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Home Away From Home: Language and Identity Reconstruction Through The Experiences of Somali-American Diaspora Returning to their Country of Origin

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**Home Away From Home: Language and Identity Reconstruction Through the
Experiences of Somali-American Diaspora Returning to
Their Country of Origin**

by

Shukria B. Omar

A Thesis

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Abstract

This paper examines the ongoing large number of Somali-American diaspora living in Minnesota returning to their country of origin or country of birth. This ideology of returning to the motherland is often referred to 'counter diasporic migration' to describe this phenomenon of immigrants or diasporas longing for a visit to their ancestral homeland. This thesis closely inspects the role language and identity plays in their return back to Minnesota. I will do this by exploring the ambiguous views of place, home, belonging, and identity, along other core elements responsible for Somali-diaspora visiting their home and motives for coming back to their other home, Minnesota.

The findings are based on data collected through two semi-constructed interviews with 10 Somali-Americans who have returned from Somalia in the past five years residing in Minnesota. Eight of the participants are second generation Somalis and two of the participants interviewed are first generation Somalis all residing in Minnesota. The participants were also asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, which asked for general information about their lives in Minnesota and questions, that dealt with the construction of two identities in two homes and which was the core elements of this research project.

Through this qualitative research project, it was found that the idea of 'home' was a very complex word to many of the participants who returned to their country of origin. Where is 'home' when you were born and raised in Minnesota, but your still regarded as an outsider? The research showed that for Somali-American diaspora who grew up in Minnesota, the process of identification with Somalia was especially complex when they returned to their country of origin. Politically, religiously and ethnically, these young people were up against powerful forces from both worlds that made identification with Somalia and America a special challenge. For these reasons, the participants easily aligned themselves with different aspects of their identity depending on where they were and who they were with. The researcher looked at the reconstruction of identity that occurred in the return to Somalia and back to Minnesota. While the research showed that the return to Somalia is a grim reality complicated by major obstacles for Somali-Americans who are in between two worlds, the researcher hopes that through the stories of people, she will show some fresh ideas in the minds of researchers and bring raw data to the diverse community in Minnesota.

Keywords: Diaspora, Somali identity, dhaqan celis, qurbo joog, counter diasporic migration, homeland, country of origin, return

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To my family, friends, and to the growing Somali-American community in Minnesota.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose of Study

“Listen to my longing or else I die. From the sweet home of my bed I was torn so my pain and crucial longing was born.” (Rumi, 13th century Persian poet and Philosopher)

The above saying is a beautiful story of separation and longing. It symbolizes the complexities of a desire to separate oneself from the pain of association with the ethnic roots and a longing to follow despite all the pain. It can be interpreted as the story of an identity dying within a generation or two. Within the context of separation and union between one culture and another, this study evaluates this longing for and the struggle that immigrant children go through as they enter this new community in their visit to the homeland and the backdrop of the larger, more complex factors that come into play in their journey.

The study adopts an interpretive, qualitative methodology to explore and examine the forces and motives that drive Somali-Americans returning to their country of origin. The goal of this research is to analyze the interplay that language and identity play in the reasons to return the country of origin as well as capture the journey of Somali-Americans and explore their implications of belonging, place, and home. Understanding this will help us, as educators, understand the identities of our growing population in Minnesota. In fact, in order for one to understand the story of any immigrant, the historical past must be understood along with the struggles that come with immigration and moving to a new land.

In addition, this study will provide new research on Somali-American diasporic returnees, as there is not much research in this area or even the lines of Somali identity, so it will help to bring a new perspective in sharing the experiences that these individuals bring

back to Minnesota once they return from Somalia. This study will also seek to describe, analyze, and record the experiences that these Somali individuals go through as they prepare for a difficult and longing journey. I argue that these diasporic returnees face difficulties in their countries of origin and also examine how their negative or even positive experiences in their motherland transform or reform their Somali-American identity.

In today's world, nations are becoming diverse in their populations due to the vast growth of migration. Migrations of populations are due to various reasons to different parts of the world. Immigration in the United States is defiantly huge. In fact, the arrival of immigrants and refugees to the United States in the last half of the 20th century is representing a great diversity of languages and cultures (Passel & Capps, 2009).

The United States is receiving large numbers of immigrants as of this day, and this is still increasing. There are many motives and forces that drive people to make immigration and to start their whole lives all over again. Reasons ranging from political oppression and escape from wars or joining their lost family members. Whatever the motives for immigration, immigrants have one thing in common and that is that they are all bringing a multitude of various languages and cultures. The children of the immigrants are the ones who have significantly been affected by this vast growth of immigration and they are the most significant sector in this population.

There are several terms that describe these children. One description "second generation" and "generation 1.5." The second term refers to the immigrants who were born in their native country and then were brought to the United States by their parents when they were children. The first term of the "second generation" refers to American-born children

with one or both parents being the ones who immigrated to the U.S. as an older adult (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999).

As a result of the increase of immigration and accelerating change in the communities, we tend to see immigrant children trying to assimilate into their new societies. As they make sense of their new home and get acquainted, established and successful, there is this longing for that visit to return “home.” Such travel is never too straightforward though and it is simply one that requires negotiation between two worlds. For the immigrant’s children who are born in America, they do not have to try to assimilate into the American society because they are already born into it. However, these immigrant children are coming from families where there are two cultures, so they must show respect to their families’ ancestral origins. We can see this present in the Somali community where a young Somali who was born in America is required to create a balance between the Somali culture and also the American culture, so in a sense they are trying to please both cultures.

According to American Community Survey Reports, current estimates of the number of Somali immigrants living in the United States vary widely, ranging from 35,760 to 150,000 and 2010 American Community Survey data indicates that there are approximately 85,700 people with Somali ancestry in the U.S. Of those, about 25,000 or one third live in Minnesota (American Community Survey Reports, 2014, p.10). Somalis have been migrating to different parts of the world since the collapse of Somalia in 1990, which led to many Somali families, and relatives scattered throughout different parts of the world today. The first Somalis who came to the United States became part of the professional sector of the American workforce system. Somalis migrated from Kenya, Ethiopia, and the Middle East to the western world

with the hope of finding new homes and becoming part of their new communities.

Throughout the years, Somalis have integrated to the American societies by being part of the political, education, and health sectors. “But today the largest numbers of Somalis in the West are found in the UK (unofficial estimates suggest as many as 250,000) and North America, particularly in Minnesota and Ohio” (Elmi, 2010). Somalis are of Muslim origins and have found themselves to become part of the Muslim communities in America. Although Somalis consider themselves to be part of the African origins, they do not consider themselves to be in the same category of the African-Americans. A report from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that more than 1 million Somali refugees are living around the world. Of those, about 10,000 have returned to Somalia in the last 5 years (UNHCR, 2013).

In order to understand the issues that drive immigrants to visit their “homeland, “country of origin” or “motherland” (these terms will be discussed further in the later chapters) it is necessary to examine the large populations that are going back. The phenomenon of visiting the homeland and returning to one’s roots is common across many immigrant communities, but it is a special concern for the Somalis, who have suffered many years of war, emotional memories, and physical trauma. Why do so many Somalis still attempt to visit this country of painful memories? This study focuses on the complexity of the connections between language and identity and how these intersect with a return visit to the motherland among Somali-Americans.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Identity

Our views of identity and its formation have changed over the years. Bonny Norton has defined identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2000, p. 5). She recognizes identity as a site of struggle and sometimes comes with various contradictions. Identity is also constantly transforming across time and space related to the desire for affiliation, recognition, and security (Norton, 1997, p. 411). Norton (2000) also describes that identity must be “understood with reference to larger and frequently inequitable, social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction” (p. 5). Stuart Hall (1996) defines identity as not so much about “being” but rather a “process of becoming” and thus representation and symbolism are at constant display in the identity process (p. 10). This tells us that identity is not consistent and thus fluid or always changing depending our social interactions and where we are at the moment.

Wegner (1998) addresses identity as not who we are, but rather through the communities we are involved in and those we choose to not participate in. He separates identity into the social and individual levels. Wenger (1998) ties identity into the specific social structures or communities as he divides it into: 1) identity in practice, 2) identities of participation and non-participation, 3) modes of belonging, 4) identification and negotiability, and 5) learning communities (p. 148). Practice is defined as “the formation of a community whose members can engage with one another and thus acknowledge each other as participants” (Wegner, 1998, p. 149). For a person to feel like they belong in a certain group

or community, they must be able to go in that community and feel comfortable interacting within that group. This is how identity comes into the picture because part of identity as Wegner puts it, is that the individual associates him or herself in a certain place when he/she for sure feels comfortable in that group. Wegner says that our identities are shaped by a combination of participation and non-participation. We come to know who we are by things we familiarize ourselves with and how we can put those things to use. We also know who we are through the practices we do not engage ourselves in.

This means that we will not go into something that we are unfamiliar with or we do not associate with. In the end, the communities that we participate in are the communities that we identify with. Wenger (1998) presents three modes of belonging as a way of understanding identity formation: engagement, imagination and alignment. The three modes are not mutually exclusive, and are best conceptualized within their interrelated combinations. For example, alignment 'focuses' imagination, and engagement 'grounds' it, allowing it to be negotiated in practice. Engagement is fundamental to forming communities of practice. It describes the active involvement in the mutual processes to negotiate meaning, enabling access to participation. It is by necessity bounded in character and there is a limit to the number of activities and people we can engage with. Yet this 'boundedness' can be changing. For this reason, when thinking of identity, we only think about the communities that we fit into, but don't discuss the communities that we cannot assert ourselves in and this is an important factor in our identity and something that Wegner brings into a great perspective.

Our identities are neither fixed nor direct, but always in a state of constant transformation constructed in social contexts. Wegner (1998) uses the term trajectories to describe identity as it being part of our social construct. Trajectories give us a clear formation of how our identities are negotiated through participation in certain communities. Those who are already in the community will stay with that community and those who are new members can choose to either accept or reject to be in this trajectories. However, this does not mean that the community cannot reject an individual because communities have power too and people can choose to leave a community if they choose to. In discussing identity, we can say that identity is a lifelong formation that eventually leads us back to our roots; to self-recognition and to who we are.

Building an identity is not easy as its always changing; moreover, balancing immigrant identity is merely impossible. "Building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities and the concept of identity serves as a pivot between the social and the individual, so that each can be talked about in terms of the other" (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). Immigrants are consistently doing this in which they are trying to make both sides of the community happy and along with trying to represent each culture equally. When thinking about the social structures of immigrants, identity becomes very complex in that they are trying to negotiate not in one society, but more than one or two social structures. For example, a Somali immigrant living in Minnesota where he/she is dominated by a large community of Somalis and another living in Missouri who comes from a Somali community that is not so large will come from different social constructs and thus this becomes more complex in how their identities are shaped.

When immigrants migrate to different parts of the country, they are faced with interacting with other cultures; ones different from theirs. “Cultural clash” is often an incorrect metaphor in defining the struggles these immigrants face because it reinforces false dichotomies between two different cultural groups as Ngo (2008) argues:

The cultural difference model for understanding immigrant experiences sets up binary oppositions between tradition and modernity, East and West, and First World and Third World, among others. This oppositional framework is problematic for at least two reasons. First, the emphasis on traditional cultural values reifies the notion of culture, poisoning it as something that is fixed or a given, rather than as a social process that finds meaning within social relationships and practices. (p. 7)

The term “cultural clash” is not an accurate term that describes the immigrants experience or identity, but it is a preconceived term that is recognized by the immigrant youth themselves because that is what the new society that they moved into thinks and expects. Bhabha (1994) describes the immigrant identity in the terms of “hybridity” and “third space” to describe the different cultural spaces an immigrant creates. Hall (1996) argues that identity is “the relation to the other, the relation to what is not, to precisely what it lacks” because identity is constructed through social and broad practices (p. 4).

When it comes to the immigrant identity, understanding multiple identities within the self is not questioned as immigrants living in societies different from theirs are experiencing multiple identities. Their lives are cut across linguistic, cultural, and national boundaries and they bring two societies into one social field. Blanc-Szanton (1985) describes “trans migrant identity” not and just as one identity, but several identities, each coming from a different society, culture and communities” (p. 8). “Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (Basch, Glick. Schiller. & Blanc-Szanton, 1985, p. 9). In other

words, “transmigrants” do not identify themselves in one place, but they put down roots in the country that they are living while maintaining this longing for the homeland, and often have an urge to return to their adopted country.

In discussing immigrant identity, we must explore racialized and ethnic identity through experiences of those living in the United States. “Racial and ethnic identities crosscut and compete with each other for dominance, with race almost always overriding ethnicity” (Tuan, 1998, p. 22). For example, the first generation of Somali-Americans may identify themselves as Somali, or even Somali-American, but in the real world, they are identified as “black immigrants” or “African American” (Traore & Lukens, 2006, p. 7). This means that unlike most Americans who have the ability to choose ethnic heritage, such as a white American circling Irish ethnic origin in an application; immigrants have a racially imposed ethnic identity when they move to a different country. They may be able to speak about their ethnic identity in a social setting or a public setting, but they are automatically wrongfully identified about their ethnic identity, in other words, their ethnic identity is a socially defined and co-constructed identity.

Somalinimo or Somaliness: What is the Somali Identity?

The Somali identity is influenced by the place the people are from and where they end up making their new homes after migrating from their country of origin. A large part of the Somali identity is the Somali clan identity, which mostly plays a larger role with the older Somali migrants. Another part of the Somali identity is the religion where the Islamic values are part of their everyday lives. Also since a lot of Somalis have migrated into lands, which are not theirs, some Somalis express this nostalgia for returning to their adopted country. Like

most other immigrant populations, issues of belongingness and identity crisis are affected by the second generation Somalis as their connection to Somalia is not as strong and their ideas of home are not as vivid as the first generation of immigrants.

When discussing the immigrant ethnic identity such as the Somalis, it is interesting to see that all Somalis reject other imposed ethnic identities. Martha Bigelow (2010) discusses Somali youths imposed, assumed, and negotiable identities as:

A common imposed identity is that of refugee—an identity that may be assumed given the history of Somali migration to Minnesota. Identity is imposed if the person identified does not have the opportunity to contest this categorization. An assumed identity is one that is also not negotiated, but unlike an imposed identity, the individual thus positioned accepts it. Negotiable identities are those that are contested or challenged by individuals or groups. (p. 99)

For example, a teen born in the United States of Somali parents may be inaccurately assumed to be a refugee by educators and actually never have the opportunity to ever negotiate this imposed identity. An example of an assumed identity is when a Somali girl born in Kenya is identified as Somali by her teachers and friends and she accepts this unconditionally.

Racial Categories: Blackness, Assimilation into American Mainstream Society

Like many migrants who immigrate to America, they are expected to blend in with American society or become part of the American culture. “Skin colour, particularly blackness, is one of the principal categories of social stratification in North America.” It is delegated to any person with any visible African characteristics and determined through what Davis (1991) referred to as the ‘one drop rule’, meaning that ‘a single drop of black blood makes a person black’ (Kusow, 2006). Somalis are categorized as “black” in the American system, but that’s not what Somalis classify themselves before entering America as they consider themselves from the Somali origins. This is because skin color is not something that

the Somali people use to distinguish each other. However, this idea is not the same when Somalis come to America because they are classified into a group based on their skin color. This means that when Somalis come to a society that distinguishes between black and white, they have to choose and see where they fit in. Somali people are not only migrating but they are moving from one set of society to another, and this means that their identities are also changed because of this social conformation as well as behavioral expectations. Kusow (2006) talks about this identity change that occurs with immigrants:

In Mexico City, for example, Chilangos are considered a smart and successful ethnic group in the Mexican social context; however, once they cross the border, they confront the ethnic classification system of the United States. Because Chilango identity is not available in the local cultural resources of the United States, the immigrant from south of the border simply becomes Mexican, Mexican-American, or Hispanic American depending on geographic location within the United States. In other words, once in the United States, a Chilango is no longer seen as smart, but rather as a person without ambition and perhaps stigmatized as welfare-dependent. (p. 4)

Similarly, Somalis in America face the same situation as they are classified as “Black” and not “Somali.” These new classifications aren’t always positive either and they are loaded with connotations that are contradictory with the immigrants’ original identity. This is also causing a clash from Somali individuals, as they are confused in which identity to choose. Again identity is fluid, and the need to choose is there. Although we recognize that our identity is not always set, there is that individual level that we struggle with in trying to pick one identity over the other.

Language

The concept of complexity in identities for immigrants is not all alone, and language for the most part plays a crucial role in the reconstruction of identities among immigrants.

Researchers highlight the fact that identity, self, and agency are linguistically constructed and negotiated. They view the connection between identity and language as “an intimate and mutually constitutive relation” (Beltz, 2002, p. 16), especially since language has important symbolic value (Wei, 2000) and plays a crucial role in establishing one's place and role in society. Immigrant youth who most likely come from homes with speakers of more than one language often have to navigate between, within, and among different language communities. This is one of the greatest challenges of immigrant population's face.

“Heritage language speakers negotiate their own identities in connection to these different languages and their power relations and social distributions in society” (Peyton, Ranard, & McGinnis, 2001, p. 18). Heritage language here refers to the speaker's first language or the language that is mostly spoken at home. The term heritage language or HL will be used extensively in this study, and Fishman's definition of heritage language will be used. Fishman defines the term heritage language as “the non-English languages spoken by newcomers and indigenous peoples” (Fishman, 2001). According to Fishman's definition, heritage language may or may not be the learner's primary language. With this study, heritage language will be used to refer to the participants' language that is spoken at home, which in this research is Somali. There are many studies that have shown how cognitive development of HL really has a positive correlation with how learners choose to assimilate in the society. Shibata (2001), in her research on the academic achievements of a group of second-generation Japanese-American college students, showed the positive relationship between English language proficiency, Japanese language proficiency, and academic achievement. According to Shabita, the knowledge of Japanese language gave students access to enrichment

educational material available in Japanese as well as granting them access to study circles in which the knowledge of Japanese language was a must (Shibata, 2001, p. 333). Likewise, the Somali community may benefit from this as it may lead to young Somali youth building a better understanding of their Somali language and culture.

It is crucial to understand identity and the processes of identity negotiation within and among language communities. Swartz, (1997) proposes two important concepts for heritage language speakers: language as cultural capital and subject positioning. According to Bourdieu “language capital” as he quotes Bourdieu “language capital is part of one's cultural capital, where identity is developed, described, and contested. Cultural capital is a term used by Pierre Bourdieu, in which he extends the understanding of capital in economic terms to “a form of power as capital in differentiated societies” (Swartz, 1997, p. 75). Over here, Bourdieu mentions that there is power when it comes to the two different societies, and he says that the cultural capital is the culture that is stronger. Those who are coming from homes in which there is two cultures that clash, there is For immigrants living in the United States who come from homes in which multiple languages are spoken, this creates a personal struggle because they belong to at least two language communities. For immigrants living in America, they are forced to negotiate two languages, two communities, and thus two identities. Off course, they have to balance these two languages, but living in a place like the United States where English is the dominant language or is the major language, use of minority languages becomes at risk. For example, the Somali community really values the essence of the Somali language in their community, so if an individual who is of Somali origin does not speak Somali, that individual may receive a sense of shame and not being

accepted to be part of that society. For this reason, Somali immigrant youth are consistently trying to be part of both these language communities.

Today, the implicit fears that minorities will not learn English and discussions on immigrant languages as a threat that can lead to a division of nation or loyalty to other countries are still at work to create an atmosphere of fear, distrust and even hatred of other people and other languages. We can see that in the American schools, which the numbers of immersion programs are many, but there are not Somali immersion schools as of this day in Minnesota. In the United States, the language with valued cultural capital is English, and other languages do not have as much cultural or market value. The consequence is loss of languages other than English within the first and second generations (those of individuals who immigrated to the United States and of U.S.-born children of immigrants respectively), since the speakers of those languages, and society in general, do not see them to be as valuable as English (Swartz, 1997, p. 89). This may create certain kinds of attitudes about one's language. If their language isn't given attention in the society that they live in, negative attitudes or choices of their heritage language will be influenced and thus they may not use their heritage language due to the negative attitudes. According to Valdés (2001), bilingual individuals or immigrants are situated in a language continuum in which the choice of a language depends on socio-cultural contexts and the strength of identification with and connection to the heritage culture and language. Wallace (2001) defines subject positioning as an important component of the identity negotiation that takes place in the effort to negotiate the self and the status quo (p. 19). Thus, subject positioning contributes to the development of heritage

language speakers' "self-concept" (Turner, 1999, p. 30) and provides another opportunity to express agency.

It is hard to imagine immigrant youth coming from various cultures identifying with only one culture, as the heritage language identity requires negotiation between at least two languages and cultures. As Wallace (2001) illustrates, heritage language speakers belong to the dominant discourse community and the one of the heritage language at the same time and sometimes even find themselves in between these multiple communities. Therefore, identity is negotiated based on a multicultural view of the self in order to make sense of the gaps that immigrant language speaker's deal with.

Defining "Country of Origin", "Motherland", "Homeland"

When using terms that relate to a person's origin, we must be very careful as we can easily misinterpret or make a false imposed terminology on the individual. The term "country of origin" can be complex in various ways as it may mean two different things to certain individuals but more often immigrant youth. A Somali youth, who migrated to the United States when he or she was a teenager, may call their "country of origin" Somalia. However, when looking at the case of Somali youth who were born and raised in America, their interpretation of "country of origin" may be different in a sense that they may consider America to be their "country of origin" because they have never visited Somalia. On the other hand, Somali youth who are born and raised in America may define their country of origin to be Somalia, as they tie it to their ancestral roots or where their parents were born or came from.

Similarly, the terms “motherland” and “homeland” also refer to the same meaning as country of origin, however these meanings can be interpreted in various ways depending on where the individual was born, where they were raised, and how they choose to personally identify where their “country of origin” is. For the purpose of this study, “country of origin” will be used to refer to the country with which an individual identifies himself or herself, and not the country an individual is born in. Thus, immigrant youth look at everything from two perspectives, and having two meanings of “country of origin” exemplifies the complexities of defining these terms.

Forms of Migration: “Return Migration”

There are many reasons in which immigration may take place for various reasons, and in this section, we will explore these terms and ideologies. Dustmann and Weiss (2007) distinguish migration as being two types, which are “between temporary migrations and permanent migrations” (p. 237). A migrant is a temporary migrant if he/she stays in a particular country for a limited period of time. At the same time the migration may be permanent from the perspective of the immigrant as he or she may leave their country of origin¹ permanently, but remain temporarily in any one-host country¹.

Immigration scholars such as Dustmann (2003) have become increasingly interested in second-generation immigrants having this sense of attachment to or longing for their country of origin. Long & Oxfeld (2004) have actually examined how Diasporas have continued to be migrating, but few have studied how a large number diasporic people have been visiting their

¹ Dustmann (2003) express country of origin differently here, and they are referring to the concept that an individual leaves the country they were born in or their country of origin.

country of origin. It is important to separate these kinds of returnees into two types. The first return is immigrants from first-generation decedents who move back to their country of origin or the country where they identify their ancestral roots permanently (Long & Oxfeld, 2004, p. 118). The second group refers second-generation immigrants who lived outside of their country of origin for many years and have returned to stay for a short amount of time either due to visiting families or connecting with their ancestral roots. In this paper, I will focus on the second-generation immigrants who have returned to their country of origin and explore their reasons and motives.

Return migration has received significant scholarly attention lately in line with a growing interest in the complex routes operated by transnationalism (Salaff, Shik, & Greve, 2008). Return migration can be categorized in two ways. The first type refers to the return of first-generation immigrants to their country of birth, a topic of considerable interest to academics and policymakers because of the purported benefits to be accrued from the financial investments, knowledge and networks accompanying return to the homeland (Saxenian, 2006). The second type refers to the return of later-generation diasporic descendants to their country of origin, which is also known as counter-diasporic migration (King & Christou, 2006, p. 818). These writings focus on the way that roots, identity and belonging prompt the return migration of diasporic descendants although they grew up abroad (Potter & Conway, 2009; Tsuda, 2009).

Moreover, 'return migration' can be defined as second-generation immigrants returning to their countries of origin or the country in which they identify themselves with and redefining their sense of self and identities. For whatever reason these immigrant youth are

visiting their country of origin, they may be running from a society that does not truly accept them for their individual selves. We can say that return migration is a complex and contested experience not just for those who have never seen these countries of origin, but even the ones who lived in countries in which their ancestries came from for many years and those returning to their countries of ancestral origin may both have different cultures due to the change in time and different cultures. However, the idea of “home” becomes an intriguing question when second-generation immigrants who have lived beyond the boundaries of these countries go back to their country of origin. Returnees’ double consciousness impacts upon them with the shocking revelation that rather than returning “home”, they are seen as foreigners to their own people. Oberg (1960) describes culture shock as “an occupational disease precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (p. 177). Alder (1975) defines this process as reverse culture shock or “the transition into one’s home culture after having lived and worked abroad” (p. 15). We must distinguish that reverse culture shock does not mean the same thing as culture shock. Those who deal with reverse culture shock can be many including returning international students to their country, short-term tourists, or immigrants who are visiting their families in countries outside their border.

In relating this with the second-generation Somali diaspora that were born in the U.S. who went back to Somalia for a period of time may feel reverse culture shock although some may think that they will be able to assimilate within people of their own kind. This may be due to the fact that they have lived outside this country for a long amount of time, and they are not acquainted with the cultural aspects within the local Somali community. Also those who returned to their country of origin may feel the opposite or be “ethnically privileged”

(Tsuda, 2009, p. 88). Ethnically privileged migration can be considered a sub-set of counter-diasporic return because it refers to the movement of people back to their ancestral homelands even if they have been raised abroad but it is distinct because the ancestral homeland also provides them priority to admission and special treatment of rights because of perceived ethnic affinities (Brubaker, 1998).

More literature in this field provides examples of countries that create special migration policies for those who return to their countries. One example of this is in Israel where there is a law that gives Israelis abroad the right of return and a route towards citizenship (Joppke & Zeff, 2001). Another example is the *nikkeijin* who are of Japanese ancestry but carry foreign citizenships from western countries which entitled Japanese citizenship even though they were not born in Japan (Tsuda, 2003). One can argue that these ethnically privileged migrants are driven to return to their country of origin for some time due to the privileges that they receive from their country of origin. For example, young Somali youth returning to the country of their ancestral origin who are educated, may receive some kind of admiration from the local Somali community because they are bringing them assets that they never had access to. For this reason, these highly educated Somalis who are returning to their country of origin may be defined as ethnically privileged as they receive some sort of attention and positive treatment.

The assumption that people will live in one place for their whole lifetime, one culture, and live by one cultural norm is impossible. Rather, second-generation immigrant children will identify themselves with two or more societies. This is what many researchers in this field are calling transnational migration. When people hear the word immigrant, they think of

people coming to a new land and assimilating to new languages and cultures, but they do not often consider the homes and lives that these immigrants have left. However, the generation 1.5 is stuck in two worlds or they are always trying to balance both cultures because they have been exposed to both cultures. Both these groups have one thing in common and that is wondering of their self-identity, the negotiation between two broadly different worlds and the multiple complexities within and across each of these worlds. Bauman (1996) describes modern identities as resembling those of pilgrims and this appeared to be that he speaks directly to immigrants. Those who immigrate from their countries of origin whether it is due to war, safety, or poverty or those who are born into a society that does not fully accept them often face this notable nostalgia for their motherland (p. 19). The questions of “where did I come from” and “where do my roots take me” come into play into this battle with trying to balance two societies.

This “visit” has been given several names in today’s world and one is roots tourism (Feng & Page, 2000; Kibria, 2004, p. 256). Roots tourism can be defined as a type of tourism in which people travel to the communities of their ancestors for such purposes as leisure, visiting family and relatives, discovering the culture of the ancestral society, and searching for one’s roots and identity without the intention of permanent settlement or other work-related purposes (Feng & Page, 2000; Kibria, 2004, p. 258). Also in response to the increasing number of immigrants going back to their motherland, scholars have investigated the motives and travel reasons for this trip. Even though there are lots of reasons that may explain a roots visit, such as economic, political, or connecting with local communities, many gaps still exist

in understanding why immigrants visit their motherland. For example, we are still not sure about its influence on the returnee's identity.

Immigrants facing pressures from their communities eventually lead to the suspicion that there is somewhere else for them. That maybe the American community is not the whole and that maybe they have two places to call home instead of one. The urge to go back to one's roots is present in all communities and in fact there is always an urge among each individual to really search for this place of full belonging and full acceptance. We will explore this complexity of returning "home" and the implications that this return has on an individual's identity further in the coming sections as we get a more in depth analysis of the actual individuals who have returned to their country of origin, specifically Somali.

Research Questions

1. How do Somali-American youth identify themselves? (At school, home, with friends and as a whole).
2. What are some underlying reasons why a large number of Somali diaspora are going back to Somalia?
3. How does the self-identification of an individual who grew up in America change when they go back to Somalia?
4. Why are these young Somali youth choosing to come back to America and not stay in their country of origin?

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Selecting a good and appropriate methodology in the field of second language research is essential because as a researcher, it will help to establish a framework to conduct good and valid. This is a study of human behavior, which involves interpreting the attitudes and choices of individuals, which makes it very complex. For this reason, the study requires a qualitative analysis. In qualitative research, objects are not reduced to single variables but are studied in their complexity and entirety in their everyday context in order to experience and understand what exists in their current life (Flick, 2002, p. 5).

Participants

In this study, I sought second-generation youth of Somali ancestry who were either born in the United States or were brought to the U.S. at an early age (before elementary school). For this study, 10 individuals of the Somali origin were interviewed. Eight of the participants migrated to the U.S. with their families at the age of 5, and two of the participants were born in Somalia and migrated to the U.S. in their early teens. It is important to note that prior to starting this study, I wanted to only interview second generation Somali-Americans however, for a deeper understanding in this phenomenon of return migration, I wanted to get the perspective of the parents who were first generation Somali-Americans.

This study consisted of a total of 10 participants who were living in Minnesota and recently returned from their country of origin. The participants who decided to voluntarily be a part of the research were given a consent form to sign and confirming that they had a right of their information being confidential. After the participants filled out the consent form, they

were given a demographic information form to fill out. This form-collected information such as their age, career profession, and county of origin visited.

Materials

The main instrument that I used for this research was a series of two one-on-one semi-constructed interviews which were mostly open-ended that consisted of answers about their Somali American identity in Minnesota and also their identity identification when they visited their country of origin. Questions that were asked were also meant to explore their experiences about their trip to their country of origin, their ambiguous views of home and place, and the importance and significance of this trip to the participants. Also the participants that were interviewed were all of Somali origin and due to the fact that the Somali people are of those who love to socialize, the interview instrument was used to make participants feel as comfortable as possible in order for them to talk about their experiences more deeply. Also, although that the Somali like to socialize, they are still very careful in who they disclose their personal information with due to the fact that Somalia has been affected by war and violence for the past 25 years. Thus, Somalis have unconsciously learned to be very cautious in disclosing information relating to their identity. For this reason, this specific instrument of one-on-one, face-to-face interviews was selected, as the participants were more likely to release personal information about their identity as well as their role in their social and professional life. This instrument also allowed the researcher to have an open dialogue with the participants where they could talk about their feelings and reflections in the form similar to storytelling.

I designed the interviews to be open-ended and flexible in order to allow the participants to freely express their ideas about their Somali identity in Minnesota. The questions were divided into two categories, which all lead to the formation of Somali-American identity. The first set of interview questions concentrated on how participants constructed their American identity in Minnesota and situations, which they felt very close to their American identity. These sets of the first interview questions were geared to allow participants to talk about their identity in Minnesota as an American. The second set of interview questions were more focused on their trip to country of origin as well as questions leading to their self-identification and sense of belonging. Throughout the interview, the participants answered the interview questions followed by probing questions to further answer the four research questions.

During the interview, I encouraged the participants to further elaborate in their answers and at the end of the interview I gave them the opportunity to add their comments about anything that they would like to contribute in the interview. The participant scheduled the place and time that was most convenient to them and I scheduled the interviews. I gave the participants a length of two hours for the interview because there were two sets of questions being asked. Length of the interviews varied as some participants took two full hours where others took less than that. Prior to the interview, I asked the participants in which language they felt most comfortable talking. Some of the participants choose to speak both English and Somali while others only choose to speak Somali for the entire interview. All of the participants were fluent in English but some said they felt most comfortable in speaking Somali to deeply express their ideas. I gave this option to all the participants that I

interviewed because for this research, I was looking to collect raw data about the participant's view of their identity and I was also asking questions, which required participants to feel comfortable. For these reasons, the participants were given their choice of language to speak during the interview. For the interviews that were conducted in Somali, I transcribed them in Somali and then from Somali to English.

Procedure

The participants were provided with an informed consent at before being a participant for the study and will be given the right to withdraw from the study at any time. This is mainly because the researcher needed to audio record and transcribe after requiring a detailed informed consent. After the participant accepts to participate in the study, they were invited to come to interview with the researcher at most convenient time. Along with the three semi-constructed interviews, prior to the interview, each individual completed a written interview asking for background of the participant and demographic information. This information included age, country of birth, and length of time living in the US, primary language, and the frequency of trips back to the country of origin.

The first set of interviews looked at the individual's life and experiences before they took the trip to Somalia. Whenever trying to interpret the experiences of an individual it is always good to look at the their life before in order to later compare it to the things that they experienced after their journey. Questions like how they felt prior to their trip and the reasons that led to their trip were asked to find out the motives and drives for their trip to their homeland. The two semi-constructed interviews were to be one hour in length. Even though the interviews were conducted in English, the participants were encouraged to use Somali at

any time for any words or phrases of their choice. Also each participant was given a pseudonym to protect his or her identity.

In the coming sections, I will answer my four research questions through the narrations and interpretations of the interviews from the participants of the study. Before I start with the actual interpretation of these interviews. Table 3.1 provides the demographic information of each participant.

Table 3.1

Demographic Information of Participants

Pseudonym Name	Age of Entry to America	Current age	Highest Level of Education	Places visited	# Of returns to country of origin
Fatima	3	27	Masters degree	Jigjiga, Eithopia. Hargiesa, Somalia	4
Musa	22	42	Masters degree	Hergaisa, Somalia	1
Sadiya	14	26	Masters degree	Mogadishu, Somalia	3
Yasin	16	33	Bachelors	Mogadishu, Somalia	1
Layla	4	19	High School	Boorama, Somalia	1
Mahad	5	20	High School	Jigjiga Ethiopia. Hargeisa, Somalia	2
Abdi	15	36	PhD	Hargeisa, Somalia	1
Salman	10	33	PhD	Djibouti	1
Nur	23	39	Masters	Hargiesa, Somalia	1
Salma	Born in USA	33	Bachelors	Mogadishu, Somalia	5

Most of the participants who were involved in these interviews were educated individuals who were well established in their careers and personal growth. The age that they came to Minnesota was collected and the age varied from participant to participant. It is important to note the age in a study like this to see how age plays a role in how their experiences played out. This number of visits to country of origin was also recorded to see the number of times they visited. It is interesting to see that those who came to Minnesota when they were older than the age of 15 only visited their country of origin one time while those who were either born or came to Minnesota at an age younger than 15 years old visited their country of origin more than one time and some even visited up to five times. We will see if age may or not play a role in the participants visit to Somalia as well as their identity construction.

Chapter 4: Results

This research study required the data to be analyzed using a thematic analysis, which is the most common analysis for a qualitative research such as this. Boyatziz (1998) describes thematic analysis as “a process of encoding qualitative information to process, analyze, and/or interpret information” (p. 4). The goal of this kind of analysis is to systematically code themes and subthemes associated specifically to the research questions. This process requires close reading of the text and associating those into codes and sub-codes. In order to do this, I first transcribed the audio recordings from the participants and then began coding and sub-coding the transcripts into specific categories, based on the research questions. I used online software to transcribe the interviews into text called Transcribe. The themes I used here are identified as 1) the way in which Somali-Americans identify themselves in their American roles in Minnesota, 2) various reasons for Somali-American youth visiting their country of origin, 3) participants encounters with the locals in their country of origin and the significance that has on their identity as a Somali and as an American, and 4) perceptions of country of origin before the visit and after the visit as well as impact of identity with being Somali. By categorizing in this format, it helped me to organize the qualitative data better.

After transcribing the interviews into English, I reviewed the participant’s expressions and tried to see which theme they best fit into. At this phase, after breaking apart the data into themes, I begin to look at the overall context and the relationship each category had. The objectives of this research were to determine how Somali-Americans from Minnesota identified themselves and if that identification changed or not with their perception and view of themselves as a Somali.

In qualitative research like this, which holds the participant to feel cultural sensitivities in discussing their biographic information; it is a must for the participant to be comfortable with the researcher's identity and have full trust in the research. Therefore, the position of the researcher is very important to the participant and brings up the discussion of emic verses etic. According to Streubert, Speziale, and Carpenter (2003), an emic perspective is considered to be the insider's point of view studying one's native culture and its people individually; etic is the outsiders' perspective studying a people and a culture as objects. For this reason, having an emic point of view could lead to collecting more information and also having a deep understanding of the participants. Being a part of this research, I was seen as an insider to the participants who were all of the Somali origin. But I was also perceived as an outsider being a female women getting higher education and I have not been back to Somalia. I was in between two trajectories because I was part of the Somali community here in Minnesota, but have not been back to Somalia. I have only seen Somalia through what the media showed me, which was through pictures and videos. This created some kind of tension in terms of having trust in me. Also my level of education seemed a little intimidating to some of the participants and this caused a little of discomfort and awkwardness. The participants felt comfortable towards me, as I understood the political and historical system that was present in Somalia. Throughout the interview, the participants also asked me about my immigration process and coming to America. Even though the Somali people are divided by the clan system, Somalis in the diaspora all have one thing in common which are the stories of war, separation, and immigration to the western world. Through sharing these stories with the participants, they felt very connected to me and this played a big role in how they answered the interview

questions. This role was really important when the questions of identity came up and some individuals of those who were second generation had difficulty answering “who am I?” or “Is there a time you felt proud to be American?” These may be simple questions for first generation Somali-Americans to answer, but for second generation Somalis who are still trying to discover their identities struggle with these kinds of questions. Despite the difficulty of answering these questions, the participants felt comfortable asking follow up questions and saying “Is it okay if I answer this in Somali?”

How Do Somali-Americans Identify Themselves in Minnesota?

In this section, we will explore the first research question: how do Somali-American youth identify themselves? This research question dealt with how the participants identified themselves in Minnesota. I asked how they identified in all contexts such as school, home, and social life. I also asked them to give me situations where they felt very close to their American identity as well as their Somali identity. One study participant, Fatima, 27, who entered the U.S. at the age of 3 and has visited her Somalia four times, described her identity in America as:

“Well as I see myself as a Somali first before I see myself as an American because I am obviously different so even though I grew up here, I don’t identify as an American fully. I incorporate my culture into everything that I do. I am more Somali than anything. So yeah, my identity in America is a Somali Muslim. I try to contribute to society by working and volunteering. I guess that’s what being an American all is about. I guess my American Identity is living the American the lifestyle. Where I go to school, I practice my freedom of speech, I drive, and I do everything that an American has the right to do. I feel like I have a sense of entitlement. As a Somali in America, I feel like I am trapped between two cultures. I am too American to be fully Somali, and too Somali to be fully American, so As a Somali in America it’s kind of hard balancing out my culture, my religion, my values and also living in America because it’s completely different.”

Fatima was one of the several participants who said that she identified as being a Somali first more than being an American. She distinguishes her American identity by associating the things that she does as an American citizen such as working, going to school, practicing her amendment rights, and being able to contribute to the American society. With that being said, she's also trying to somehow incorporate her Somali identity into her American identity. This is hard for her and it seems as if she's still trying to balance these two cultures. She uses the word "trapped" to describe this feeling of not being Somali enough or American enough. She seems like she has to make a choice between the two identities. This choice is defined between the Somali culture and the American culture. She's not trying to assimilate in the American culture because as she says she's not American enough anyways. This isn't assimilation; it's like an alignment and a repositioning between several aspects of identity.

Another participant, Abdi, 36, who entered the US at the age of 14, and visited his country of origin for the first time as an adult had also responded to this question saying:

"I would say I kind of have multiple identities. Depending on what time and what day. One shift I might be Somali. I am at the Somali mall. I am sipping tea at the 24 mall or karmel mall. Talking to people about stories about Somalia and what's happening. So that's really my Somali identity. That evening I get back home, the following morning I am a professional who is working at mainstream institution. I am wearing my American workforce clothes. So I would say it's mixed. It changes. The American part I would say it's working at a professional setting exposes me to the American identity. Coming into interactions with non-Somalis. When traveling you know having that American passport. Celebration of American holidays such as Thanksgiving. Manners also play a huge role in my American identity. For example, when I am with a Somali community I can just be like you know loud! I can yell your name and say 'Hi Shukria' in a loud voice, but when if you were an American, I would need to lower my tone."

Abdi here does not seem to choose between being Somali or an American. He feels that there are certain situations where he feels Somali or American depending on the social context or where he is at by location. To him, identifying as an American or as a Somali really just depends on the social context. He distinguishes being an American from Somali by being in the American workforce, and social interactions with the Americans. Unlike, Fatima, Abdi doesn't really say he is American or Somali. Instead he shows that he is in between the two, and calls it "mixed."

Along with this question, participants were also asked to talk about a time they felt close to their American identity and disconnected from their Somali identity. This question was meant to bring out more explanations about their American identity. Musa who came to the US as an adult talks about an incident where he felt close to his American identity:

"Those instances always come up when I travel internationally. Last year was the first time that I travelled back home to Somalia, but I do travel to other countries. A year ago, I was traveling to Dubai and a couple of other places. That's when you feel proud of being a United States citizen because of the benefits that's offered. If anything happens to you, you have access to the Embassy and the counselor services and as soon as you arrive some of those other destinations you receive if there's alerts for security or others. So always you feel proud of being a US citizen when you actually visit other countries and also when your here and enjoying freedom. When you have the freedom to speak freely. When you have the freedom to participate in the political process. When you have the freedom to start your own business. When you have the freedom to practice your own religion."

It is important to note that Musa talks about his experience leading to feel more American occurred outside of America and not within America. For him, the American identity assures safety and thus revitalizes his American identity because of feeling a sense of security. Those things like freedom of speech, freedom of religion and being about to express who you are

comes prevalent when he was outside of America. He feels lucky that he has the opportunity to have these rights, which may not be attainable, if he were not American.

Leyla who came to the US at the age of 4 also addressed this question of a situation that she felt more comfortable with her American identity much more differently:

“I can't think of a single situation. It would be with the whole Somali tribal thing. When I am around people that are talking about tribes, I feel like I can't relate with them, and feel more American. The whole tribal thing in Somalia doesn't make sense to me. I just don't understand it the whole tribal thing. I don't understand why people use it to hate on people. I am thankful that I had the chance to come here and live here, and see that tribes aren't a big deal. Somali tribes still exist in America, but more as clicks. People here do talk about tribes, but it's not used to hate people. Somalis here do get along, but I am sure tribes still exist in America.”

The Somali clan system is really important and membership in a clan is determined by ancestral lineage. “The clan system is the most important constituent social factor among the nomadicpastoralist-Somalis” (Abdi, 2001). The clans function as ethnicities of the Somali nation. Clan affiliation is the main identity-providing factor within the Somali nation. The clan system matters for all functions of society, even for the structure of the government. Somalis usually know their exact position within the clan system. Some clans have a higher power than others in terms of the political system and also higher jobs. Although this is something that's important, Leyla does not feel this importance of clans. She knows about the tribal system, but it isn't important to her and seems happy that she's an American.

All of the participants seemed to be living comfortable lives before leaving to visit their country of origin. These visits were mostly voluntary and they actually all took a break from their jobs, schools and families to make their trip possible. Some had important jobs that made it difficult to expand their stay in their country of origin.

I asked each participant to talk about their schedule or life before the trip to see and compare if their life after the trip has changed or not changed. I also asked them their initial reasoning of going back and what their aim was for going back. Fatima, 27, talks about her life before the trip and her reasoning of visiting her country of origin:

“I had a very comfortable lifestyle, I was working full time at two jobs and volunteering. I always had the intentions of going back and staying there, but it just never worked out for me. I guess it’s not time for me to do that yet, but it’s in the works. It’s a future plan of mine to go back and live there. This time when I went back I had a reason. I have two cousins and his friends. One is a radiologist and the other one is a doctor, so we wanted to open up a diagnostic center in my family’s hometown. So I basically I went there to scope out the scene, see if I could get a licensed that I had to get from the government, so I went for a purpose this year and it was for business.”

From this, we can see that Fatima was not forced to go back, she made the decision to go back. We can also see that she had a comfortable lifestyle before leaving which makes the point that she didn’t leave because she was not satisfied with her way of living in Minnesota. This may have to do with finding out more about her Somali identity. Halima has described more deeply in the interview the importance of being part of the Somali community in Minnesota. Even though she said this, she also says that she has been longing to go back and it was always on the back of her mind. Fatima is one of the participants who went back to her Somalia 4 times. She had several visits to Somalia and as she says, the last time she went back, she had a reason behind her return. Another participant Salmah, 25, who was born in Minnesota had a different journey:

“Honestly, I loved my life here in Minnesota. I am as Minnesotan as you can get. I do anything that an American girl does. I don’t even dress or act like Somali. When I was first going to Somalia, I was 13 years old. I was in middle school, and I hated my parents for planning my trip. I didn’t really care for it. I was just a teenage girl and all I wanted to be was fit in with my middle school friends. I guess that’s what you think about at that age? I wasn’t ready to leave my life, but my parents thought I needed to

go see where I came from. I hated the first visit. I was scared for the most part really, I was horrified. I felt so uncomfortable, and was glad to be back once I got back. Off course I don't feel like this now and things have changed since my first visit."

We can see that Salmah really was attached to her American lifestyle and she was not really comfortable to leave this life and visit her country of origin. Salmah is the only participant who has visited Somalia five times. In the above statement, she's talking about her first visit to Somalia. We will see in the next sections if this ideology changes or not. The participants were asked about their initial feelings before the trip and most seemed to be excited while others were worried and scared. Somalia does not have a stable government and this is what worried most of the participants. A person may get killed and the murderer may not go to trial or even get judged, and this creates fear and anxiety for those who want to visit Somalia.

Abdi, 36 talks about his initial feelings before leaving and says:

"Oh gosh! I don't even want to remember. Anxiety, worried whether I am going to return safely. Also worried that I probably didn't have enough resources to make a difference while there. But at the same time also a sense of excitement that I am going back to where I came from originally. It was my first time in 20 years."

Another participant Mahad, 20 says:

"Before I left, you know I didn't know what to expect, I only heard stories from the people are related to me and what to expect and see, but it's a completely different feeling when you go. I think I was confident you know. I think that if you know your culture really well, if you speak very Somali well, that helps you, and that makes you of a more likable person. But it feels like if you don't, or if you're not very connected with your culture and you go there, you will have a harder time. I felt happy to go back and see my family and to see where I was born and where I came from, but at the same time you feel nervous because you know what are they going to think? Is he here for dhaqan celis? Or is he here for something else, stuff like that."

Both Abdi and Mahad had mixed emotions prior to leaving. Mahad defined being connected to meaning that he knows his culture and language. They didn't have many expectations, but Mahad knew that if he were connected to his Somali culture, he would have an easier or a

better time there. Mahad doesn't really know what the people over there will think of him but his curious to know. He uses the dhaqan celis [Dakan Alis], which translates to cultural rehabilitation. It is a Somali term used to describe for those who have lived in the west for a long time and are visiting their country of origin. The Somali verb dhaqancelin literally means returning to culture, and dhaqan celis refers to a person who is being returned to culture. If someone is said to need dhaqan celis, it usually carries a bad connotation and those who need dhaqan celis are missing something, either their language or culture. Mahad seemed to be concerned whether the Somali locals will accept him or call him dhaqan celis even though he was confident of his Somaliness.

I asked this same question to the two participants in this study who were first generation Somalis or those who migrated to America in the 1980s. Here are their answers:

“I haven't been to Somalia in 25 years. I left Somalia as a young man and now over 40 years old you know it was a bit strange because a lot of things have changed since I left. You know 25 years things have changed.” (Musa, 42)

“I was worried really. Worried about the people I am leaving behind. My kids and wife live here. I was also feeling two things at the time, which were both worried, and happiness. I am going to my country. What will I see? I've been gone for 16 years. How will it look? Did it change? I thought it changed after all those years. Those kind of things were going through my mind.” (Nur, 39)

It is interesting to note that both Musa and Nur had expectations of Somalia because they left at an older age. It is important to also mention that these expectations were different from anxiety. They knew Somalia one way since they left, so they expected for it to have changed. They thought that it would somehow look better and that things have changed. They had expectations because they knew a Somalia before coming to America whereas Mahad and Abdi did not have much of an expectation because they left at a young age and did not really

have many memories to compare. They just seemed to go with the expectations everyone had told them about.

Language and identity are intertwined, meaning in order to be socially part of a community, one needs to know the language. Also Somalis see the Somali language to be an important aspect of the Somali culture and identity. As more Somalis in the U.S. learn English in order to succeed in American schools and jobs, there is a fear that the Somali language will die out someday. Most of the participants for this study were asked about their Somali skills and were also asked to fill out their proficiency level in the areas of writing, reading, comprehension, and speaking in the demographic information worksheet. Participants were also asked about their language skills prior to visiting their country of origin. Leyla talks about her experience in losing the Somali language. She came to America at the age of 4 and had to learn English in order to help her family in their daily tasks such as going to the doctor, or grocery shopping. She says that her parents noticed when she was losing her Somali, but ignored it due to the fact that she served the role of a translator for her family. Leyla talks about her Somali skills before going to her country of origin:

“Honestly, my Somali wasn't wonderful. I understood people when they spoke in Somali, but the thing is when I tried to speak, I made lots of errors especially grammar. My Somali grammar wasn't good and people would be like I didn't make sense. Another thing with the language is that English naturally follows to me, but in Somali, I have to think about the word order and how to form simple sentences. I think it's because I speak English more. When I came here to America, I spoke Somali very well. I was just a kid at that time. But I slowly lost my Somali. At that time, my parents didn't really mind because they wanted us to learn English. But then my mom went back to school and started to learn English. So we would speak in English to help my mom learn English. There was just a period of time of 3 to 4 years that we hardly spoke Somali. I really hated when relatives would come to visit and speak to me in Somali, and wouldn't be able to understand it or even reply back. I felt out of place when I tried to speak Somali. It was kind of embarrassing. The little bits of pieces of

Somali that I did speak were so broken that you would think that I was never born in Somalia.”

We can see here that identity and language plays a big role and she even says that she feels “out of place” when she speaks Somali. Also with people telling her that her Somali is not good shows that she is reassured that her Somali skills are poor because she cannot be understood. Again, identity and language are intertwined and it is clear here in Leyla’s case.

Sacdiya who came to America at the age of 14 also talks about Somali proficiency skills. When Sacdiya came to America, she didn’t speak much English, but was fluent in Somali. She learned English fast and her Somali tends to be stronger than her English as she says:

“I think as a Somali there are certain things that you pick up, but when it comes to talking to a person that doesn't speak English you have to speak in Somali 100% of the time. I mean my Somali is good. But I realized how much code switching I was doing since I came to America. For example, one word I can’t find when I was talking in Somali is the word to describe "weekend" You know when I was there, I would be asked what days I am free, and I would say "the weekend" and people would be looking at me in confused way. I mean there is no way to say it in Somali. At least I think there isn't a way. I think my Somali is great, but since my work requires me to speak English most of the time, I tend to code switch a lot which was more prevalent in Somalia than it is in here Minnesota.”

Participants were also asked how they identified themselves when they were in their country of origin. Leyla speaks about this and she seemed to have been comfortable saying that she’s from America:

“I said I am American. They were amazed when I said that. Oh my god! They treat people from America like royalty there I swear. They would literally just be like "Oh that girl waa qurbo joog" and they would give me stuff that I want. They would try to talk to me. I don't know they just really like it. They think America is like the greatest place in the world. Over there they think that money grows on trees and stuff, and they are like you guys are so lucky, you’re so rich. You have this and that. And I am like no! It’s not true! They were super curious. I later found out that it’s not good to say that. You should not tell the locals where you’re from otherwise they will take

advantage of you. When I went to Somalia that was when it really hit me, oh my god! I am so American because I identified so much with the American culture and I never noticed it before until I went back to Somalia.”

Here we can see that Leyla had very close identity identification with the American culture and even though she was in Somalia, she still said she was American. She did get some kind of special treatment from the locals because of the way she presented herself and like she says, she was treated like royalty. But in the end she realized something, she was so Americanized that she didn't realize that until she actually experienced it. With that being said, she also got the big picture that she shouldn't really say where she's from to the locals because they may treat her differently. People also said she was *qurbo joog* [kurbo jog] which is a bad connotation and means a person who lived in the west for a very long time.

Fatima had a different experience that was kind of similar to Leyla, but she did not say where she was from and identified herself as Somali, but the locals called her something different.

“I wouldn't have to say anything. I identified myself as a Somali. When I went there the first time the first thing I did is I bought a baati and garbarsaar, I tried not to wear my American style clothing and I tried to look like everybody else but for some reason, everybody could pick me up out of a crowd. Like I am walking there and they would say, ‘When did this girl come from America’ Like I didn't even have to verbally say anything. Just by looking at me, even though I am dressed exactly the same as my cousin or my aunts. I don't know if it's the way I talk, I don't if it's I look people in the eye, I don't know what it is. I think it's probably the way I walk or maybe my face looks different. When they gave me that look, I was kind of like, oh my, maybe I am not Somali. Maybe I am American. These were literally my thoughts and I was so confused at one point. There's something different. It has nothing to do with clothing style. Maybe the way they carry themselves. They tend to walk faster people from the west. Where the locals especially the women walk slower because *wee xaragootaan*. And girls from US or UK are walking way faster. There are things that you can automatically tell that this person is not from around here. Mannerisms, the way they move, I don't know, what it is.”

Identity is not only what we think about ourselves, but it is also what others have to do with what others think about us. Even though Fatima identified herself as a Somali when she was in America and also when she went to her country of origin, she was not getting the same from the locals. She says she dressed like them and wore a baati and garbarsaar, which are both traditional clothes that the Somali women wear. With all this hard work and trying to look like them, she realized that it was impossible and clothing had nothing to do with it. People identified her to be from the west, and these reactions from the locals gave her this feeling of questioning her Somali identity.

From these narrations on identity and language, we can realize that identity is not only our views of ourselves, but also the views of others who come from the same culture we are trying to identify with. Possibly it is a process that is fluid and is shaped according to circumstances and opportunities. Identity may depend on the family one is born into, the culture, one's community and one's life experiences. As I have talked about identity in my literature review, identity is both individual and also group oriented. For example, one of the participants in this study, Fatima identified herself as Muslim first, then Somali, than American. Moreover, identity formation does not come from one side, there are many angles to look at and for Somali immigrants it gets even more complicated. Some of these participants identified better with the American culture and had more positive experiences with their American identity such as when traveling. Their American identity became prevalent when they were traveling because they travelled with their American passports and not their Somalian passports. Most of these individuals were scared before they took the trip, but this trip was also a trip that was not forced, it was something that each individual thought

through either by themselves or with family members. In the next sections we will follow these participants' stories as they visit their country of origin.

Difference of “Returning” and “Visiting”

It is important to note that I used the term “returning” differently here. This is because the word “returns” being used in this study entails multiple meanings for multiple reasons in different contexts. There are two meanings for this term for the purpose of complexity of this research. The first meaning is the ideology that one returns to their country of origin after being away for so long. This could mean a Somali-American who was born in America, and returned to their country of origin. Notice that return here does not mean staying at one's country of origin, but it's for a short time. The second meaning is one who left their country of origin at a young age and returned to their country of origin for a short amount of time. “Return” in both meanings does not mean the stay of a long time in the country of origin; however, it does mean returning to where the person originally came from. Most people would argue that this is not a “return, but rather a “visit. However, this is not just any visit, it is more than that, its someone going back to their roots and connecting with their origins. In the next sections, we will see this with the narrations of the participants for this study and that their “return” was not just a “visit” but more complicated and much more significant. Salmah talks about how her trip was not just a visit, but also a return to her origins,

“I was never connected with my country or origin. Yes, I am Somali by origin because that's where my parents came from, but I didn't really have much connection to my origins. When I was first going to Somalia, I was so nervous and scared because I thought myself as an outsider. This wasn't a vacation for me or a quick trip. I remember that I was trying to prepare few months before leaving. Reading about Somalia, language and culture, I was so scared that I would not fit in. When I got there it was amazing. I am a social person and in Somalia, you can talk to anyone at any age with a cup of shaah or I mean tea. I felt so free there you know almost kind of stress

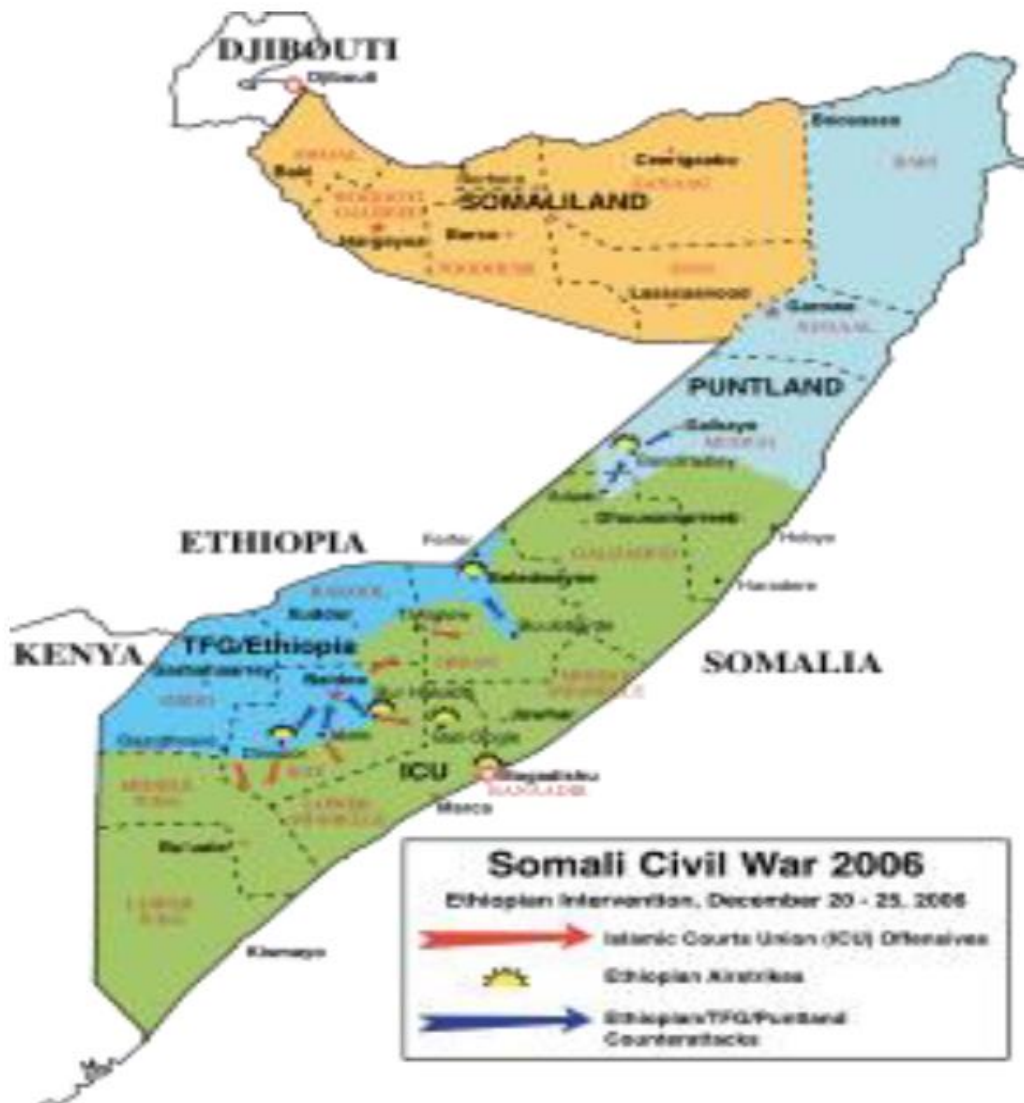
free and just extremely happy. This wasn't a visit for me, it was a return to my original origins, it's almost like I had another person inside of me and the only way to release that person was to return to Somalia, and to keep returning."

The participants in this study returned to their country of origin or Somalia. Now where that might be in is a very complicated issue. "The collapse of the state in Somalia and the genealogical and territorial conflicts between Somalis even the difference between the peoples of "north" and "south" Somalia has become as divisive academically as it is politically on the ground in Somalia" (Ahmed, 1995; Besteman, 1999). Somalia has become so separated in terms of geography due to colonization and also by the clan system that it has been called the "Afar Somalia" which literally translates to "the four Somalia." The Afar Somalia has a distinct cultural and linguistic identity of their own and a well-defined territory in the Horn of Africa. This is an area commonly referred to as the Afar Triangle, which is divided between Ethiopia, northern Somalia and Djibouti. Major clans divide each of these areas. In the past, the conflict between the groups was mainly over water, land space, cultural values and tradition. However, nowadays it turned too modern competing over which territory is bigger and has a better government and economy (Yasin, 2010).

For these reasons, Somalia isn't just one nation as some people from the west think of it that way and this is most evident with the northern side of Somalia declaring separation from southern Somalia. In 1991, northern Somalia named itself Somaliland and declared independence from southern Somalia. Somaliland is known to be safer and there are fewer bombs in the streets of Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland (Ahmed, 1995; Besteman, 1999). Like any country or region that separates, there's tension that is present in the northern Somalia and southern Somalia. Southern Somalia has gained international attention from the

international world and is recognized, but northern Somalia or Somaliland isn't recognized and they have not really gotten any aid from the outside world. The people from the northern region of Somalia do not identify themselves as Somalis, but as Somalilanders. Another area that separated from Somalia is Jigjiga, which is in Ethiopia. Whether Jigjiga is part of Somalia region or the Ethiopia region is a very controversial statement. However, geographically, Jigjiga is a Somali dominated region in the state of Ethiopia, but used to be part of Somalia region in the early 70s. The people in this state identify themselves as Somali-Ethiopians and some even carry both the Somali passport and also the Ethiopian passport. The third area with most populated Somalis and was never part of Somalia is Djibouti. Djibouti was founded by the French and was a colony of France until it gained independence in 1977. The Somalis in Djibouti are much different than the Somalis who live in southern or northern Somalia. French is the dominant language, and it has a French influence, meaning the dialect is also different from the other Somali dialects. The people from Djibouti identify themselves as Djiboutians but of the Somali origin. Below is a map showing the regions of Somalia and how it was separated over the years.

Table 4.1

Map: Separation of Somalia after Civil War

Source: (Thomson, 2000)

This map of Somalia shows the separation of Somalia since the civil war. The orange area and light blue area shows the northern part of Somalia, which calls itself Somaliland. The

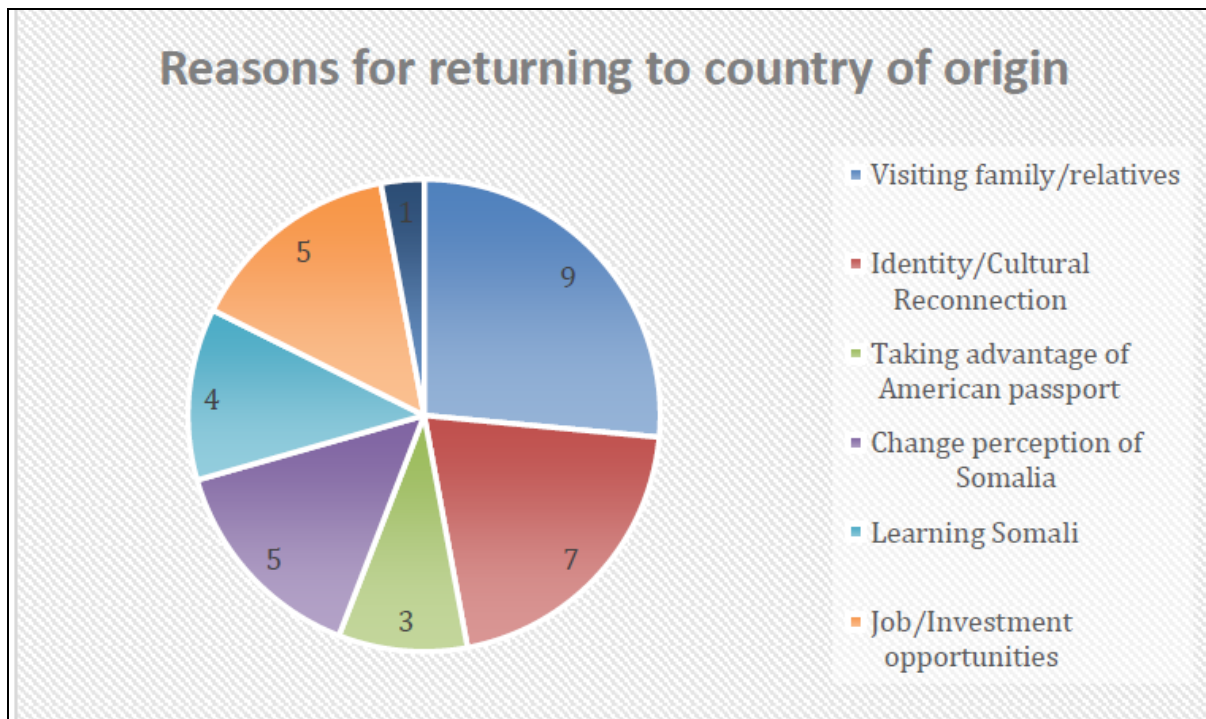
green shade color and blue shows the southern side of Somalia, which is the part of Somalia that is recognized internationally.

Reasons for Somali-Americans Returning to Their Country of Origin

Now we will explore the second research question, which aimed to answer the reasons to why these individuals returned to Somalia. I asked the participants the reason they went to their country of origin along with follow up questions. The reasons for their return to their country of origin varied among each participant. Below is a chart showing the most common reasons each participant left to go to their country of origin.

Table 4.2

Reasons for Returning to Country of Origin



Participants were given the choice of choosing what their reasons of returning were.

Percentage represents the number of participants in this study. As shown above, the reasons

for the visit varied, but the most common reason among all the participants was visiting family and relatives. Off course this wasn't the only reason and there were other reasons among visiting family members. The numbers represent the number of participants. As for Abdi, he went as a part of an organization and that lead to him visiting his country of origin and visiting relatives. As he says,

“It was with an organization that I was working for, but Somalia wasn't part of the places to go. It was my decision to go. There was parts of me that really wanted to go. Let's say that even the peace building work didn't happen, I would've still gone. The desire in me, the passion I had to go back, was strong. It was about visiting families. Seeing where I originally came from. As someone who was involved in academia, I was also interested in just doing assessment of where things are in the region now. For some time, I been longing to go back.”

Abdi was a part of a peace building organization that visited parts of Africa, but his country of origin was not part of those visits. During the interview, he talked about how excited he was to go to his country of origin, but also didn't know what to expect. He did not just go to visit families as he says, yes that was part of the reasons, but there were other reasons too, such us job investment opportunities in Somalia.

For Sadiya, Nur, and Mahad it was a different reason. They all wanted to take advantage of their American passport. They were among the three people who said they wanted to explore with their passport opportunities meaning that they wanted to take advantage of being an American, Sadiya says,

“I wanted to visit my family. Most of my family are there. The first time I left it was right after I got my American passport, so I felt an urge to fly out! That kind of gives you the idea of "Yes I can travel now" So why not travel back to where you know. The second time I left, there was this thing that was going on Facebook, there was this organization that wanted young Somalis to go work in Somali. That organization kind of put it in my head that I should go check the situation out and see for myself if I actually wanted to work there or not. I also went back because my grandmother was

alive and don't ever remember seeing her in my whole life so I wanted to have that connection and see her while she was still alive and also see where I came from."

Nur also says,

"There were many reasons, but most honestly, I wanted to have the privilege and opportunity to travel as an American. I had the right. Also, I didn't see my father for 18 years. You can imagine the pain of not seeing your father age. He was sick at the time so I wanted to go and see how he was doing. That's the main reason to why I left. I am glad I was able to and see him. You know the war in Somalia has torn apart families. It separated us. The pain is unimaginable. I also didn't see my mother since I was a kid. Can you believe it? Seeing my mother at this age? My parents have aged so much. I never saw them age. It was awkward you know. It's been so long."

Mahad also adds to his reasoning to going to his country of origin,

"The first time I went, I got my US passport about a week before purchasing my ticket. You know it's not easy traveling, but being an American with an American passport makes traveling so much easier. I went there because number one, the first time I went there, it was Ethiopia and I never went to Somalia. The second time I went because I wanted to go to Somalia at least once if not ever again, but once for sure. But mainly the reasons were family. I went there to go visit my sister and my mom side of the family and I wanted to meet them and see their way of life, and how their living was another reason to go. You know Africa is a tough place to live, and some people don't have food, they don't have water, you know I just wanted to go check out the situation of my side of the family and see how they were living"

As you can see, all these participants have said that they wanted to take advantage of their American identity, but there were other reasons among these. With all the participants, there was more than one reason to go to their country of origin. The second most common reason to returning to their country of origin was identity and cultural reconnection to their country of origin. Leyla talks about her longing for reconnection to her country of origin,

"I went back for many reasons, but for me it was mostly to reconnect with my motherland. To see where I came from. To see the house I was born in. To see Somalia through my eyes. You know my parents always have told me of this country through their eyes, but I never saw it. I knew I needed to go back and see this place that I came from. I wanted to learn about who I am because I am still trying to figure that out right? Well it's still in the process and I think returning to my country allowed me to see another side of me that I still need to discover."

For Leyla, she really wanted to learn about herself and she was among the seven people who said they went back to reconnect with their country of origin. The next most common reason to return to their country of origin was job and investment opportunities in their country of origin. Five out of the ten people interviewed have mentioned that they wanted to try to see if they can invest in their country of origin or find a job. Musa talks about his aim to invest in her country of origin,

“One of the main things was for me to visit family but another thing that really attracted me is to explore investment opportunities. Somalia, especially in the north and some other places you know northeastern Somalia are coming out of the grave yard and business is booming and a lot of diaspora are going back to be part of the political system in there and also establish business. So one of my dreams is to go back one day and establish business. I am not so much interested in the political process in Somalia, but more in the business sector.”

We can see that even though Musa left to visit families, he also was researching to see if he can contribute to the economic system in Somalia. This was the case for most of the participants. However, for Salma, it was different. She went to her country of origin five times. She says that the first time it was forced or advised by her parents that she should go to Somalia. In face she stated that if her parents did not tell her to go to Somalia, she would never have went.

“The first time, it was my parent’s idea. I didn’t really want to go. My mom especially wanted me to go back because I haven’t been back since I was 4 years old at that time and she was like you need to go back you’ve been away for so long. She wanted us to go for a while but she has kept postponing it because of time issues and I was in school and also financial issues. If she didn’t have enough this year she would say let’s go next year because I don’t have enough money this year. I am grateful that I went and that my parents were really supportive in pushing me to go even though I didn’t care for it. I loved returning so much that after my first return, I decided to go every summer. My parents forcing me was the first reason why I went, but the other visits were mostly to connect with my Somali identity, learn Somali, and see if I could work in Somalia one day.”

Salma's story is so fascinating and remarkable. She was the only participant that was born in Minnesota, but who has returned to Somalia several times. She is also one of the few who stayed in Somalia for an extended period of time. One of her stays was for two years. She also had a mixture of various positive and negative experiences because her stays were longer.

Participants Encounters with the Locals in Their Country of Origin

The experiences of returning to one's country of origin had influences in the returnees' lives in that it provided them information about themselves as they interacted with people who grew up there. Some of the respondents had described that the experiences that they had while they were in their country of origin provided them with inner feelings about their identity and who they are. I asked each participant about the reactions they got from the locals since they were from the west or in other words America or the term in Somali would be *qurbo joog*. Abdi says that since he had a higher position, he got some kind of special treatment from the locals,

“Because of my peace building work and the foundations I've worked with, there's also a perception that I was already high up there. So the kind of the treatment I would get even from other diaspora members, people who left from Minnesota with me, I would get a handshake and a hug, it was a sense of a special treatment that I wasn't too comfortable with it you know. So overall, I think they treated me well. They gave us more respect than I deserved. I enjoyed meeting with different people, and meeting the young people. I saw historical sites. So it was a mission driven trip slash leisure.”

Abdi is very involved in the Somali community here in Minnesota and most people know him for his work. His not only well known in Minnesota, but also in Somalia and for this reason he talks about receiving “special treatment” from the locals. Although it may seem

great that people are giving him attention, he says it made him feel uncomfortable and just wanted to blend in. Fatima also talks about getting this “special treatment”,

“They treated me differently because I was from the west. I liked it at the beginning, but it got annoying when they always assumed that I was from the west and offered to help me. They would ask me about what America is like and I would get more respect from them even the street traffic controllers like the police officers that would portal the streets from them. It was the Independence day for Ethiopia, where they got their independence from Italy, so around that time, police controlled the streets and there was a curfew that people can’t be out past 10pm, so me and my cousins were out past 10 and they were also from the US and then when they stopped us they were like, where you guys from, and all that we had to say is we are diaspora or qurbo joog and they were like how’s life in America. If we were from there we would probably get in trouble for walking past curfew, so they walked us home, so there’s a culture of treating people from the diaspora better than people who are living there your automatically treated differently. Even though they were nice, I didn’t like the treatment. It was like your or qurbojoog so you need help. They were kind of saying I am dumb indirectly.”

This term qurbojoog means a person who grew up in the western part of the world and carries a negative connotation. As Fatima says, she did receive some kind of treatment since she was from the west. One might think that this kind of treatment is good, but to Fatima, it made her feel uncomfortable because she felt like they were helping her because they automatically assumed she needed help. This may feel okay at first, but when it is done repeatedly, it can bring a negative connotation on the individual.

The participants were also asked to talk about situations or times they felt connected and disconnected when they were at their country of origin. I brought up this question because wanted to know how these situations shaped their perception of themselves as Somali and American citizens. Let us look at some of the times where they felt connected and disconnected in terms of identity, culture, and belonging to their country of origin. Sadiya talks about a situation when she felt connected to her country of origin,

“There is lots of hostility in our culture and I love that part of my Somaliness. I never felt alone or lonely because people are so caring especially if your visiting they show that. If someone dies for example, the whole community comes down for them. I like that part of being Somali. When eating, we love to eat together. Food brings people together. That makes me feel proud.”

She also mentions a time she felt the opposite or disconnected,

“I think it would be when they give you a hard time at the airport. I remember when I was leaving Somalia there was a time where I said "I would never come back here" The American airports were really questioning me. They looked at me and saw that I was a Somali, and happened to come from Somalia. They asked me lots of questions like why did I go to Somalia, the places that I went to.”

Some of the participants like Abdi felt connected when he could talk to people that had the same interests as him,

“I time I felt connected would be when people were discussing humanitarian issues. How to solve and address poverty. I felt really connected. So meeting with people who work for the United Nations or other NGOs. Whenever I hung out with them, you know I felt like I was home.”

Things like food is something that was mentioned by a couple of the participants, which brought people together.

“Food for brought me close with the locals. When eating Somali traditional foods you know we got connected. In times of food and prayer, I felt very connected. On food and religious matters I was mostly connected.” (Mahad)

“Oh it would defiantly have to be food. Eating Somali dishes together despite where you’re from brings people together. People in Somalia eat three times a day and rarely skip a meal. No matter which part of the western society you came from or raised, it is a fact that your mother cooked Somali rice or Anjeero and drank lots of tea. I can go to a stranger and just talk about Somali food with no problem.” (Salma)

Food is part of the Somali culture and brings people closer together and strengthens ties among people. Eating is also seen as a social gathering time and sharing a meal is very common in the Somali culture.

Social gatherings are also times that bring out these experiences of connectedness or disconnectedness.

“It was at a party. Everyone was dancing and singing and my sister and I didn’t know any of the songs. There was like little girls that were so much younger than us and they knew the songs and were dancing and singing along. There was all these traditional dance an all of that, and my sister and why just sitting there were clueless. We just kept clapping. I felt embarrassed and out of place. I was so disappointed at myself. I was like how come I didn't know any of this.” (Leyla)

“In terms of the conversations, there were politics driven. A lot of us versus them conversations that would come up sometimes in restaurants that I was in or coffee shops and it was just very uncomfortable. I would try to join the conversation to kind of give a big picture, big vision you know say we got to move away from this clan politics and hysteria. I felt like I would be under attacked. They would say comments like "oh he is from America, and you can't understand this, and how the dynamics are here. I felt like I needed to bring myself down to a level that I would be self-disrespect to myself you know. So yes there were times that I felt disconnected and out of place.” (Yasin)

Both Leyla and Yasin mention that at these social gatherings, they felt “out of place” because they could not relate to the things that were happening at the time.

Salman who was the only participant expressed he felt very disconnected many times because there were not many Diasporas from the west who were in Djibouti. This is because most of the people that live in Djibouti are locals as Djibouti is a very safe country and they don’t usually immigrate to western countries. Salman says,

“First of all people in Djibouti speak French and most of the daily things are in French such as billboards and when you’re going to shops. People questioned why I didn’t speak French and when I spoke English, they gave me weird looks. Also people here chew Khat. Over there, it seems like people have lots of time. They like to sit and just talk for hours and I don't normally do Khat. I don't sit for hours and just talk. It was a bit strange for me to sit that long and just Khat. People would ask me why I wasn't talking. Over here, we barely have enough time to ourselves.”

Salman talks about khat is a plant and stem tips are chewed for their stimulating effect that is similar to marijuana. It is mostly chewed on Fridays or in the weekends or in special

celebrations like weddings or parties. Although Khat is consumed both by male and female, adult males mostly enjoy using it. In the western society, Khat is similar to alcohol in western societies and plays a crucial role in the Somali society. Just like how alcohol is a stimulant and increases talking and bonding, Khat has the same effect. Culturally, Khat is seen as a social activity and while individuals chew khat together, they build trust, friendship, and an intimate bond. We can see how this kind of social gathering may affect those who are returning to Somalia especially Salman, who identifies himself as being very conservative and is not a fan of drugs. Although Khat makes the individual feel high, most Somalis deny that Khat is a stimulant or a drug. Khat is a social activity that brings people together, and if you are not interested in it, then there might be a rejection from the community to accept you in fully.

Impact of the Return on Identity

What did returning mean to these participants? And did returning to their country change or not change with their view of themselves and identity as Somali-Americans? For this section, participants were asked about their feelings overall from returning to their country of origin. This was an important section and it gave lots of depth and insights, recapping the return to Somalia.

Fatima talks about her overall feelings about returning,

“When I was first going back I didn’t feel as Somali, I felt more American than I did Somali and being Somali seemed like something that was kind of caai or an insult. And then when I went back few times, I felt proud to be Somali. And this was mostly because I had positive experiences and that it kind of gave me the realization that there is no place like home no matter how much I live abroad or grow up abroad there’s always this one place that I belong and that my family belongs so it’s nice to have that connection.”

The return changed Fatima's perception of her identity, as she says that returning to her country of origin made her feel more Somali or connected her more to her Somali identity.

The positive experiences affirmed this identity. Returning multiple times had an even greater impact on the construction of identity. Leyla also says that the trip changed how she identifies herself,

“Before I left, I am not going to lie, there were these times where I felt ashamed of being Somali because I would hear all of these stuff and I would see how people were judging us and I would be like why? Why am I Somali? But now that I've went to Somalia, I am so proud to be Somali. The trip completely reaffirmed my whole Somaliness and my whole identity. Before I would feel comfortable with people saying 'Oh your American' but now if someone says that I would be like No! I have another side. I am Somali-American. It's not American Somali, its Somali-American. Somali comes first now. I still love my American culture but I now I just feel like I have this whole other side that I didn't know about. Before my American identity was a little higher than my Somali identity you know but now it's leveled out.”

Like Fatima and Leyla, Salma also shares the same view,

“This trip changed me. Going there really brightened up my horizons in a way where I now I know that what you hear is not what it actually is. What I heard and what I experienced were complete different. It just made a better person in a type of way because I just realized how closed minded I was before. Like America is not all there is to life, there are other places in the world to live and be happy, it's possible, it was visible in Somalia.”

All these three participants expressed that they felt transformed due to the trip. Feeling more Somali or being identified as Somali-American and not American became more significant by returning to their country of origin. For others, returning affirmed that the perceptions that they heard from others were not true and that their country of origin was a safe place to return to as Salma says,

“I was like ok. Where is all the bad stuff everyone was talking about because I don't see it? The way people made it seem it was like there will be fighting in the streets, there would be gun fights everywhere, and there was death and famine. And I didn't

see any of that. There was just more happiness there than bad. I feel like it's because human like to focus on the bad than they like to focus on the good." (Salma)

Most of the participants have mentioned that they would definitely go back to their country of origin and none of them said that they did not want to go back. This also depended on which part of Somalia they were returning to. Those who went to Mogadishu said they would go back if they had more security whereas those who went to Somaliland and Jigjiga expressed that they would go back with no question. This is because Mogadishu or southern Somalia is currently unstable and unsafe whereas Somaliland is much more safe and comfortable. Salman who is the only participant who went to Djibouti said that he would not go back because he felt so disconnected and that if he went back it would be a short visit.

"Honestly if I went back it would for short term. Maybe if Mogadishu becomes safe I will move there. I think Djibouti is not a realistic place for me to live. Also my field isn't even known there. I don't think I can work with my profession there because people don't even know what a psychotherapist is. I have more connections there in Mogadishu. I don't think I can fit it Djibouti. I've been away for a long time and feel that I've become disconnected the Djiboutians and became more Somali as I lived in America. I feel like an outsider. People who are still in Djibouti are mostly locals who have never left whereas Mogadishu consists of Somali diaspora from the west who are running the city."

Mahad and Fatima both have returned to Jigjiga and have both expressed that they wanted to go back to their country of origin for a longer term.

"In the next years, I would want to go there from time to time and couple of months and years. Maybe two years. But in the long run, I do want to live there and just stay there for good. But for the next years, I think it would be short term visits. Visiting family, checking up on how they are doing, and also doing what I can to help."
(Mahad)

"Yes definitely. Why not? I think it's always an opportunity to go back. For me, Somalia is home and America is home as well but I might consider both. I really have an ambition of going there and staying longer than I did before. The next time I go back, it would be a long term stay." (Fatima)

We have to distinguish here that this type of return is different from a visit that is similar to someone going to Italy for a study abroad program. This is a return in their country of origin or where their family roots are from. Fatima says that she would stay longer because she felt like she needed to explore her Somali identity more in depth. Those that returned to Mogadishu, the southern side of Somalia also expressed the idea of going back, but were concerned with the safety.

“Yes. I need to go back it’s my country and duty. I have so many plans of returning, but you know Mogadishu isn’t a stable place and safety isn’t good. Off course I am scared and I have to precautions and I am not going to be involved in the government because I don’t want to be a target.” (Sadiya)

“Yes and it would be for a long term. I am not only one person, I have a family so I have to think about them. Where we going to live and what will I do there? It’s my dream now to move to Somalia but it would take time.” (Yassin)

“I am going back this year for the sixth time. I would be going back towards some steps I’ve taken to help communities. I am going back with ideas. As a women, I know it will be difficult. I am so worried about the safety and my family isn’t really supportive of me going back. But I don’t care, my country needs me! I am going to stay longer time. I sold everything, my car, house, and quit my job. Actually I didn’t purchase a return ticket so you know I am not coming back anytime soon.” (Salma)

Here we can see that all of these participants show an interest to go back someday and live at their country of origin for a longer time. We can call Salma the outlier in this study. She has visited Mogadishu several times which is seen to be the most unstable place in Somalia yet she rarely talks about this in her interview. She has acknowledged that Mogadishu is unsafe, but chooses to not talk about it in more depth as I interviewed her. We do not know why this is the case, but we can assume that she was in denial about the safety issue or personally chose not to discuss it for whatever reasons. Salma is the only participant who, at the time I was interviewing her, was already preparing for her big move to

Mogadishu. She was born and raised in Minnesota and was the only participant with the most visits to her country of origin.

Participants were also asked why they didn't stay in their country of origin and most of the respondents had said that the return was planned to be a short one. They also talked about the difficulty that they couldn't stay there because they had a life in Minnesota whether it was school, work, or community work. They felt that it was hard to stay because their life was well established here in Minnesota and moving to their country of origin would take longer planning.

"I only had one month and a half to stay there so my intention was not to stay there. My life is all surrounded with activities in Minnesota. Like family and work I mean this is home. Minnesota is home. Somalia was like home from home, but this is my home. This is where I call home. Even to this day, as much as I want to end extreme poverty, Minnesota is my home. I am a Minnesotan. I am a Minnesotan with an accent." (Abdi)

"I have a job here and I have established businesses here in Minnesota. At this point, I am not ready to move you know permanently back to Somalia or any other country. But it is something that I am thinking about within the next five to ten years. My plan is within the next five to ten years, to plan to maybe going back to Somalia permanently or some other countries like Kenya." (Musa)

"I wasn't ready to stay there. I still had school, work, a lot of things that was left undone for me in American that I keep coming back to, I feel like the next time that I have everything stored away I and I feel like I am ready to start my life there, I would without hesitation go there, but right not it's just because I have a lot here. I have family I have work, I have school. So it would take for me getting my master's degree and saving enough money and finding a job with either an NGO or the business that me and my partners are starting for it to be a successful would defiantly be an incentive for me to go back." (Fatima)

We can see that all these suggest a theme of security and familiarity. Yes they wanted to stay at their country of origin, but they also had a life in Minnesota that they were acquainted with and it's hard to leave all that behind when it took years to build it. Their

American identity also gave them a sense of security, which is something that was not given with their Somali identity.

Reaffirmation of Identity

At the end of the interview, each participant was asked to give any comments or suggestions relating to the research. Interestingly, most of the participants have said that the return has given them reaffirmation of their identity. Below are the comments.

“This return validated my belief that I have multiple identities. My double identity. Maybe triple identity. As a Muslim, as a Somali, as an African, as an American so I say multiple identities. So I think it reinforced my belief that I am a product of two places. East Africa and United States.” (Salma)

“Going there and coming back, it reaffirms you identity. You know your Somali, but when you see your own people there you know for sure. Here in America, we are Somali-American, we live with Americans, but going there and back it really reaffirms who you are. There’s lots of people who are like you over there. You know your origins, you know where you come from and that gives you some kind of assurance like that’s my people.” (Mahad)

“It reaffirmed my multiple identities. It reaffirmed that I am not just an American. That I am not just Somali either. But I am Somali American. Muslim American, immigrant American. So it reaffirmed my multiple identities that I always believed I had. Going back it strengthened and made it stronger. Now I have a stronger ties to East Africa than I would have had if I didn't leave. Now I am thinking about how to improve life chances for young people in Africa. I am thinking about how to help economic identity for people in the refugee camps. I want to help to provide income generating opportunities for people in Somalia. All of these really probably not have happened as much as it’s happening now if I didn't go to that trip. So the trip was a big deal in my life. I am in a different place now. I mean we probably wouldn't be meeting here. I wouldn't be starting this consulting firm that I started. I wouldn't be leaving my comfortable position. All of that can be traced to the trip that I went.” (Abdi)

The return, certainly affirmed their identity and it eventually lead to shaping their lives knowing more about where they came from and also made them realize that they do not have just one identity but multiple and complex.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The findings in this study confirm the value of the return as a memorable event, which no respondent regretted. All of the participants referred to their country of origin whether it is Minnesota, Somalia, Somaliland, Jigjiga, or Djibouti, which reaffirms the complexity of the term “country of origin. Each participant’s experiences depended on which region they were going back to since some parts of Somalia are more peaceful than others. Returning to their country of origin acted as a catalyst to revisit again and again, and for some it changed the meaning of home and belonging. We can see this for Salma who visited her country of origin five times and decided to make the big change of resettling in her home country permanently. Feelings of home and belongings surfaced and some of the respondents distinguished between feeling at home in Minnesota while it was the reverse for some where home was their country of origin. For some, the return brought out the feeling of having two homes, and to also be able to integrate the two, which shows that socio-cultural change in conditions of immigration is more complex and ambiguous. The return also translated into decisions to returning permanently or staying for a longer time in their country of origin.

Also returning to their country of origin enabled the participants to see how the social interactions really impacted their experiences. We can see that as some of the participants have said they felt “out of place” in their country of origin at times. Without returning, these interactions would not have been possible. This analysis of the return showed that going to one’s country of origin can bring an awareness of one’s identity and also enable them to make informed choices for their future. This again brings us the difference between “return” and “visit” which is plays a crucial role in this study. Many Americans, who were born and raised

in the United States, are not able to have this feeling of returning to their origins because it has been so long and the lines back to Europe, Asia, South America, or elsewhere are so blurred that it is difficult to return or even think about returning. This shows that these participants had an advantage that a lot of Americans today lack and do not have access to. As one of the respondents said: “I know who I am, where I came from, and where I am headed, and to know this means you need to return to Somalia.”

Limitations

There have been three limitations for this research: 1) Number of participants, 2) Geographic locations the participants returned to, and 3) Potential researcher’s bias.

For this study, there were 10 participants who all lived in Minnesota. Eight of these participants were second generation Somali-Americans and two were first generation Americans. Of these 10 participants, only 3 participants returned to their country of origin more than one time where the rest of the participants only returned once. It would be interesting to see if a larger sample with more returns to Somalia would yield the same or different experiences. Generally, it would have been more interesting to have a larger sample size for this study since it could have given more diverse meanings. Smaller sample size limits the degree of generalization of the findings, but it may have contributed more to this research.

Where the participants returned to played an important factor in the findings of this study. Only three participants returned to southern Somalia while seven of the participants returned to the northern part of Somalia. Since northern Somalia is more politically stable, the experiences that were shared might have been one sided. It would have been interesting if

there were more participants who returned to southern part of Somalia to see and compare the experiences. These findings might have delivered different results if there were equal number of participants from each side of Somalia. I also wasn't aware of how the geography of Somalia is very much acquainted into the Somali community in Somalia. For example some of the participants I interviewed choose to not be identified as Somali, but as a Somalilander, which created sensitive discussions for which I was not initially prepared.

Throughout this research, I was also very conscious of my own position as an insider who was studying my own community and this brings some objectivity. However, having this position as an insider helped to bring trust within the interviewees to avoid potential bias. This helped me as a researcher because the participants were able to share their experiences with me comfortably, which might have remained private if I was an outsider. I was also seen as an outsider in terms of my position as a researcher who was educated and a women. At the time when I was conducting this research project some of the participants in the Somali community were suspicious of me and required proof that my project was valid. Some of the participants questioned my identity because there was already questioning happening for a group of young Somalis who have went to Somalia to join terrorist groups. Due to the ramifications of this study, there was a lot at hand with the community and I was responsible to show the positive side of the Somali community, which made me, feel pressured.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The term diaspora or in Somali *qurbo joog* is the primary theme of this study and shows the complex encounters Somalis have to go through when they return to Somalia.

“To be diasporic, at least in the present, is to be uprooted from one’s place, detached from one’s nation, and searching for both. A prime subject for historical inquiry is how the diasporic sensibilities of a given migrant people vary according to the places where they reside. In the end, diaspora and comparison are inseparable elements of migration history.” (Kenny, 2003)

Kevin Kenny’s analysis of being diaspora or being detached from one home and then searching for that home you have been detached from captures exactly what immigration does to people when they search for security and prosperous futures for their families. Dreams of returning to their country of origin either being a permanent stay or a short stay is something that is widely discussed in the Somali community living in the west. Most Somalis believe that America is part of their transition process and that returning to Somalia one day is their final return to the homeland. These Somali-Americans aren’t newly arrived Somalis, but they are those who were in America for years.

This study focused on Somali-Americans who have established themselves educationally and financially fulfilled the American dream and claimed their American identity strongly. Despite all this, their dreams were not yet achieved; they needed to return to their country of origin or where their roots lay. It is interesting to note that these individuals who are returning aren’t returning for the reason that they do not feel fully assimilated in the American society. In fact the majority of the participants in this study have expressed proud of their American identity. The American identity isn’t a crucial indicator for returning but it is rather this nostalgia that exists for exploring their Somali identity. Most Somalis have been

separated from their country with no choice. Those who were young did not have the choice to come to a land that they were not familiar with. It was something that was given to them automatically, and they were forced to be part of this country and system. This study also concentrated on the complexity of transnational ties and the inability to choose one identity over the other. As these individuals have returned to Somalia, we can see that what they expect and what they encounter does not necessarily align together. All of the participants who participated in this research expressed their stories and for some it was difficult to discuss this struggle of finding their identity in a country that they have been detached from for so long. Understanding the Somali identity is difficult as it is formed by the effects of the war that has occurred in Somalia since the 90s. Even those born in the US are affected by this history of war because family members share these stories. For this reason, many Somalis living in the U.S. have become to know their country as another country of war, violence and hunger.

In spite of all these circumstances, Somalis return to their country of origin in the hopes of finding something about their Somali identity. For most of the participants, this return to Somalia reaffirmed their identity in a way that they appreciated their Somaliness even more. Returning to Somalia increased their self-awareness about who they are as Somalis and Americans. Those who left Somalia at an older age, also had difficulties when they returned as they had many expectations that were not met. They had memories and believed that Somalia has changed for the better over the years. However, they too have difficulty fitting in Somali society because they too were not locals. They had another home somewhere, and carried the American passport. Those who left Somalia at as a child have no

memories of Somalia. They had no expectations, but they thought that they would feel at home once they settled in Somalia. This was not the case for them either as they struggled to fit in social activities or realized how much of an American they were. Some of the participants have said to feeling “out of place” when they were in Somalia because the Somali locals did not fully make them be part of their social system in Somalia.

Some only knew about their Somali identity to the stories that they heard from their families and relatives and wanted to broaden their understanding of being Somali more deeply. So in many ways, their perception of Somalia and being Somali has changed for the better. All of the participants in this study have not expressed this idea of not returning. In fact most of the participants, whether they had positive or negative experiences, said that they would want to return again one day. I think it is difficult to make conclusions due to the complexity of this research and the themes that follow each story that each participant shared, but it definitely shows that the Somali identity is not something that is discussed in the American community. What most Somalis know about their culture and identity only comes from what their family and relatives tell them or what they hear from the media. We can see that their views of home and belonging have changed since returning to their country of origin. They have realized that the Somali identity is not only shaped by having the physical features of Somalis, but it involves knowing the language, culture, and family kinship.

This research was attempted to provide the meaning of returning to country of origin and how it differs from traveling to any country. The return visit is very complicated as it is positioned in the interaction between two cultures and two identities. We can say for sure that one returning to their country of origin is beneficial and constitutes to understanding ones

identity on a global level. This research was also aimed to helping teachers, educators, and community leaders in understanding the Somali identity in Minnesota. Almost certainly, future research needs to be done in the area of Somali identity in order to know the transnational ties that exist between the Somalis in the west and those in the Somalia region. Additional research needs to be contributed in understanding what the Somali-American identity really means. Ideology of home and what it means to be American and Somali needs to be further researched so that the next generations of Somalis have resources when they are struggling with their multiple identities.

Like many of the participants have said, this visit to Somalia, felt like home, but still away from home, and it is the theme and complexity of this research that makes this project so personal. It is not easy to ignore my personal journey as a Somali-American who grew up in Minnesota for most of my life. As the researcher of this study, I choose to study my own culture, people and the transforming identities that come with being an immigrant. Moreover, I wanted to contribute raw and recent data about the Somali-American identity since it is a community that is growing in Minnesota. Growing up in Minnesota, I also shared similar stories with the participants in this study, but I have not returned to my country of origin since my family and I migrated to Minnesota. Through listening to the stories of these participants, I have gained knowledge about my identity and have developed the nostalgia to return to my origins and rediscover my origins. I learned as I talked to each participant, and they shared their stories with me that each story was different and carried its own theme and meaning. Each story had a beginning and an ending. Each story had its positives and negatives, and each story affirmed something about each individual's identity, home, and who they were as

individuals. As I listened to their stories, I wondered what my story would be like and what returning to Somalia would teach me about my Somali-American identity. What would it teach about my role in the Somali community as an educated, conservative, opinionated, Somali women who grew up in Minnesota? This nostalgia that I discussed in my study grew in me as I told each individual story. I hope to one day return to Somalia and tell my story and share it with others. This project has been fascinating for me and although I did not expect to learn something about myself, I have. Identity is fluid, always changing depending on where we are and who we are with, and each person has the right to discover who they are and tell their story to the world. It is through stories and experiences that we learn about others and ourselves.

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Appendix A: Introductory Letter

My name is Shukria Omar and I am currently pursuing my Masters degree in Teaching English as a Second Language at the St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. Presently, I am conducting a qualitative research study for my master's thesis.

The purpose of this study is to explore second generation Somali diaspora who have returned to Somalia or the country of their ancestral origins for a period of time and then returned back to America. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees about 10,000 Somalis have visited Somalia within the last five years. This study will highlight the forces and motives that drive second generation young Somali-Americans to go back to their homeland and the relations language and identity has on their return back to America.

The findings of the study will be based on the data collected through three structured interviews with second-generation Somali-American youth residing in the State of Minnesota who have returned from visiting their homeland. Along with this participants will be given a demographic questionnaire complete before the interview for each individual asking for general information.

Interviews will be arranged at a time and location, which is convenient for the participants. The study will be completely confidential. The participants will be identified by name but will be assigned a pseudonym. The requirement for the participants is that 1) they should be second-generation Somali-American youth of Somali ancestry who are either born in the United States or have immigrated to US at an early age, who have visited Somalia in the past five years and returned back to America. 2) Those who are presently eighteen years of age or older.

There are no direct benefits for taking part in this study. However, the researcher believes that the information she gathers from this study will help fill in the gap in understanding this large Somali population in Minnesota, and also provide perspective of the co-constructing identities of the Somali youth in America as well as how their identities are changed or not changed by visiting their homeland.

Through your participation in this study, aspects of your role and ideas about this important issue can be included in the historical narrative. In addition, you will have the privilege of reviewing the raw data to make comments and suggestions, prior to its incorporation into the final results.

I would appreciate it if you give copies of this letter to anyone who might be interested to participate in this research study and have them contact me at 952-594-9683 or via email at sbomar@stcloudstate.edu for more information or on any further questions they might have about the study. I'd be delighted to meet with you and discuss the research in more depth.

Thank you in advance for your help and/or participation.

Shukria Omar

St. Cloud State University

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in an interview for a research study on Diasporic Returnees: Relations on Language and Identity on young Somali-Americans visiting their country of origin.

Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask any questions that you may have or ask about anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take your time to decide whether you want to take part in this study.

BACKGROUND

My name is Shukria Omar and I am a master's student in the department of Teaching English as a Second Language at St. Cloud State University, and I am a researcher conducting this study. The purpose of this study is to explore the motives and forces that drive second-generation Somali youth to visit their country of origin after being away or never visiting it in a long time. This study will also explore the ambiguous views of place, home, belonging, and identity, along other core elements responsible for second-generation Somali-diaspora visiting their home and motives for coming back to their other home, Minnesota.

STUDY PROCEDURE

If you agree to participate in this study, I will be asking you to fill out a consent form and then I will conduct three interviews with you. Prior to the interview, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about your general and demographic information. Each interview will take approximately one hour at a time and location that is convenient to you. In the interview, I will ask you to answer questions about your experiences of your trip to Somalia, and the role your identity was shaped or not shaped by your visit to the motherland. You may also be asked other kinds of related questions stemming from our conversation.

I will audiotape the interviews for the purpose of collecting accurate and complete information. You are not obligated to answer my questions. If you are unwilling to answer any question, simply say so, and we will move on. If, at any point, you want to talk off the record, I will turn the tape recorder off and I will not take notes of that part of the interview. You may stop or withdraw from the interview at any time.

RISKS

The risks of this study are minimal. You may feel upset thinking about or talking about personal information related to your identity, language, and culture. These risks are similar to those you experience when discussing personal information with others. If you feel

upset from this experience, you can tell the researcher and she will tell you about resources available to help.

BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits for taking part in this study. However, the researcher believes that the information she will gather from this study will help fill in the gap into understanding the Somali-American identities in the United States and show the experiences these individuals had in their country as well as their perception of their newly formed identities. By providing this information to the large growing population of Somalis in Minnesota, this study aims to provide raw information to ESL educators, administrators, and the Somali community.

Through your participation in this study, aspects of your role and ideas about this important issue can be included in the historical narrative. In addition, you will have the privilege of reviewing the raw data to make comments and suggestions, prior to its incorporation into the final results.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your data will be kept confidential. Research records and recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected computer located in the researcher's workspace. Only the researcher will have access to the original records. No copies of audio recordings will be made public without your written permission and they would only be available for educational or research purposes. . In publications, your real name will be removed and instead pseudonyms of your choice will be used.

PERSON TO CONTACT

If you have any questions or would like additional information about this research, please contact me anytime by phone at 952-594-9683 or by email at sbomar@stcloudstate.edu.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate or the decision to withdraw from this research will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. This will not affect your relationship with the investigator. If you decide to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate, your decision will be kept confidential.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION TO PARTICIPANTS

There will be no costs and/or compensation for participating in this study.

CONSENT

By signing this consent form, I confirm I have read the information in this consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I will be given a signed copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant Date

Printed Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher Date

Appendix C: Demographic Information Questionnaire

As part of your participation in a research study on. Diasporic Returnees: Relations on Language and Identity on young Somali-Americans visiting their country of origin. Please respond to the following questions. The information gathered here will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only. I would like to thank you in advance for your participation in this study.

Background Questions / Demographic Information

1. Name _____
2. Age _____
3. Name of the University attended or attending now _____
4. Major _____
5. What is your highest level of education? _____
6. Where were you born? _____
7. If foreign born, how old were you when you came to the US? _____
8. If born in a Somali speaking country, how old were you when you left that country?

9. What language do
 - a. Your parents speak? _____
 - b. Your grandparents speak? _____
 - c. Your friends speak? _____
10. What is your nationality?
11. What is your first language?
12. In addition to English, what other languages do you know?
13. Do you speak Somali in your daily life? Circle one
 - a. Never b. Rarely c. Sometimes d. Everyday

Appendix D: Interview Questions

First Interview: Before the trip to Somalia

Interview questions:

1. Describe your identity here in America as a Somali.
 - a. How do you practice this identity?

2. Describe your identity as an American in the US.
 - a. How do you practice this identity?

3. Tell me a situation in which you felt close to your American identity? If not, why is that?

4. Briefly describe what your daily schedule looked like before going to Somalia?

5. Prior to planning to your trip to Somalia, was there a significant experience or event that lead to your decision to travel to Somalia? Explain

6. Describe your Somali skills? Were you able to communicate with the Somali community?

7. In a few words, describe how you felt before you left Minnesota.

Second Interview: Trip to Somalia

Interview questions

1. How did you identify your identity when you were in Somalia? Somali, Somali-American?
2. Describe your first initial feelings when you first arrived to Somalia? Surprised? Amazed? Puzzled? Why?
3. Describe your daily routines or sorts of activities in which you participated.
4. Describe your initial feelings about these activities?
5. Describe how the locals reacted to your Somali language?
6. Within the social activities that you participated in, describe an experience in which you felt a connected to your Somali culture.
7. Describe a situation in which you felt disconnected to your Somali culture

DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS OR CONCERNS?

