



BETWEEN BELONGING AND DISCRIMINATION: THE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AUSTRALIANS FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

A LaRRC submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission
on African Australians

August 2009

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on African Australians: A report on human rights
and social inclusion issues

August 2009



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About the La Trobe Refugee Research Centre

LaRRC's work contributes to improving access to health and social services for refugee communities and informing strategies for promoting participation and social inclusion in Australian society.

Established in December 2003, LaRRC builds public awareness and contributes to community debate about issues relating to refugee health and settlement both in Australia and globally.

LaRRC began as a partnership with the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture. In January 2007, LaRRC broadened its partnerships, moving from the Faculty of Health Sciences to become part of the School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University. This move, along with the more recent change in name from Refugee Health Research Centre (RHRC), are a reflection of our recognition of the need to take account of the broader socio-political and global contexts of forced migration. LaRRC is also a core affiliate of the recently established Institute for Human Security at La Trobe University. These new developments have enabled innovative research collaborations with social scientists from a range of disciplines including history, law, sociology, anthropology, politics, geography, and development studies. A key focus across all the research is actively including people with refugee backgrounds in the work of LaRRC both as academics, researchers, students and advisors.

LaRRC's current research focuses on three key areas:

- Refugee diasporas – identity, belonging and citizenship
- Refugee protection – seeking asylum , government responses to asylum flows
- Social determinants of settlement and wellbeing – social inclusion, social participation and access to health and social services

LaRRC also contributes to teaching in the undergraduate and postgraduate programs at La Trobe, as well as professional development through seminars and conferences.

LaRRC staff are based at the School of Social Sciences, La Trobe University, Bundoora (Melbourne) and at the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT) in Brisbane.

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Executive Summary

This submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission is drawn from mainly qualitative findings of nine studies carried out by the La Trobe Refugee Research Centre (LaRRC) at La Trobe University, between 2004 and 2009, into the wellbeing and resettlement experiences of people with refugee backgrounds settled in Victoria and Queensland. A specific focus of this submission is the in-depth experiences of those who have participated in these studies. As such, the “data” contained here is largely descriptive aiming to let the participants “speak for themselves” as far as is possible. The submission presents evidence of African Australians’ experiences of social exclusion and discrimination in five domains of social life: employment, education, health, justice and social participation.

Evidence from this program of research suggests that African Australians face discrimination in every domain of social life: employment, education, health, justice and social participation. This discrimination is pervasive, is experienced in many different forms and impacts on the subjective wellbeing of the individual as well as on more objective settlement outcomes including educational success, economic and civic participation and feelings of belonging – that the person is part of Australian society. For many African Australians, discrimination was part of their refugee experience and this social violence continues in the resettlement context – a context that is supposed to offer opportunities for rebuilding their lives, families and communities in a safe and protective society.

New arrivals are energetic and willing to work to create prosperous futures for themselves and their families. The lack of agency they feel in response to discrimination is perhaps the most detrimental impact. They succumb to a trajectory of disadvantage and exclusion. Discrimination seems to snuff dreams and dictate futures.

What we can conclude from our research is that participants are experiencing discrimination in all areas of life. It is not limited to school, work or accessing services, but it is also experienced during interactions in public spaces and through the portrayal of African Australians in the media. Some participants even identified racism as a feature of the Australian political system. Social exclusion, alienation and inequality are common experiences among African Australians today. These experiences have a negative impact on their sense of belonging to Australia and their potential to participate in Australian society.

A major urgent challenge facing Australia in promoting successful settlement and wellbeing among African Australians with refugee backgrounds is tackling the discrimination they encounter because of their perceived *visible difference* in Australian society.

Part 1: Background

Over the last ten years, approximately 116,000 people have entered Australia as part of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program; around one third have come from the African continent.¹ These individuals arrive in Australia with high hopes of building new futures for themselves and their families. Resettlement affords opportunities to gain an education, find a job, raise a family and make a home in secure housing, participate in social life and in civil society. However, for many African Australians with refugee backgrounds the discrimination they experience in many aspects of daily life act as barriers to their being able to achieve their dreams and to fully become part of Australian society.

This submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission presents evidence from a programme of research carried out by the La Trobe Refugee Research Centre evidencing ***experiences of discrimination as part of the everyday life of many African Australians***. This discrimination is pervasive, is experienced in many different forms and has a profound negative impact on the settlement, wellbeing and social inclusion of African Australians with refugee backgrounds. For many African Australians from refugee backgrounds discrimination, a significant part of their refugee experience, persists in the resettlement context – a context that is supposed to offer opportunities for rebuilding lives, families and communities in a safe and protective environment. There is an urgent challenge facing Australia in the promotion of successful settlement and wellbeing among African Australians with refugee backgrounds – addressing the discrimination they encounter because of their perceived *visible difference* in Australian society.

The evidence in this submission is drawn mainly from qualitative findings of nine studies carried out by staff members of the La Trobe Refugee Research Centre (LaRRC) into refugee wellbeing and resettlement between 2004 and 2009 in Melbourne and Brisbane (see Appendix I for study details):

Study 1: Good Starts For Refugee Youth – followed 120 recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds over four years to investigate the factors that promote wellbeing and settlement. 86 (72 per cent) are from African backgrounds (see Appendix I).

Study 2: The SettleMEN Project – continues to follow 233 men with refugee backgrounds settled in Brisbane and Toowoomba, investigating their wellbeing and settlement experiences. 173 (74 per cent) men are from African backgrounds.

Study 3: Sexual health literacy among youth with refugee backgrounds – investigated issues relating to sexual and reproductive health literacy among 142 youth from refugee backgrounds, 57 of whom are African Australians.

Study 4: Concepts of Wellbeing among Sudanese Australian Young People – is a doctoral thesis carried out with Sudanese youth in Melbourne.

¹ Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Settlement Database, Canberra. Accessed from <http://www.immi.gov.au/settlement/enterSelectReport.do> Accessed on 03/08/09.

Study 5: Experiences of African students from refugee backgrounds enrolled at TAFE in Brisbane – was carried out as a Master’s thesis (Onsando, G. Griffith University) exploring the experiences of ten African Australians (five men and five women) in Brisbane in relation to education.

Study 6: The impact of family separation on resettlement – interviewed 13 families, of whom five were African Australians, and three focus groups, one involving African Australians, living in Melbourne about the impact of family separation on resettlement.

Study 7: Integration Experiences among Somali Youth – is a doctoral thesis comparing the experiences of education and transition to employment of Somali youth living in Melbourne and Minneapolis (USA).

Study 8: Good Starts Arts – used arts based methods to document the experiences of youth from refugee backgrounds. Two groups in the study were Somali and Sudanese young people living in Melbourne.

Study 9: Evaluating NEXUS: A suicide prevention program for young people with refugee backgrounds – NEXUS is conducted by the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT) and involves young people aged 12-24 from refugee backgrounds. LaRRC was in charge of the evaluation of 2007-09 NEXUS program.

Four of the studies (4,5,7,8) included only participants with African backgrounds, while the other studies had a majority of participants with African backgrounds. All but one study (5) focused primarily on recently arrived people with refugee backgrounds. Six studies (1,3,4,7,8,9) focused on adolescents and young people, one (2) on men, and one (6) on families. The content in this submission pertains only to the African Australians who participated in these studies. The common theme that connects all of the studies is a focus on the social determinants of settlement and wellbeing in Australia; experiences of discrimination were revealed as major barriers to social inclusion among African Australians in all of these studies.

This submission primarily presents qualitative evidence from these nine studies to highlight the experiences of African Australians in relation to human rights and social exclusion, with a specific focus on the firsthand experiences and testimony of participants. As such, the “data” in this submission is largely descriptive, aiming to let the participants “speak for themselves” as far as is possible. The reader is referred to Appendix I for a list of publications arising from these studies, which provide further details about their designs and findings.

Part 2: Social Exclusion and Discrimination in Five Domains of Social Life

Discrimination is a powerful form of social exclusion that impacts profoundly on one's life chances – in this case of resettled African Australians with refugee backgrounds. While taking many forms, some more overt than others, discrimination impacts on both subjective wellbeing and on more objective settlement outcomes, including educational success, economic and civic participation, and feelings of belonging – that one is part of Australian society. The following section presents evidence of African Australians' experiences of social exclusion and discrimination in five domains of social life: employment, education, health, justice and social participation.

2.1 Employment

One of the key aspirations for African Australians with refugee backgrounds is to acquire secure employment. Both men and women say that this is one of their highest expectations for making a good life in Australia. Becoming employed is important not only for financial security, but also as a key entry to Australian society – where one can develop a sense of belonging. Not only does discrimination stand in the way of being able to find a job, it also leads to underemployment and poor job satisfaction. Further, to be without a job is an added insult acting to preclude people from participation in other areas of Australian social life.

2.1.1 Finding a job

Finding a job is a major challenge for many African Australians and although there are a range of programmes designed to assist newly arrived refugees, many experience a range of barriers to full participation in these programmes. For example, in the first year of data collection in the SettleMEN study (Study 2) carried out in Queensland, eighty (46 per cent) adult African men were unemployed at the time of the interview. Among those who were employed, 53 per cent believed that their current job was below their level of previous skills/qualifications. Among those men who had sought work in Australia (n=143), 82 (57 per cent) stated that they had encountered difficulties finding work. Forty five percent reported some form of discrimination while finding work or working in Australia. A significant proportion of them stated that this was due to their accent (85 per cent), language ability (68 per cent), and their physical appearance (63 per cent).

Other barriers to securing adequate employment in Australia identified by participants were: the requirement to have Australian work experience (66 per cent), the requirement to have referees in Australia (65 per cent), and the necessity of having a car (60 per cent). Among those men who had used the services provided by the job networks (n=124), 35 per cent were dissatisfied, 25 per cent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 40 per cent were satisfied. Seventy one (41 per cent) African participants reported having formal qualifications from overseas. Among these, only 3 (4 per cent) had their qualifications fully recognised in Australia, 10 (14 per cent) obtained partial recognition, and the remaining 58 (82 per cent) were unable to have their overseas qualifications recognised in Australia.

Participants stated that they were dissatisfied with the job networks (Study 2):

“...they are unable to find you a job”

“...they are very slow in their process of finding or leading people to jobs”

“..They are not serious to find a job for me, they keep telling me come tomorrow yet they don't find a job for me for about 3 years.”

“...discrimination and racism and undermining job seekers skills”

“...don't fulfil their promises”; “cannot help someone with proper qualifications”

“...I asked them to send my paper for recognition [skills recognition] but they did not comply. They seem to undermine people.”

“...they don't follow-up the resumes or cover letters that they send to companies for clients”

For the African Australian men participating in Study 2, finding work is one of their primary concerns relating to settlement in Australia. Deng², a middle aged participant, stated that most men from refugee backgrounds had high expectations before arriving in Australia - *“...they are brought in and then left alone shortly after”*. He expressed his frustration about the services local job networks offer to African humanitarian entrants living in regional areas in Southeast Queensland. He said that job networks are largely unhelpful *“milk cows”* that get money from the government but don't provide the services they are meant to. According to Deng, job networks and other employment agencies waste a lot of time in “appointments” and “training”. He proposed that the government utilise this funding better through direct training and assistance to targeted populations.

Discrimination is experienced by African Australians as a key barrier to finding work. A young Somali Australian man (Study 7) describes the double discrimination - racial and religious – he faced when seeking employment:

“We have two traits against us. Firstly we are Muslims, and secondly we are black. So, by there we are disadvantaged....so there are a lot of discriminations against us”. (Study 7)

Another young Somali Australian man described how he felt about negative stereotypes that hindered his employment prospects:

“There is a negativity towards Africans you say that. Because it is all about stereotype things because one sort of people would do something bad and straight away be generalized with everyone else”. (Study 7)

2.1.2 The working experience

Many African Australians experience employment opportunities as limited, while for those who do find employment it is often in low paid or insecure jobs. Many men in our studies carried out in Victoria and Queensland find employment in meat factories, seasonal fruit picking at farms around regional areas, or as hospitality staff in cafes and restaurants. They identified racial discrimination in the work place as one of their main challenges. For example, Ajok a young man from Sudan working at a busy cafeteria in a Queensland

² Names have been changed to protect anonymity.

town laments how some customers made racial statements at him:

One of them asked loudly, *“Are you painted black or are you really black?”* This customer, who was accompanied by several other people, pinches Ajok and then while laughing, he loudly says *“Oh, you are black all right!”* Everybody present breaks out laughing. Ajok is embarrassed, but chooses to laugh it off too. He is angry, but chooses not to react in a violent way. (Study 2)

2.1.3 Economic disadvantage and social exclusion

Experiences of exclusion from the labour market directly impact on opportunities for social participation and on feelings of belonging in Australia. Many of the Sudanese Australians who participated in a study on wellbeing (Study 4) highlighted the importance of paid work in being a part of Australian society. Ayen, a 19 year old Sudanese Australian woman explained how employment was one of the most important factors for wellbeing:

“A lot of people who are here get money from Centrelink, and that money is not enough, to buy for the kids ... you judge yourself, “I can’t get that, I can’t get that.” Being poor is not such a good thing... it’s very hard to get jobs, you have to have some experience before you get a job... it’s a struggle for the society to move to another level, and be able to take care of themselves, money-wise. Because money does play a big role in society.” (Study 4)

Ater explained how having a job and a house is fundamental to having a good life in Australia:

“Coz, if he had a job and everything and a house, he would be happy, he wouldn’t be upset you know. He wouldn’t be think of different things you know, or he wouldn’t act you know, the way he act ... maybe he’s a sad man, because he doesn’t have a good life, or he doesn’t have a place to live or something.” (Study 4)

2.2 Education

Much of the research carried out by LaRRC focuses on young people with refugee backgrounds and education is one of the most important areas of social life for young African Australians. Young people arrive in Australia with high aspirations for educational achievement and being able to attend school is for many, what they most look forward to. It is also what makes them most happy. Australian Sudanese youth (Study 4) highlight how educational opportunities impact positively upon their wellbeing:

“Sudanese young people, they are already happy [bemused tone]. Because they come here, some are study, and some are working, so they think they were lucky... so they are happy”. (Lau, male, 22)

“I think what makes them happy is because they’ve got school, and we get to go there, like me I really like school, I go to school everyday, like which makes me happy, seeing my friends... in Sudan, some time some people don’t go to school, they don’t have the money to pay for school and stuff, but here, I’m really lucky to have school.” (Nyadak, female, 16)

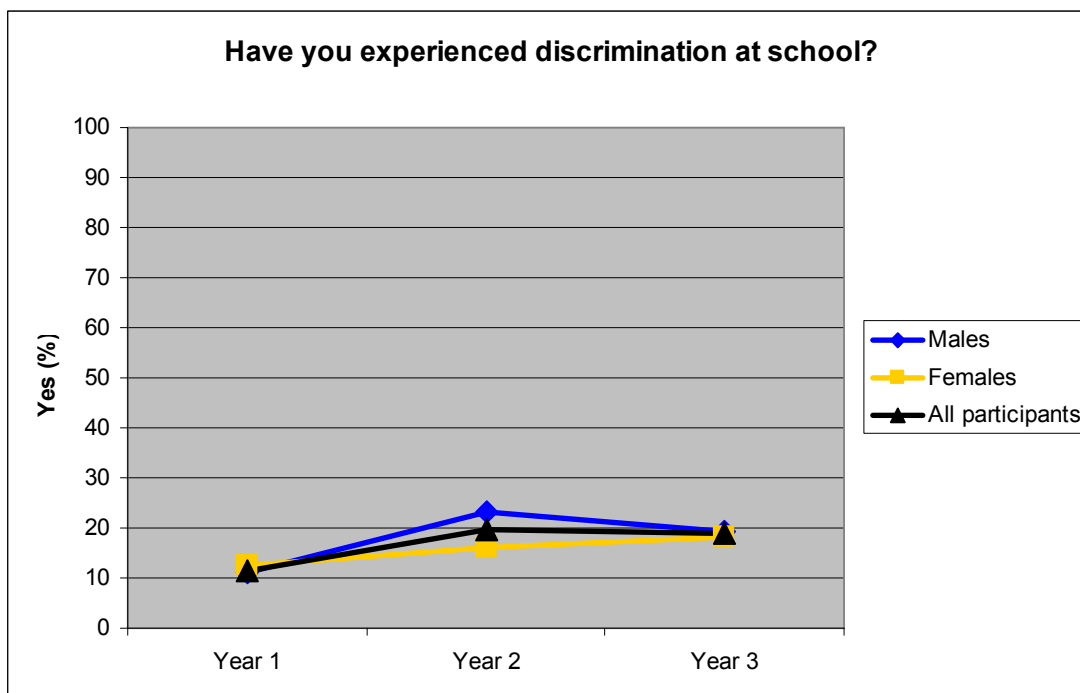
“As long as ... people are looking after them and taking care of them, and you know, they go to school on time. That is all the kids want, go to school, study, and catch up with their friends, you know what I mean.” (Lul, male, 23)

A range of forms of social exclusion including discrimination, are experienced as major barriers to educational participation and success. For recent arrivals, as much as for African Australian youth who have spent most of their childhood in Australia, educational experiences are greatly impacted on by discrimination in the school setting. These experiences range from subtle forms of social exclusion to overt and violent racial attacks. Discrimination is experienced in relation to race and religion as well as more general issues of difference between “African” culture and “mainstream” Australian culture.

2.2.1 Racial Discrimination at educational institutions

For many African Australian youth, racial discrimination at school is one of the most powerful forms of social exclusion and a key barrier to educational success. The Good Starts Study for Refugee Youth (Study 1) found that experiences of discrimination among African born youth at secondary school were common and that there was a significant increase in experiences of discrimination at school over the three year period ($p=0.006$) (see Figure 1). The percentage of boys who experienced discrimination at school increased from 11 per cent in Year 1 (ELS) to 23 per cent in Year 2 (mainstream school), and then decreased to 19 per cent in Year 3 (mainstream school). Among girls, there was a consistent increase in discrimination over time: 13 per cent in Year 1, 16 per cent in Year 2, and 18 per cent in Year 3. However, the differences between boys and girls were not statistically significant.

Figure 1: Changes over time in experiences of discrimination at school among African youth with refugee backgrounds (all African participants and by gender, Study 1)



These experiences of discrimination add another layer to the settlement challenges faced by African Australian youth with refugee backgrounds.

The following story, which documents the experiences of a young male Sudanese youth over the three years of this study, clearly illustrates the impact of discrimination at school:

JAMES' STORY

James is a vibrant, intelligent young man full of energy and curiosity about the world around him. However, he struggles with strong emotions and a lot of instability. James lived most of his early childhood in a large refugee camp in Kenya. He arrived in Australia when he was 12 years old with his older brother, while his mother and other siblings remained in Africa where his father had passed away.

When he arrived in Australia, James began his schooling at an English Language School (ELS), which made him happy. He hoped one day to go to university and become a doctor, lawyer, pilot or engineer and have a family. His teachers were very important to him and he liked the other students but was easily provoked into fights. This upset him because he got his friends into trouble. He worried a lot about his family overseas and felt that he was always in a blue mood. After school he would often go home and have dinner by himself because his brother was at work. He found it hard taking the bus on his own and liked seeing his street because then he knew he was not lost. He was lonely at home as there was nobody to play with him. When he finished ELS he moved to a local primary school, but soon moved schools again when he moved in with some family friends. His brother had become very worried about him and thought it would be better if he lived with more people. James stayed in this house for over a year, finishing grade 6 and graduating to the local high school.

Towards the end of his first year in high school, James' mother and siblings arrived from Africa. He moved in to a new household in a different suburb with his mother, brothers and sisters, and two other relatives. His new house of nine people was a busy place and James was not sure of the rules of the household. Sometimes people in the family argued and he did not like it when his mother asked him lots of questions, but he felt happy and safe at home. He loved watching television or playing computer games in the lounge room.

After moving house, James moved schools for the fifth time. Although he enjoyed going to his new school and trusted most of the teachers and students, he had some problems. He was teased a lot and experienced discrimination, which made him angry and want to fight. He had problems with one particular teacher whom he felt had misrepresented him to his mother. Another student told us that he had also had problems with this teacher but felt there was nothing to do about it so he just accepted it and 'got on with things'. However, James found it harder to let this unfair treatment go unchallenged. These problems were compounded by the fact that he had difficulty concentrating and sleeping at night. He was also angered by negative comments made by members of the Australian government about Africans in Australia. He did not look forward to his future at school, although he did want to complete high school. Despite these challenges, he was successful at some of his subjects and felt that he could do things as well as most other people. James' English language skills were very good and he is very gregarious and playful, teasing students and teachers and always asking questions, as if he can never learn enough about the world. However, he still feels downhearted sometimes despite loving jokes and being in a good mood.

Over the next year, James worked on dealing with his emotions as part of an anger management course at school. He found ways to avoid fighting when other kids called him 'nigger' or insulted him in other ways. He no longer got into so much trouble at school, however, he does not like talking about these experiences and doing so affects him profoundly. On a personal level, he no longer felt that he could do things as well as other people and there was little that he was proud of. Although he felt good about his cultural background, he felt his family had no status in Australian society and that he did not belong here. His mother discussed moving back to Africa for a while, but was not sure when she might go. James wanted to go with her to visit but knew they would not have enough money for him to go too.

Now aged 16, he has left school to take up a mechanics pre-apprenticeship. He uses some of the money to help support his family here and overseas. He loves playing around with words and music, and hopes he will become a famous musician or actor. He knows it takes a lot of work to get to that, so he thinks it would be a good idea to become a mechanic as a stable back-up. In the meantime, he is going to save enough money to buy music software for his computer so that he can make some demos to send to record companies. (Study 1)

2.2.2 Religious Discrimination at educational institutions

African Australian Muslim women have described experiences of being discriminated against because of the visibility of their religion. One young woman described some of her experiences with other students at her school:

“Some [students] try and pull your scarf off... They say ‘can we see your hair?’ They don’t act nicely to you... [They say] ‘you will look beautiful without the Hijab’. ‘It is too big to carry.’ ‘You look like a terrorist.’ ‘You look like a monster’...people keep staring and looking at you weirdly... they think you are mad wearing skirts and scarves in summer.” (Female, Somalia) (Study 7)

2.2.3 Social exclusion relating to cultural difference and refugee background at educational institutions

While less overt, African Australians identified a range of experiences that exclude them from full participation in education. These include lack of understanding of cultural differences and refugee experiences, stereotypes of “African learning ability”, and the inflexibility of the education system to meet the specific needs of African Australians with refugee backgrounds, particularly in relation to disrupted schooling.

Some African Australian youth told how their teachers, tutors and fellow students did not understand or respect African culture or their experiences prior to arrival in Australia, which impacted negatively in a range of ways:

“There are all sorts of African traditional and cultural practices ranging from foodstuff, poems, storytelling to dances. We the Dinka are river-lake Nilotes and are cattle keepers. We make a lot of initiation marks on our foreheads and are strongly guided by our parents. ... [Life in Australia is] totally different, very, very different ... everything absolutely different. ... It would be good if teachers could understand students’ life and not just giving or teaching and go away.” (Male, Sudan) (Study 5)

A lack of understanding of the refugee experience was clearly identified as having a negative impact on learning. One young man explained how his teachers did not understand how his refugee past affects his ability to learn:

“They [memories of traumatic experiences] are not frequent, but sometimes [I have] some nightmares about the camp. These issues cannot just disappear; it takes quite a long time. Even sometimes if I get a call from the refugees that ‘we are suffering, now we are in trouble’, even if I go to school, I will still have to mind that a lot of my colleagues are not in a good condition. I may pretend that I am in class, but I am not doing anything – my mind is thinking about this problem – this affects a lot.” (Male, Burundi) (Study 5)

Another African Australian who was attending TAFE commented on problems faced by older people trying to learn English:

“Oh dear ... I think they [teachers] need to know somehow where the refugees come from ... the way they teach those old people now, they will never, never learn English, never, never! Most people will complete the mandatory 510 hours for learning English, but they don’t improve....” (Male, Sudan) (Study 5)

Many African Australian young people also recounted how the Australian education system was unable to take account of the common experiences of disrupted schooling prior to arrival in Australia:

“Some teachers don’t comprehend why someone who is 16 or 17 [years old] did not get to school in his life”. (Male, Somalia) (Study 7)

“In Australia, people [are] judged according to their age of going to school. But that one is too difficult to them, to take a person in Year 12, and he don’t know how to read, and he don’t know how to do mathematics, it is too hard for them ... they are unhappy, because some young boys now they leave school, because there is nothing they can do in the class. They can’t understand anything.” (Male, 22, Sudan) (Study 4)

Perceived discrimination was identified as impacting on young people’s ability to concentrate and to participate in classroom activities. In response to a question about racial discrimination in the TAFE classroom setting, this young participant responded:

“Absolutely I do! And this gives me much stress by not concentrating very well sometimes! Yeah, it has been happening, it has been happening. Especially, when doing group work activities, they keep you out; they assume their ideas are more appropriate than yours. We students from the non-English speaking background, we have been pushed aside, by teachers, through our assignments, through our ideas ... by tutors, and other students. Yeah, that’s right.” (Male, Sudan) (Study 5)

2.2.4 Negative stereotypes about African Australian’s ability to learn at school

Below participants explained that stereotypes lead to teachers having low expectations of African students:

“The main stream [Australians] think black people are not good in education” (Study 8)

“...I don’t think teachers expect a lot from them [young Somali men]...” (Study 7)

Countering the above examples are the cases of four young Somalis who participated in the Good Starts Arts study (Study 8). We were able to follow four of the participants in this study over three years from their last year in high school through to their second year at university. When asked what made a difference to their educational success, all said that having a teacher who believed in them and had high expectations of what they were capable of achieving made all the difference.

2.3 Health

There are a range of ways in which experiences of social exclusion impact on African Australians’ wellbeing and access to health care. For some, the refugee experience adds yet another layer that impacts on their health and wellbeing.

One young Sudanese participant from Study 4 explained how they and members of their community were not confident in receiving the health care that they may need because of their ethnicity:

“But some people will feel like they’re never going to get that help, because “I’m this and I’m that, I’m Sudanese” ... You don’t always feel like you are going to get the help you need. You don’t trust they are going to help... “I don’t think they’re going to help the Sudanese. Maybe it’s another Anglo Australian they’re going to help better than me.” (Study 4)

Another young participant in the same study of wellbeing among Sudanese youth described how she was tired of being treated like a victim because of her refugee background:

“People ... assume that they know you more than you know yourself... a lot of the White people you come into contact with, there is this assumption, through what they have read ... that they have a complete concept of who you were. But sometimes that is not the case. Or most of the time that is not the case ... people are different. And no matter how much you think you know someone, it always helps to also approach them as if you know nothing. And then learn from them. And then you will have the right information. Not what you think is the right information... The fact that we come from ah, war-torn countries and stuff, does not take our humanity away. We are still human beings. And when you treat someone so much as a victim, [pause] that is a bit you know, it’s weird ... it’s very disempowering: “Ohhh, they come from war-torn countries”, “Ohhh, they’ve been going through this”. So everything you do to them you think its help. You think you’re just rescuing them. And you never question what you give them, because you think it’s an advantage to them most of the time. But that is not the case. And that is very dehumanising [laughed] ... you are a human being, I am a human being, and that’s where the border lies, and sometimes just forget the whole issue of me being from a war-torn country like that, stop treating me like a victim just treat me like a human being.” (Study 4)

2.4 Justice

Many young African Australians with refugee backgrounds have had negative experiences with law, justice, and those authorities responsible for maintaining law and order. Their refugee experiences are important for understanding and framing their interactions with law and authority figures in Australia. Many youth live with pre-migration experiences where authorities and those in power could not be trusted. For many, the law was commonly not on their side and their own governments were often implicated in their persecution and that of their family and community. This, coupled with a lack of understanding about the Australian legal system, results in the many difficult and often negative experiences that young African Australians have with the law and figures of authority in Australia.

For example, a young Sudanese participant tells about his experiences with the police and how these experiences make him feel unaccepted in Australia:

“A lot of young Sudanese kids, they get in trouble by the police. They find them sitting at the park ... they tell them to leave... [if] somebody, another Black person or African person makes a problem, so if they come and they see me, they think I am the same as the other guy. So, if you want to talk about your rights, they don’t give you time actually. Yeah. And I’ve seen it around

here, a lot of young Sudanese people, they just, they don't talk to them, straight up they spray them, up the back of the van.... they start losing their future because of the police. They just get them and take them to the police station. They charge you with something like this. And next time, another policeman, he says like you know, "this guy he's been in trouble", like this. He might think this guy is a troublemaker. So it keeps adding and adding and adding, and then at the end he lose his future, you know. And that isn't good... they came here for their future." (Study 4)

African Australian youth spoke of being particularly sensitive to issues of injustice:

"These policemen they came out and they started hassling the kids, ...they were letting all these people pass, but as long as you were Black, they ask you for your ticket... I didn't want to say anything, because it was just so stupid - "Is it because I'm Black, is that why you are doing this?" - I don't really think that helps at all ... I didn't understand how far police could go or what they can ask you... most of these boys, are little kids, 15 years old, the way that they were handling these kids, and the way they were talking to them ... it was so mean. I remember one of the policeman take the water from my [brother's friend], and said, "who did you steal this from?" Whatever happened to innocent until proven guilty?!" (Study 4)

This same young man went on to describe how such interactions negatively impact upon his sense of self and wellbeing and belonging in Australia:

"You can't just accuse someone of stealing something ... If you approach someone in such a manner it's so offensive, and that's why a lot of young Sudanese kids are beginning to be very, very violent towards the police, the way they are approaching them... and they have a really, a violent history, you don't want to act violent to them, violence always breeds violence, it's what happens, and ... my [brother's friend] started getting angry, you know, "I didn't steal it, why do you think I stole it?" ... they started manhandling the kid. And I told him "it's a 15-year-old kid, you know he doesn't even have the same strength that you have, you don't even have to push him that hard, you can just handle him simply, without pushing him around, pushing him to the wall, pulling him back, you know, that is hassling, that is too much, he's not as strong as you, so why? It's unnecessary, it's not necessary". And they just ...looked at me as if I'm dumb. You know, pretty much laughed in my face. But, yeah. So when you experience stuff like that, that makes you [laughed], you think your position in Australia or how far you think you can go, you think maybe I am an Australian, but maybe I'm an Australian to this level [motioned halfway]." (Study 4)

Many of the African Australian youth who participated in the Good Starts Study (Study 1) experienced a range of negative interactions with police. The following story gives an in-depth picture of the distress and disillusionment experienced by one young male participant when dealing with police.

AKOK'S STORY

While walking along the sidewalk Akok noticed a car approaching him from behind. He recalled feeling quite fearful, suspecting the people in the car were potential aggressors intending to harm him. As the car came to a stop the passengers, dressed in street clothes, identified themselves as police officers. Despite his high anxiety caused by the randomness and nature of their approach Akok initially felt relieved, knowing that the police in Australia were not out to harm him.

According to Akok the police officers said "we just want to speak to the Sudanese community". Still harbouring concerns about why he had been stopped Akok recalls "...by that time I was so confused I'm like whoa, if you want to speak to Sudanese community why you want my address, number and everything?" Then the police produced a photo and started questioning Akok about a young man with black skin and any possible association he may have to Akok. At this point Akok began to suspect that the police are there to harass him. Akok adamantly tells the officers that he does not know the man in the photo. Akok reflects on his adamant response vividly, noting keenly his naivety in this situation as a new arrival to Australia with no understanding of or prior exchanges with police. When asked to elaborate on what he meant by this Akok explains that he now understands that should he find himself in the same situation again he would not be "so stupid": "I'm like oh man I was so stupid, how did I let them take my address without asking them what's going on".

This interaction is an example of reverse or negative learning. It shows that rather than consolidating an important trust with authorities – the beholders of law and justice, the providers of protection – what Akok learnt from his experience with the police was to be cautious of them. From this experience Akok took away the idea that one needs to create strategies of protection 'from' the police, he learnt that rather than be trusting in such situations he should in fact be acutely untrusting, even suspicious.

Unfortunately this is not the only instance in which Akok has encountered the police. On two other occasions Akok interacted with the police and on both occasions it was because Akok had been physically assaulted – in the first assault he was hit in the face, causing permanent eyesight damage, in the second assault Akok received blows to the back of his head, causing him strong headaches and sensitivity to his eyes.

The first assault took place while Akok and his friend were on a train heading to the city. Initially, the police who responded to the assault did not believe Akok and his friend's version of events. Akok asserts that the officers were more convinced of the account given to them by Akok's aggressors, who suggested Akok and his friend had initiated a fight and were also concealing weapons. Akok claims that the police conducted a full search of his person and failed to find anything. Akok describes how at this point a "Caucasian" witness to the event came forward and supported Akok's version of events, asserting that Akok and his friend were indeed the victims, and not the perpetrators, of a violent assault.

Akok recalls that the police then swiftly handcuffed one of the aggressors and put him into a police car. Despite taking Akok's details and having the witness statement, Akok has yet to hear back from the police about any action taken against his aggressor. For Akok, this assault inflicted not only physical, but financial and psychological wounds: the cost of medical bills and purchase of glasses to counter permanent eyesight damage compares little to the emotional damage caused by Akok's loss of self-esteem, which has resulted in a sharp decline in his socializing with people other than those at school and at home.

During the second incident, Akok was assaulted by aggressors who quickly fled the scene in a car. When asked by police attending the scene if he could provide them with a registration for the vehicle Akok was forced to admit that he hadn't seen it as his eyesight was impaired and he had recently taken to not wearing his glasses because he believed they made him appear weak and would attract encourage another attack. Akok was not even able to identify the assailants, nor provide the police with a report of the incident, as he had received blows to the head. The brutality of this and the previous assault left Akok feeling vulnerable and anxious.

When asked to reflect on his overall experience of Australia, Akok reports that "Nothing really changes; it's kind of bad since I come here. Yeah, since I come here nothing good happens, it's kind of all bad." Akok describes feelings of loneliness and isolation, saying that he has very much been left alone and his strategy has been to retreat into himself physically and emotionally: "You know, I'm kind of invisible, they can't see me, 'cause I'm really quiet, I don't really want to get attention of someone." Akok believes that in doing this he will avoid others perceiving him as a bad person, thus avoiding confrontations. He says, he'd rather remain in a state where, according to him, "stay like not exist."

Akok continues to remain sceptical about the extent to which police can provide protection: "I don't think police can do anything at all, come on, last time my glasses got broke, they said they're gonna talk to this guy, they don't do anything. The second time me and my friend coming from work going home, we get started over, I get punched, kicked in the head, I have like several weeks I can't look in the sun, ... hurting my eye so much.... I reported (the assault to) the police, come on, they didn't do anything... What can the police possibly do? Everything happens to me, I report it to police, what they do, nothing at all...No they don't protect me at all... They find me lying down there, what did they do? Nothing." (Study 1)

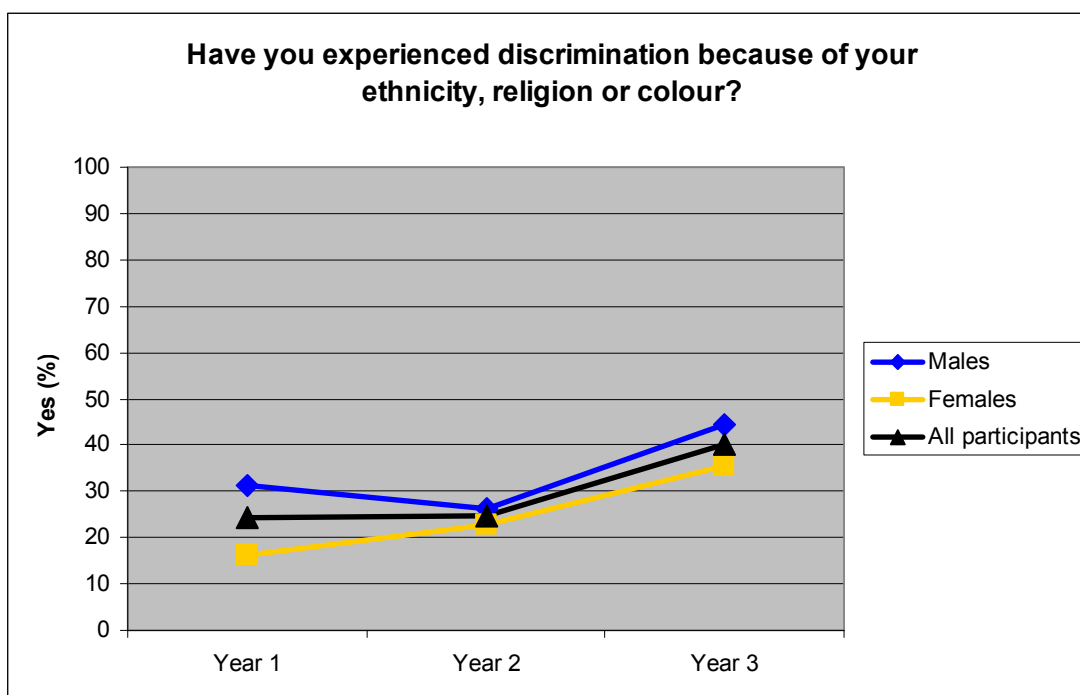
2.5 Social Exclusion in wider domains of social life

For many African Australians, experiences of racism, discrimination and other forms of social exclusion have a significant impact on their every day lives. These experiences take place in wider domains of social life, and influence their perceptions and attitudes towards police, government and the media.

2.5.1 Experiences of Discrimination

Experiences of discrimination are a major source of social exclusion among Good Starts youth. In Year One of data collection, 24 per cent of African youth reported experiencing discrimination because of their ethnicity, religion or colour, and this figure increased slightly to 25 per cent and then considerably to 40 per cent in Year Two and Year Three respectively (statistically significant increase; $p=0.018$) (see Figure 2). Males were more likely to report experiencing discrimination than females (though the difference is not statistically significant). When compared with youth born elsewhere, young people born in Africa were significantly more likely to have experienced discrimination ($p=0.027$).

Figure 2: Changes over time in experience of discrimination among African youth with refugee backgrounds (all African participants and by gender, Study 1)



"This guy called me like I'm a nigger. I called him 'You like white bread!'...because he looked like bread! He was Australian." (Male, Somalia) (Study 8)

Many youth report being discriminated against before coming to Australia, for example in refugee camps and in cities they lived in after having fled their home country.

"(In Egypt) there was really terrible racism...we use to fight with them...there were not any Sudanese or African persons who went to Egyptian schools...'cause if you went to their school it would be really bad." (Study 1)

Where do refugee youth experience discrimination? (Information below is from Study 1)

At school: As stated in 2.2.1 above, experiences of discrimination in school reported by the youth increased significantly over time (See Figure 1).

“The first day (at school) some people were nice but on the second day...they’re mean! They do not respect black people. Like in the toilets, they write bad stuff...I can’t do anything even if I tell the teacher...”

On the streets or in public settings: Experiencing discrimination on the street or in public places such as shops and trains increased from 11 per cent in Year One, to 15 per cent in Year Two, and 22 per cent in Year Three (statistically significant; $p=0.035$). Males were more likely to have experienced discrimination in public settings than females ($p=0.008$).

“We were walking in the street, me and my mate, coming from basketball, and the car stopped and they were calling us niggers.”

“I went just to get, like, to buy a few things. I went to the counter and he’s like empty your pockets. I’m like, Why? He’s like, ‘cause you’re stealing. I just emptied my pockets, he checked me, and I had nothing. Then this other kid comes in, he was a white kid but I’m not trying to be racist. He walks out and then just, beep, beep, beep and [he] starts running. I was pretty angry. I’m never going back.”

Police: 13 per cent of young people reported experiencing discrimination from police since arriving in Australia.

How do young people respond to discrimination or unfair treatment? (Information below is from Study 1)

In Year Three, nearly one in four young people accepted discrimination as a ‘fact of life’.

“There’s nothing much you can do about it [racism]. First we know the police is racist and next thing you know people in the street are racist, next thing you know maybe most of the country are. There’s nothing much you can do about it.”

Also in Year Three, one-third of Good Starts youth kept their experiences of being unfairly treated to themselves, while two-thirds told someone else about them.

“The students here, like they treat people badly, they try to be racist and stuff. I go and talk to the teachers about that and they talk to them. If somebody do something wrong we’ll go to the teacher.”

Feeling discriminated against is a major cause of fights.

“This Year 12 guy, he was being racist...he came up to me and he pushed me and I just punched him straight away, then my friends jumped in.”

Importantly, discrimination impacts negatively on wellbeing: youth who have experienced discrimination in their first three years of settlement were more likely to have lower wellbeing scores in the physical and environmental domains (WHOQoL questionnaire of wellbeing)³ and lower scores on their levels of happiness. (Study 1)

2.5.2 The impact of racism and discrimination on every day life

Racism and discrimination were issues raised overtly by over half the young people participating in the study of Wellbeing of Sudanese Australian young people (Study 4). Some participants such as Ageer and Nyankol describe how experiences of racism impact on their wellbeing:

"This lady ... she's like, 'go back to your country'... I was like, 'I can understand you were already frustrated with your day, so don't release it on me', and she was like, 'no, no, no, this is not your country'... you think maybe other people who are keeping quiet say the same thing in mind ... because you really don't know what they think ... that make you feel really, really uncomfortable. You just hold to yourself, you can't even interact with other people because you feel, even if they keep quiet, it will give you a paranoia, if someone keeps quiet then um, you know, maybe they are pretending... with that gap in between you and them I think it will take really long for you to get to know them and for them to get to know you because you feel like you don't trust them ... you feel like, I need to just lock myself in and stay home, cook, and next time I'm [at the shops] there'll be someone telling me go back to your country or whatever ... You don't feel the freedom of just walking around ... you don't know what to expect, you don't know what's in store outside there for you."

(Ageer, female, 22)

"There's some racist people in Australian group and they start discriminating you, you're Black and that, you think 'oh my God I don't belong here I just have to get out'. When you have that you start isolating yourself from people, and when you do that, that can lead to depression, and I know we don't use that kind of thing a lot, like "depressed" or whatever you know, but it does happen. And what happens when you don't have anybody to talk to, that will lead for you to have a lot of anger, anywhere that you see people you just want to fight, or nothing good will come out of your mouth ... So you might be actually emotionally be having problems, but there's no-one to talk to because you don't trust anybody." (Nyankol, female, 20)

Other incidents of perceived racism and discrimination in Australia described by participants included being called "nigger," "you're Black, you don't belong here", various insults and violence from strangers, avoidance of social interaction and physical contact, workplace discrimination, being asked to leave a nightclub, a security guard failing to assist a Sudanese friend being physically assaulted, being told by a teacher not to enrol in challenging subjects despite adequate ability, and various incidents with police (as discussed earlier) and incidents such as witnessing a policeman calling a Sudanese boy "you Black monkey." One participant (Study 4) described how her family members were very fearful now and warned her to wear bright colours in case someone tried to run her over and tried to pretend that they did not see her because she was Black.

³ World Health Organization (1996). WHOQoL-Bref: Introduction, administration, scoring and generic version of the assessment. Geneva: Programme on Mental Health, WHO.

2.5.3 Racism in the Media

The media was seen by many participants in Study 4 as contributing unhelpfully to the social exclusion of Sudanese Australian young people, leading to feelings of alienation, insecurity, and an internalised sense of worthlessness. In some cases the media was seen as inciting further racism and as generating a self-fulfilling prophecy:

“Stuff that makes them unhappy and stuff is when they are being targeted by the media and that. And of course there are a lot of there are some people out there who are not really comfortable you know, with Black people around and stuff, that’s being racist... It has been really bad because we are being portrayed as people who completely lack knowledge in almost all areas ... nobody really cares about the positive stuff.” (Ayen, female, 19)

When you see people talking badly about you on the media, you feel really bad ...people say “I’m bad, I’m bad, I’m bad” ...you feel insecure... some people, they are like, “oh if they think I’m bad, then maybe I am really bad”. And from there it would affect everything that they do in their everyday life.” (Ageer, female, 22)

2.5.4 Racism and citizenship

Some young people from Study 4 praised the (Howard) Australian government for enabling Sudanese to settle in Australia as Humanitarian Entrants:

“I think the Government is also making them happy too.” (Grace, female, 19)

However, many other participants in this study described the (Howard) Australian Government as detracting from the wellbeing of Sudanese Australian young people due to their rhetoric around “Australian values,” integration, and their decision to reduce the intake of Africans under the Humanitarian Program. According to one participant, the entire Australian political system was based on a foundation of inequality:

“Racism is in the Constitution of Australia, the racism is there in the Constitution, in the Parliament”. (Ajith, male, 22)

Citizenship and multiculturalism were also raised by participants in this study as issues relating to the wellbeing of African Australian young people. Some participants felt that citizenship should be accompanied by social inclusion and acceptance, however this did not bear out in reality, as explained here by this participant:

“You feel like it’s not your country, even though they give you the citizenship and everything, but you still feel like you’re not one of them, so you’re not wanted anymore”. (Aisha, female, 21)

Other participants spoke about their Australian citizenship with pride, intimating that it was helpful for their future and wellbeing. Regarding multiculturalism, some participants found comfort in the diversity of Australia, populated by people “from different parts”, as a country “you really do belong to”:

“When you think of the whole Australia, no-one’s Australian, you know what I mean, they are all from different parts, and stuff, and they are all under like Australia, so it’s something you really do belong to, you know what I mean, somewhere you really do belong to.” (Madiha, female, 18)

In stark contrast, other participants argued that Australia is not living up to the principle of multiculturalism and that this is a contributing factor to entrenched feelings of alienation and despondence. As Ageer suggests:

“Australia should accept the fact that it’s a multicultural country, and um, you can’t be picked on based on your religion or your race, and yeah, that’s what caused everything now ... We should just accept that we’re a multicultural country and just accept everyone’s culture, and their ideas and their uniqueness, and let’s just all be Australian.” (Ageer, female, 22)

The short DVD “Crazy” (Study 8) was made with a group of Sudanese girls specifically in response to the murder of a young Sudanese male in Noble Park in 2007 and the grief and anger they experienced in response to the then Howard Government towards Sudanese more broadly (see Appendix II).

2.5.5 Social Exclusion, alienation and inequality

More broadly, social exclusion, alienation, and inequality were common subthemes capturing Study 4 participants’ feelings that Sudanese Australian young people were suffering from a general lack of acceptance and belonging in the systems and social worlds of Australia, as the following quotes from Manyang and Akol illustrate:

“People may say ... ‘I’m not happy here in Australia’ because they can see the amount of people not friendly to them. A lot of people are not socially friendly to Sudanese ... As young people of that age who could be more reactive; they may not understand those things.” (Manyang, male, 22)

“When I walk on the pathway, people sometimes they cross, they cross to the other side, and I just wanted to say ‘hello’. They just cross. Even if they are very close you know. But in my country, if you find someone, if you see someone walking there, you say hello. Everybody does that. Everyone. It’s a bit hard to socialise sometimes... it feels like discrimination against you ... They make you come down. They say it’s a multicultural area in this place you know, but sometimes it doesn’t seem so.” (Akol, male, 19)

Some participants from Study 4 explicitly described the mental health effects of feeling excluded by peers, such as Ageer, who highlights the resulting sadness, self-blame, and feelings of inadequacy:

“You bring the whole thing to yourself later and you start blaming yourself for something you’re not even responsible. Why am I being hated on? So you just don’t get it... I’m supposed to be a young person, I’m supposed to be a human being, ...like why am I being left out, why do I feel different, why am I different? So if you don’t get an answer to all those questions then yeah, I think that’s what makes you sad.” (Ageer, female, 22)

According to Ageer's memories, the sense of belonging she experienced in the refugee camp was a determinant of wellbeing that even counteracted her hunger:

"It might have been a tough situation in Kakuma, for example, no food, no even sometimes no water ... you just wait, you take it one at a day, but we feel happy, we feel loved, you know, we feel belong, belonging. But here, you know, it's not the same. (Ageer, female, 22)

Supportive programs and services are key for counteracting the impact of social exclusion, alienation and inequality. The following story illustrates how a supportive environment can make a difference in the lives of African Australians.

ACHAK'S STORY

Achak has been in Australia for the past two years, he arrived with his sister and her children in 2007 from Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, after going through a lengthy and difficult visa processing procedure with UNHCR. Upon arriving in Australia, they were settled in a regional area in South East Queensland. A few weeks later Achak was enrolled in the local state high school.

Achak initially experienced culture shock and difficulties learning English. He was missing his friends and loved ones. As a result he found it difficult to settle into his new life and started having problems at school. He was considered very 'tough and sourly' to manage by teachers and was also described by some teachers as being on a 'knife-edge'. As a result of that he was often implicated in issues regarding theft and fighting.

A few months after starting at the school, Achak met a few other students who regularly visited a community organization providing social support by offering tutoring and an open space for young people to socialize. After a number of months attending youth activities at the community organization, Achak was comfortable enough to share his story regarding the difficulties he was facing at school. He also spoke about the challenges he was having acquiring a driver's license as he is unable to afford the driving lessons, due to the fact that Achak often minds his sister's children after school while she works and therefore has very little time for part time employment.

Recently, Achak found a job in a meat factory, however the manager told him soon after he began that he would need to leave school and work full-time if to keep the job. Achak chose to continue going to school; days later the manager called him again to offer some part-time work. However, Achak found that the work was inconsistent and felt that more work was given to friends of the manager. At work Achak has been reprimanded a number of times for speaking his language. This is despite the fact that he explained that he was using his language to help clarify the work to newly arrived employees, as the factory employs a large number of Africans, the majority of whom are Sudanese.

Despite the initial challenges Achak experienced, his teachers at school noticed a change in his behaviour. One teacher stated that he was a changed boy, purposeful and much more mature, happy within himself and no longer attracting the negative attention of the school. They thanked the community organisation for the support provided to Achak, as they saw the positive impact that the youth program has had in Achak's life.

Achak and his friends are very disappointed because the youth program provided by the community organisation will be closed in two months time. The program was funded for two years by the Commonwealth Government but will not be renewed. Many young people living in town will be left without any support programs that specifically address the needs of youth from refugee backgrounds. Many regional areas around Australia still lack adequate support services for recently arrived refugee communities.

(Study 9)

2.5.6 Racism and violence

For a person from a refugee background, exposure to racism and violence in the country of resettlement helps to perpetuate the human rights violations experienced during displacement and flight, and can seriously impact on their health and wellbeing, their self-esteem and sense of belonging, and their perceptions of safety in a new land. Akok's story, which follows, is a powerful reminder of the pervasive impact of social exclusion and violence.

AKOK'S STORY (continued)

"Nothing really changes; it's kind of bad since I come here... Yeah, since I come here nothing good happens, it's kind of all bad."

Akok, is a 22 year old male from Sudan who arrived in Australia in 2005. Akok lives with his uncle and his uncle's family - his only immediate relatives. The last time Akok heard from his family was in 2006, he has since lost all contact with them, which deeply affects him. When he was asked how he feels about this situation he says: "Well I feel bad, kind of homesick, family sick, you know how you feel when you're not contacting with your mother or father for a long time..." At the time of interview Akok's aspirations were to finish year 12 either find a job or go to university or TAFE – Akok is a talented drawer and enjoys using the computer to create animations and to illustrate his work.

Akok describes feeling as though he belongs in Australia while he is at school, but feels that outside of school he does not. When asked to explain why he feels he does not belong in Australia Akok says that outside of the school setting "some people like want to start trouble with me in some - you know, kind of using some language that I...don't wish... them to talk to me that way... bad language, calling you names... black cunt, get off the train". The ostracising and dehumanising affect of overt discriminatory experiences of this kind are brought into perspective by Akok, who in the following statement contrasts the feeling of belonging as felt in a country that while being 'home' was one from which he was forced to flee, and another country that has promised to provide him a haven from fear and persecution and in which he is expected to make a new home. "Back home no one use that kind of language at me so there, you know, I feel like comfortable to like just sit around, yeah, but here then I don't, like feel comfortable, and people they see me like some kind of – you know, not belonging like not type of them..."

For Akok, such experiences have unfortunately also been combined with two violent incidences that have involved him being physically injured. (See 2.4 for details.) Far from allowing Akok to construct a pathway towards a positive and safe process of resettlement in Australia, the experiences of discrimination, specifically the verbal and physical violence, described here have served undermine his ability to establish foundations from which to develop strong self esteem and wellbeing. These experiences have in fact lead to a series of negative emotional and mental effects that impede Akok's ability to develop a sense of belonging within Australia. Frustration with his quality of life, particularly in relation to his feelings of fear and insecurity due to experiences of violence and discrimination, have forced Akok to question whether he might be better off in Sudan - despite the risk to his life and standard of living:

"Sometimes, you know,... I thought ... like oh man, what am I doing here, I prefer to stay back there [in Sudan], if I get killed or something happens to me, I would be proud, you know, I was in my country I get bullied in my own country, but here sometimes I'm like oh I'm in foreign country, I'm here, I'm just a foreigner so everybody can do whatever they want to me... So I'm kind of sad, I kind of feel like oh it's my fault, I come here, they bully me, what can I possibly do, it's not my country... every time I get bullied, no I don't belong here, this is not where I supposed to be, I belong there not here. [You belong to Sudan?] Sometimes I feel like I belong to Sudan, I don't belong in here, 'cause some other stuff, like some other things that people say to me, back in Sudan, yeah, nobody say that to me, so sometimes I like oh why they saying that stuff to me. Back there I even never heard of that words, that word been saying to me, but then here oh like all that kind of other words possible to be said to me, back there it's not even exist, so sometimes I feel like oh I better off to stay there"

Akok explicitly describes feelings of confusion and distress due to his experiences of discrimination in Australia. The understanding that this limits his ability to participate fully in Australian society, ultimately exacerbating the feelings of vulnerability and weakness that emanate from the refugee experience, lead Akok to question whether he will ever feel that his rights as a human being have been recognised.

(Study 1)

Summary and Conclusions

The research conducted by LaRRC suggests that African Australians face discrimination in every domain of social life: employment, education, health justice, and social participation. For African Australians discrimination is not only related to their visibility, culture and religion but also to their refugee background. Not all of our research actively explored the issue of discrimination with participants; however, it was a common theme throughout our studies. This suggests it weighs heavily on the minds of our participants.

New arrivals are energetic and willing to work to create prosperous futures for themselves and their families. Our research suggests that the pervasive impacts of discrimination form a barrier to African Australians reaching their goals. Participants reported discrimination both in the job market and in using job network services. The lack of agency they feel in response to discrimination is perhaps the most detrimental impact. Many succumb to a trajectory of disadvantage and exclusion. Discrimination seems to snuff dreams and dictate futures.

The narratives of the young African Australians that participated in our research also illustrate how discrimination in the education system is an active barrier to them reaching their potential. Discrimination extends from the playground to the classroom, where classmates and teachers actively stereotype and exclude. Conversely, young African Australians who attained educational success, credit the supportive and encouraging education environment in Australia.

Assumptions and stereotypes about African Australians also extend to Australian health services. Participants spoke about assumptions made by health professionals related to their ethnicity or refugee background. This undermines their trust in the health care providers and impacts upon their willingness to access health care services. Indeed, our study of refugee youth finds that discrimination is related to poorer wellbeing and lower levels of happiness.

African Australians also reported experiences of discrimination during their interactions with law and authorities. Participants in our research feel targeted by the police and excluded from the basic rights afforded to the broader population; this impacts negatively upon their sense of belonging. Participants' responses to discrimination varied; some had learned to accept it as a fact of life, others kept it to themselves and some acted out in frustration.

What we can conclude from our research is that African Australians are experiencing discrimination in all areas of life. It is not limited to school, work or accessing services, but it also experienced during interactions in public spaces and through the portrayal of African Australians in the media. Some participants even identified racism as a feature of the Australian political system. Experiences of social exclusion, alienation and inequality are common among African Australians. These experiences have an adverse effect on their sense of belonging to Australia and their potential to participate in Australian society.

Appendices

Appendix I: About the studies

Study One – Good Starts Study for Refugee Youth (completed 2008)

Aims:

This ethnographic study aims to describe the social contexts and determinants that promote mental and social wellbeing for newly arrived refugee youth during settlement. Study outcomes will inform policy, programs and services in the education and welfare sectors, in relation to optimal outcomes for refugee youth.

Methods:

The study has recruited 120 newly arrived young people from refugee backgrounds aged 11 to 19 years and is following these youth over a four year period. The study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Publications:

Gifford, SM, Bakopanos, C, Kaplan, I, and Correa-Velez, I. 'Meaning or Measurement? Researching the social contexts of health and settlement among newly-arrived refugee youth in Melbourne, Australia', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2007; 20(3): 414-440

Gifford, SM, Correa-Velez, I and Sampson, R. *Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds: Promoting wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia*. Melbourne: La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, 2009 (Final report to be released late 2009)

Study Two – The SettleMEN Project (2008 - ongoing)

Aims:

To gain a deeper understanding of the health and resettlement experiences of recently arrived adult men from a refugee background who are living in Brisbane and Toowoomba (Queensland). This study aims to document; physical and mental health needs, including socially and culturally relevant issues; the impact of refugee men's settlement experiences on their families; barriers and pathways to education and workforce participation.

Methods:

The project team is interviewing 233 adult men from refugee backgrounds who arrived in Australia from 2004 onwards. Participants are being followed-up at 6-month intervals for two years using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Publications:

Correa-Velez, I. and Onsando, G. 'Educational and occupational outcomes amongst African men from refugee backgrounds living in urban and regional Southeast Queensland'. *The Australasian Review of African Studies* (in press).

Study Three – Promoting Sexual Health among Refugee Youth (completed 2008)

Aims:

This study focused on how refugee youth access, interpret and implement sexual health information. Built upon the RHRC 'Good Starts' project which identified the need to improve health literacy, particularly in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, findings from this study have been used to develop recommendations for appropriate strategies to promote sexual health and sexual health literacy among refugee youth in Victoria.

Methods:

The study was carried out by the Refugee Health Research Centre, the Centre for Multicultural Youth, and Footscray Youth Housing Group. Data collection included consultations with key people, interviews with relevant health professionals and case-workers, and in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 142 newly-arrived young people with refugee backgrounds. Analysis and preparation of written reports was completed during 2008.

Publications:

McMichael, C. (2008), *Promoting sexual health amongst resettled youth with refugee backgrounds*. Melbourne: Refugee Health Research Centre.

Study Four – Concepts of Wellbeing among Sudanese Australian Young People (completed 2008)

(Doctorate of psychology (Dpsych) thesis (2005 – 2008, passed 2009) Submitted by: Dr Madeleine Tempny (Monash University))

Aims:

To qualitatively explore and describe the concepts of mental health and wellbeing held by Sudanese Australian young people in Melbourne. The key rationale for this project was that the mental health and wellbeing needs of Sudanese Australian young people might not necessarily be well served by standard mental health conceptualisations and interventions, due to cultural differences.

Methods:

Following a pilot study and key informant interviews, 24 Sudanese Australian youth (aged 16-24 years) participated in Study 1, which involved a semi-structured interview designed to explore concepts of mental health and wellbeing using a constructionist, "bottom-up" approach. Twenty-two of the same participants then

took part in Study 2, which was a structured, mixed methods, vignette-based interview using a “top-down” approach. Specifically, participants were interviewed about how they conceptualise mental health and wellbeing, what factors contribute to mental ill-health and what factors contribute to high psychosocial wellbeing, how mental ill-health can best be treated and what interventions can be used to promote wellbeing. Interview transcripts were qualitatively analysed using thematic analysis. Significantly, social exclusion was not a topic raised by the interviewer, but the majority of interviewees devoted a great deal of their time to talking about social exclusion when they were steering the interview content.

Publications:

Tempany, M. (2009). What research tells us about the mental health and wellbeing of Sudanese refugees: A literature review. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 46(2), 300-315.

Tempany, M., Hay, M., Zion, D., & Gifford, S. (2008). “Mental health? I don’t think Sudanese have it!”: Talking to Sudanese refugee youth about their understandings of mental health and wellbeing. The abstracts of the 43rd Australian Psychological Society Conference. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 60, p. 195.

Tempany, M., Hay, M., Zion, D., & Gifford, S. (2007). Concepts of mental health and wellbeing held by Sudanese youth from refugee backgrounds in Australia. The abstracts of the 15th Biennial Australasian Human Development Conference. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 59, p. 204.

Study Five – Experiences of African Refugee at TAFE: A phenomenological study

(Study conducted by Gerald Onsando as part of his Master’s thesis at Griffith University, Brisbane. Gerald is currently a staff member of LaRRC.)

Aims: This study investigate the experiences of learning at Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes for African students from refugee backgrounds. The study reflected upon a small cohort of students’ socio-cultural backgrounds, their refugee life experiences and particular personal histories, and their literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency, with a purpose of describing – from their perspectives – their experiences of learning at TAFE.

Methods: Phenomenological methodology and ontological philosophical principles were used to capture participants’ personal experiences of learning at TAFE institutes. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with ten African Australians (five men and five women).

Publications:

Onsando, G & Billett, S. ‘African students from refugee backgrounds in Australian TAFE institutes: a case for transformative learning goals and processes’, *International Journal for Training Research* (in press)

Study Six - Family Separation and Settlement (completed 2009)

Aims:

- (i) to document the impact of family reunion (or lack thereof) on the settlement of refugee background communities and
- (ii) build the evidence base for an appropriate policy response.

Methods:

The research followed a qualitative design using rapid assessment techniques (semi-structured interviews and focus groups). Qualitative research methods provided an avenue to unpack the intricacies of the family reunion 'story'.

Publications:

Wilmsen-McDonald, B. and Schwarz, J. *Family Separation and Settlement*. Melbourne: Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture, 2009 (Final report to be published 2009)

Study Seven - Integration Experiences among Somali Youth (ongoing)

(Study is being conducted by Yusuf Omar as part of a doctoral thesis with La Trobe University, Melbourne.)

Aims:

The overall aim of this study is to examine Somali experiences of youth integration in Australia in comparison to their counterparts in the USA. It investigates youngsters' views on their adjustment to the mainstream culture.

The specific objectives are to:

- (i) Describe the ways in which experiences prior to arrival impact on settlement;
- (ii) Identify the facilitators and barriers to integration;
- (iii) Identify youth perspectives on integration into culturally diverse communities, and parent's perception of their children's adaptation;
- (iv) Describe the education, socialization and employment opportunities and experiences of Somali youth;
- (v) Compare and describe the social and policy contexts of Australia and the USA; including, the impacts on the integration experience.

Methods:

Methodological approach is qualitative. Primarily data has been collected through a range of methods including audio recorded in depth unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, field participant observations, and field-notes.

Publications

Omar, Yusuf (2008), Somali youth in Diaspora: A comparative study of female and male perceptions of further studies and future career (Case Study Somali Youth in Melbourne, Australia) [in press], *Bildhaan (International Journal of Somali Studies)*, Macalester College St. Paul, Minnesota: USA.

Omar, Y (2007), *Discussion Paper: Australia's Muslims, after September 11: Experiences and Expectations*, Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University, Victoria: Australia.

Omar, Y (2005), "The Educational and Employment Aspirations of Somali High School Students in Melbourne", *The Australasian Review of African Studies*, 27(2), The University of New England, Armidale: NSW.

Omar, Y (2005), "Young Somalis in Australia: An educational approach to challenges and recommended solutions", *Migration Action*, 22(1), Ecumenical Migration Centre of Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Victoria, Australia.

Omar, Y (2004), "I am a New Australian Citizen", *Migration Action*, 22(2), Ecumenical Migration Centre of Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Victoria, Australia

Omar, Y (11,9, 2007), Talking point, *The Age*, Melbourne: Australia.

Omar, Y (10/1/2007), "Beware of Dogma", *The Age*, Melbourne: Australia.

Omar, Y (2005), "Window into Somali Culture", Annual Report Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre Inc. Melbourne, Australia.

Study Eight - Good Starts Arts (completed 2009)

Aims:

The Good Starts Arts project aimed to produce outcomes in three main areas:

- Health Research Outcomes: To produce a variety of audio-visual materials that strengthen and enhance the qualitative component of the Good Starts for Refugee Youth Project;
- Community Art Outcomes: To produce a variety of audio-visual materials for public screening/exhibition, as a means of providing the general public with unique insights into the life experiences of young people from refugee backgrounds; and,

Youth Development Outcomes: To develop the communication, story-telling, creative, leadership and audio-visual media skills of young people from refugee backgrounds, and improve self-confidence and self-esteem.

Methods:

Good Starts Arts drew on a range of methodologies from the fields of visual anthropology, participatory action research (PAR), collaborative ethnography, and community cultural development (CCD). It also utilized research tools developed for the Good Starts Study for Refugee Youth.

Publications:

This study resulted in the production of four short documentaries;

- *See Through Me: Discrimination through the eyes of ten young Somali-Australians* (2007) [DVD] Melbourne, Vic: Refugee Health Research Centre, La Trobe University.
- *Crazy: The everyday experiences of Sudanese-Australian young women* (2007) [DVD] Melbourne, Vic: Refugee Health Research Centre, La Trobe University.
- *Home: An exploratory journey with young Somali-Australians* (2008) [DVD] Melbourne, Vic: Refugee Health Research Centre, La Trobe University.
- *Finding Light: Reflections of recently arrived Afghan boys living in Australia* (2008) [DVD] Melbourne, Vic: Refugee Health Research Centre, La Trobe University.

Study Nine – Evaluating NEXUS: A suicide prevention program for young people from refugee backgrounds (2007 - 2009)

Aims:

The objectives of the NEXUS program (2007-2009) were:

- To increase the number and quality of connections of young people from refugee backgrounds to people, place and culture thereby promoting social connectedness and wellbeing;
- To increase the proportion of young people from refugee backgrounds with internal locus of control thereby building resilience;
- To decrease the impact of high academic and employment expectations on the suicide risk of young people from refugee backgrounds thereby building resilience;
- To decrease suicide risk in those young people who have attempted suicide or are at high risk of attempting suicide; and
- To improve community attitudes, understanding and awareness to better identify and help youth from refugee backgrounds at risk of suicide.

The evaluation of the program assessed both its performance (process evaluation) and its effect on young people who accessed the program (impact evaluation).

Methods:

The evaluation used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods which included structured questionnaires administered to young people, focus group discussions with NEXUS clients, semi-structured interviews with NEXUS staff, document analysis, and analysis of the QPASTT electronic online system database.

Publications:

Correa-Velez, I and Goj, PC (with assistance from Telford, M). *Evaluating NEXUS: A suicide prevention program for young people from refugee backgrounds (2007-2009)*. A report prepared for the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT). Brisbane: La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, 2009.

Appendix II: Transcripts from Study 8 DVDs

– ‘Crazy’ and ‘See Through Me’

- i) Transcript of *Crazy: The everyday experiences of Sudanese-Australian young women* (2007)
[DVD] Melbourne, Vic: Refugee Health Research Centre, La Trobe University

Crazy: The everyday experiences of Sudanese-Australian young women

Transcript

- Participant 1: I'm Reba Dador, and I'm a funny girl. I like to have fun, I like going crazy with my friends and family. I wanna be a model in the future. I wanna show other girls that they can feel free to do whatever they want.
- Participant 2: I'm Rania, Rania Victor, and I'm kinda a nice girl – everyone knows that. I came to Australia about four years ago.
- Participant 3: My name is Nyaboul. When I came to Australia I was just about 13 years old. Yeah. And it was different, and it was difficult to live, cos I dunno, I never even seen a tram or a train.
- Participant 4: Hey y'all, my name is Nyapan, aka Toy. I was named Toy when I was born because I looked like a toy. Sudan is my home town, that's what I always say, like, I feel like I belong there. I'm proud to be Sudanese, I love saying that.
- Participant 5: Hi, my name's Adwina. I'm 15 years and a half. I come to Australia like one year and a half. I love Australia and I love my family and my friends.

Friends

- Participant 2: When I'm with my friends, I'm like, I'm nice to everyone, well, cos, all my friends are like, Rania, you're too nice.
- Participant 4: Like, she's smart. Like, she knows what's right. She knows how to cook, she knows how to clean, she's really smart. Sometimes I wish she can be my mum.
- Participant 3: I have fun with my friends, I'm so talkative, I talk too much with them. I wouldn't talk the same with my friend as I talk at home.
- Participant 4: Reba, the little gangster. Reba the crazy one.
- Participant 1: I love to muck around, go crazy. When I go hyper, I go hyper. I don't really care, I'm just me, you know?
- Participant 4: She's tough.
- Participant 1: No, I'm not tough, I just, I like to be me... feel free, you know.
- Participant 5: I love my friends, walking together, talking together. And, you know, like, they don't know my language, but English, we just speaking English.
- Participant 4: When I'm with my friends, I'm crazy, of course I'm crazy. We love to start up girls for no reason. And we just go crazy, be normal, have fun, hang out, dress up, call boys, prank people.

- Participant 1: She's funny, crazy, sometimes she's violent (*giggles*).
- Participant 5: I'm quiet, but when somebody want fight with me or hit me who didn't say sorry, I'll press them, say why, what are you doing?
- Participant 4: For us black people, it's different. When somebody says something to us, we don't talk about it. I don't go and say, "hey, do you want to talk about what we said", I would never do that.
- Participant 1: It's not like you're gonna go up to them, "let's have coffee and talk about it" (*laughs*). You have to, you know, do something about it!
- Participant 4: Friends is all about trust. You have to have trust in a friendship, that's how friendship works.

School

- Participant 4: At school I'm a nerd that doesn't look like a nerd, and I'm crazy at the same time, and I'm a bully.
- Participant 2: At school I'm really hard worker.
- Participant 1: They see us at school as good students, sometimes when you're not naughty.
- Participant 5: I like to go to school and I don't want to miss school. I like playing with my friends at school and I love to go to the library.
- Participant 1: You can go there, you can get a book and you can read it, you know, quiet time. And I also like reading magazines – soccer magazines. I'm obsessed!
- Participant 4: At school I feel free because there's people around me, like especially, I'm in year nine, and everybody around us like, you know, we all react to each other and we're all [free to each other], I feel like I'm just at home but with a bunch of other white people and other nationalities around me, and I feel like free, like I can do whatever I wanna do.

Home

- Participant 1: When I'm at home, I'm a bit quiet cos I'm with my parents and um I speak in a different language, not at school. I don't speak - sometimes I speak English at home, but it's mainly Arabic, and Nuer, which is a Sudanese language.
- Participant 4: When I'm at home, you gotta cool down a little bit, cos Mum is there, she has a headache and things like that, so you're cool a little bit. But then when she leaves the house, you're back to crazy again.
- Participant 5: I love my sisters, my little sisters, who play with me always, we play like skipping.
- Participant 1: I'm the middle child. So I get all the blame.
- Participant 2: I love my kitchen. It's big and it's easy to clean. Well, we always eat African food. My brother doesn't like African food. He said he's in a new country, he's in Australia, why the hell is eating African food for. I'm like, it's traditional.

Noble Park

- Participant 1: They call it Noble Black. I don't know why. Cos there's a lot of people in Noble Park. So people call it Noble Black.
- Participant 3: The things that make me sad is when I hear this stuff about Sudanese on TV. Like they talk about Sudanese, say bad stuff about Sudanese, that makes me sad.
- Participant 4: They're calling Noble Park the ghetto. Noble Park is not a ghetto and things like that. They just saying bad things about Sudanese, and Crips and Bloods and things like that. They should get over the whole damn thing. We're all the same on the inside, it's just

the colour that makes us look different.

Participant 2: When you walk in the street right, there's just people lookin' at you for no reason, like, just keep on staring at you.

Participant 1: You should just ignore them!

Participant 2: I just wanna tell people that the media they don't actually get the whole - they don't actually know the whole story.

Participant 1: We don't just hang at the station to get drunk and stuff. We might be hanging at the station to be with our friends, and we hang in gangs to be with our friends, not to bash up people.

Participant 3: We are not just really like a bad people, we are a good people.

Participant 2: She is gorgeous (*giggles*). She's really funny.

Participant 4: Like, she's smart. Like, she knows what's right. And she likes to make trouble with other people.

Participant 1: She's nice, she's funny, she's, I see her as a quiet person.

Participant 4: We always go crazy, so that's the way we are.

Credits.

- ii) Transcript of *See Through Me: Discrimination through the eyes of ten young Somali-Australians* (2007) [DVD] Melbourne, Vic: Refugee Health Research Centre, La Trobe University.

See Through Me: Discrimination through the eyes of ten young Somali-Australians

Transcript

Voice: People who don't know us, see us as trouble-makers.
Voice: My community sees me as a decent person.
Voice: My friends see me as a sweet girl, who can be really shifty at times, but is able to maintain her good-girl image.
Voice: I see myself as someone who is looking for herself in a huge world.
Voice: People see me as a good boy, that doesn't make trouble and is good to his parents.
Voice: At school, I see myself as a dull, lifeless, lazy, unrecognized person.
Voice: I see myself as an outsider, someone that does not fit in.

Bell tolls.

Multiple voices talk over the top of one another:

Voice: I see myself as part of my people and community...
Voice: People see me as a loner...
Voice: My friends see me as a person that is scared of his parents, like a mumma's boy.
Voice: ...as someone who isn't recognized.
Voice: ...as someone who wants to learn.
Voice: ...as a good daughter who sometimes rebels against her mother's judgments.
Voice: My family see me as good, obedient and thoughtful.
Voice: ...as a lost person in a huge crowd, where I'm the only stranger, like I'm invading their place in the world.
Voice: I see myself as part of a group, I'm loved, and it doesn't matter what colour I am.
Voice: I see myself as a Somalian and happy with my life.
Voice: I see myself as a person that's funny and likes to play soccer

Bell tolls.

Photographic "clicking" sound.

Male 1: Every time I enter a bus or a tram or something, like, everyone will turn around straight away, like I'm like some kind of alien from another space. I feel like I'm kind of left out, not fitting in, like I'm different and you know it doesn't feel good, but after a while you do get used to it.
Female 1: When I'm walking with my Mum and stuff, because she wears like, the big scarves, you like full on, they give her the looks, like "look at her you know, she's all religious and all that", and that really gets me cut, cos like you know, it's my Mum.
Male 2: I dunno, on trams, trains, buses, they're all the same. Yeah, but I've, that's the only time I feel insecure and um, I don't know, just low and that.
Female 2: I've had plenty of looks. So like, when you, I think it happens most when you go into stores

that are very classy, and they expect you know, rich white females to come in that are all dressed up and stuff. But when they see you with the scarf, they kind of give you these looks, like, “what is she doing here?”

Male 3: I was walking to school one day, and this was like a couple of months ago, and I was walking to school and I was going past the milk bar to get a drink, and near the milk bar, on the other side of the milk bar, there's a park that I have to go through, and as I was going through the park I saw this white guy, and I had no offence with him, you know? I had nothing against him. But then, it was just the way he looked at me, the way he acted, the way he looked, so asking him, I was saying, you know, “why you looking at me like that?” And then, you know, he got smart and everything, I tried dealing with it with conversation, with words other than just straight go into fight, and in the end I had no choice but to fight him.

Photographic “clicking” sound.

Male 1: Like once, when I was sitting at a bus stop, and I was just sitting there listening to my ipod, and just listening to music, and a couple of Aussie boys came past with bikes, BMX bikes...

Male 4: There was this one time, I was walking down the street, it was kinda like night time...

Male 5: I was at this shop, and there were all these people lined up...

Male 2: We were sitting outside and a couple of guys drove past and I think it was the day after the Cronulla riots...

Male 1: ...and the boys came past, and they were like, you know, “what's up, nigger?”...

Male 4: It was this bunch of Aussies, so I was the only black kid, I was walking down the street and they kept lookin' at me badly and just calling out names...

Male 5: ...and then he said to me, “You, nigger. Hurry up, I don't have time for this”...

Male 2: They came past, they were like full on swearin' at us, callin' us like, “negroes, black this, black that”, and um one of 'em actually said, “we flew here”, no, “you flew here, we grew here”. I'm like, c'mon man, you know, what the hell's that sposed to mean? I felt kinda pissed off cos like you know I've been here for more than 14 years and I'm still not accepted.

Male 1: When I heard them say that, like I've kinda lost patience and you know I didn't know how to react to it, but I only remember getting physical and getting violent.

Male 4: I was outnumbered, so I just kept my mouth shut, and just kept walkin' away. I had to ignore them or else I woulda copped the damage.

Male 2: The way we um we handle the situation, if we don't handle it cool, calm and collected, then other people are gonna get different ideas.

Male 3: Never jump to violence, cos you're always gonna be the guilty one. If you're gonna solve something, solve it with manlihood talk, just talk to 'em, say why are you lookin' at me like this, or why are you treating me this way.

Male 1: You shouldn't react to violence straight away, because that's kind of stupid, you know, people do look at each other, people you know do check out each other too...

Photographic “clicking” sound.

Female 3: They see a person with a scarf, or they see a man with um a beard, they associate it with terrorism. Just cos I wear a scarf, it doesn't mean I'm a terrorist. Just cos I'm a Muslim, doesn't mean that I'm a terrorist.

Female 1: I think females get more like discriminated than males, because like, males they can just get away with you know, like, when you see um a Muslim male, whether black or white, you can't

tell they're Muslim.

- Female 4: I don't know, cos sometimes I just forget about it and then sometimes like, when I'm with people, like, non-Muslim people, then I see it, but then I don't think of it as much. It's just I'm like the only one not showing their hair.
- Female 2: There should be more awareness about religion, and um cultures and stuff like that. Because, um, because you know Muslim females wear scarves and stuff, people immediately like perceive us as being oppressed and you know and being forced onto the scarf and not being allowed to study and stuff, like what happens in some non-Western countries. This country's more discriminating against religion than colour.
- Female 3: In the media, they pinpoint the religion Islam, they don't pinpoint the person. The religion is not the person who committed the crime, it's the actual human being.
- Female 1: The way um they make us sound and look, they just make it like, they make people dislike us in a way, and be afraid of us, and think that we're, we're like some kinda aliens who just came to their country and try and take everything over.
- Male 4: I doubt that Somalians will ever have a say in the media or a voice of opposition against the media in Australia.

Photographic "clicking" sound.

- Female 3: If Australia wants multicultural stuff, they should accept it, not deny it. Because the way they're doing it, they're denying it.
- Male 5: So I feel like this country has become a little bit more intolerant of things.
- Male 4: In my life, discrimination is like a small part, because the places I go, I hang out with mostly my kinda people, Somalians, the Arabs, some I hang out with are Vietnamese, I hang out with all kinds of people that are cool.
- Female 4: Like I wake up every day to see that you know I'm not in my own country, but I'm in somewhere different you know, a place where there's many different type of people. It depends on how long you've lived here. Me, I've lived here like for quite a while and I feel like this is home, you know. I am like sort of Australian. Or I wanna be seen as Australian.
- Female 1: It's not my country, like in a way it is my country, cos I live here and I got used to the way things are here and everything, but you know like when you think about it, they'll be like "oh, you know, we're Australian, you weren't born here, this is my country, you should follow my rules, not your own rules".
- Male 1: I reckon I have been accepted. Like, in every country, obviously, there is racist people, you know, all around the world, you know no country's perfect, so obviously you do face bad people, and you do face good people.

Bell tolls.

- Voice: I want to see Australia stop losing its dignity.
- Voice: I want people to see that we have things in common.
- Voice: I want to change the way we are seen.
- Voice: I want to see Australia become more fair.
- Voice: I want to see people accept the fact that we are different.
- Voice: I want to see Australia becoming more caring and responsible.
- Voice: I want to see Australia create its own identity.
- Voice: I want to see Australia accept everybody's cultural rights.

Voice: I want to see Australia more environmentally and naturally like Africa.

Voice: I want Australia to be a country that doesn't discriminate based on ethnicity.

Voice: I want Somali-Australian people to feel that there's always someone who will care and listen to them.

Voice: I want Somali people to create their own destiny.

Voice: I want the Australian media to get their information right.

Bell tolls.

Credits.