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The Emergent Generation Gap in Attitudes toward Khat Use in Urban Ethiopia

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The Emergent Generation Gap in Attitudes toward Khat use in Urban Ethiopia

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Field study, May 09

- Introduced to khat topic by Ethiopian colleague
- 3 weeks of interviews, filming
 - Addis Ababa, Gondar
- Key informants: Physicians, psychiatrist, priest, government representatives, khat sellers, laypersons of various ages, students
- Basic fact finding
 - “We’re here to learn about khat”

Ethiopian Christians (Addis Ababa, Gondar)

- Traditional social and religious sanctions against khat use, especially for youth
 - Widely accepted among Muslims & Christians in traditional khat chewing regions
- Change
 - Approximately 15-20 years
 - 1993: Literature refers to new khat use pattern among youth
- Two views
 - Age 30_≤ accepts khat use in general
 - Age 50+ strongly opposes khat use by Christians

Video 1

- “Traditional” family = Christian Orthodox
- Small town life

Generation Gap

- Intergenerational conflict due to differences in values & norms
- “De-authoritization”: change from parental influence to peer influence
- Increased attention on young people, greater “voice” of the young

USA 1960s-1970s

- “Baby boomers” – born in the 1940s
- Felt disenfranchised by the traditional “system”
- “Used” for military power by the older generation
- Wholesale change in value structure and priorities
- Fully embraced by “Hippies” and “Flower children” and to varying degrees by others
- American society influenced by this challenge to traditional values



USA 1960s-1970s

- New pattern of drug use
 - Old: Alcohol
 - New: Marijuana
 - New: Hallucinogens
 - Open use, social settings

USA: Context of Social Change

Increased

- National infrastructure (roads, communications)
- Economic growth
- Education and contact among young people
- Modes of personal expression
- Political interest

What is the Ethiopian Context?

Ethiopian Milestones

- Haile Selassie
 - 1916-1930 Regent
 - 1930-1974 Emperor
- DERG
 - 1974-1991
- Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
 - 1991-present
- New Constitution 1994

Since +/-1994

- National infrastructure (roads, communications)
 - Bahir Dar-Gondar: 6 hours vs. 2.5 hours
 - Computers, internet, cell phones
- Economic growth
 - Exports
 - Tourism
 - Investment by members of Ethiopian diaspora
- Education and contact among young people
 - Great emphasis on higher education, building schools
- Modes of personal expression
 - Computers, internet, cell phones
- Availability of khat



Video 2

- Growing college enrollment
 - Increased migration, learning from students from khat-growing regions
- University life = freedom

Video 3

- Many similar points, but:
 - Pressure to perform at University
 - With more people exposed, greater number of vulnerable individuals chance negative consequences of khat, tobacco, and alcohol

Conclusion

- US/Ethiopian generation gap parallel is not a perfect model, but useful for our purposes of comparison and contrast of contributing historical, economic and societal factors