EDUCATION, ISLAM, AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION:

A qualitative study of parents’ and children’s educational objectives, strategies, and participation in the Somali refugee community of Columbus, Ohio.

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**EDUCATION, ISLAM, AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION:**

A qualitative study of parents’ and children’s educational objectives, strategies, and participation in the Somali refugee community of Columbus, Ohio

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Immigrant children in the United States and elsewhere create a sense of cultural identification based on a combination of their own experiences and cultural knowledge transmitted from their parents. For Somali refugees in Columbus, the issue of cultural transmission is particularly crucial because in 2003, a generation of children is growing up completely outside of Somalia, in contrast to their parents, who were raised and educated in Somalia. This study creates understanding of how these parents transmit cultural information, or “what they need to be Somali” to children through a combination of elements which includes secular education, religious education, instruction at home, and large-scale manipulation of their environment. The construction of a model for cultural transmission allows the examination of specific aspects of Somali and American culture which are sustained, and other aspects of culture or future possibilities which are filtered. This process contributes to children’s experience and helps build their self-identity as Somalis and Muslims. The study emphasizes qualitative research methods which allow individuals to describe their experiences as Somalis in Columbus. Better understanding of methods and strategies used by parents to preserve culture and cultural values will allow members of the Somali community as well as outsiders to better understand the choices parents make for the children’s educational experiences and can lead to improved options for every parent who participates in education in an area where immigrants or refugees are a significant part of the community.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“My community has been important to me all my life. I always think of my group. I cannot imagine living for myself; it contradicts all the things I believe in.”

Yusuf, adult, Toronto

“I love my duqsi because I’m learning my traditions and stuff, and what I need to be learning when I grow up, and what I need and what I’m supposed to know...[and] at International Academy...I learn the subjects because I can pass college, or high school, middle school...so, they’re both important.”

Alena, student, Columbus

Within the Somali community of Columbus, Ohio, parents continually find ways to transfer their conception of culture to their children. Strategies used by parents include the creation of schools for religious education, known as duqsi; the development of a public charter school, the International Academy of Columbus; instruction at home; and interaction with a relatively homogeneous community consisting of other Somalis or Muslims. These strategies ensure that children understand the Somali language, understand the practice of Islam, and develop methods for dealing with what parents perceive as negative aspects of American culture. All these elements contribute to Somali children’s experience during the transmission of cultural values from their parents.

For the purposes of this paper, I will use Goodenough’s definition of culture: “A society’s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members” (quoted in Keesing, 1974, p. 77). While this definition is broad, I would also include the idea that culture is “shared codes of meaning” (ibid. p. 79). Together, the knowledge children require and the symbols or codes of meaning are what are important for parents in the Somali community to work to preserve. There are certain things one should know as a Somali, either in Columbus or in Somalia, and certain symbols, such as the wearing of the hijab by women and girls, that are universally shared within the community.

In this study, members of the Somali community in Columbus were observed working and going to school and later interviewed about their views about life in the United States, the education of their children, and the differences between living in Somalia and Columbus. Attempts to compare parents’ and children’s educational experiences were made in order to determine how parents use education to preserve aspects of Somali culture in their children, many of whom have grown up entirely outside Somalia or Africa. The intention of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of some of the methods by which culture is transmitted to children from parents, which ideas and values are sustained, which negative influences are filtered, and Somali children’s experiences.
I have divided this paper into six chapters. This first chapter is a discussion of some specific aspects of the community and schools I studied, and the assumptions and bias that I brought to the study. The second and third chapters are a discussion of current knowledge and scholarly activity related to Islam, education, and refugee communities. The fourth chapter discusses the methods used to gather the data for the study, and the fifth outlines the results of the interviews and observations. The final chapter concludes with some recommendations for future research and notes the limitations of this study.

**Living in Columbus**

When refugees travel from their home country, they inevitably face issues of cultural adjustment. Along with the individual’s adjustment to a new way of life, refugees who travel with families must also consider the way their children will live in their new home. For many of the Somali refugee community of Columbus, adjusting to life in America has meant a focus on education for their children. Whereas education in Somalia consisted of a combination of learning the typical subjects - reading, writing, and arithmetic – and Qur’anic studies, in the United States, these two aspects of life are separate and parents must make a specific effort to ensure that their children are learning how to be a good Muslim as well as how to read, write, or do math problems.

Many Somali parents are also confronted with issues of authority in their households. Living in the United States, without a sufficient grasp of English,
many parents now rely on their children to assist them with day-to-day life. The difficulty with language is thus of new significance for families in which there may have been more “traditional” lines of authority and leadership. When the father is the definitive leader, provider, and teacher, cultural values are passed to children directly. However, when a father’s authority is perceived as diminished due to a lack of ability to speak English, children may not accept as readily what they consider to be outdated cultural characteristics. For this reason, and others, parents are concerned that their children will forget their language, Somali, and that their immersion in English and the United States will mean that their children will lose their parents’ ways of life.

The Somali community in Columbus is perceived by many Americans as an enclave, a mostly homogeneous group that mainly keeps to itself. There are a number of reasons why this may be true. Somali parents mention that one of the main differences in their experience in Somalia and that of their children in the United States is the lack of an cultural system that ensures the development of their children’s religious practice in keeping with parent’s beliefs. In the United States, Somali parents must guide children much more actively in order to counteract what they perceive as a vastly different cultural system. Parents are concerned with the “pop culture” nature of American society and the effect it may have on their children’s choices in the world. Creating an insular community may allow parents to control the activities of their children and
therefore mitigate the negative influences of local (American, Ohio, Columbus) culture.

In addition to the cultural aspects of life in Somalia, parents in Columbus expressed a fear for their children being influences in other ways, or even kidnapped or “stolen”. One parent described his feelings about his children living in the U.S. compared to Somalia as follows:

All the people in the community, they are helping each other. Because, even if you, you don’t afraid, now we are afraid, for the outside children. Because, might be they stole your child, might be they harm your child, might be...hit with car, but there [Somalia], we don’t afraid that. Because, our environment. We don’t have an environment to take children without reason (Khaled, parent).

One of the major themes that recurred in my conversations with Somali parents was a discussion of what many called the environment; that is, everything that surrounds their child – their school, their family, their friends, their community, and the messages they get from the media. The differences in the environment of the United States and Somalia often account for what Somali parents see as the differences between their children’s education and theirs.

Included in some parents’ discussion is what it meant to deal with the issues of being a Muslim in a Midwestern state like Ohio, where specific instances of violence against Muslims and mosques occurred after September 11th (see
O’Malley, Sept. 18, 2001, The Plain Dealer; Tarazi, Jan. 4, 2002, Columbus Dispatch). This is a specific aspect of the Somali experience in Columbus that I will attach to the larger idea of cultural transmission discussed above.

**Somalia, refugees, and Columbus**

The decade of the 1990s in Somalia was characterized by a loss of centralized governmental control, interclan rivalry and warfare, failed attempts by the international community to create a peaceful transition to civilian government, and a large influx of Somali refugees to the United States and Canada. “Minneapolis and Columbus have become the first- and second-most popular destinations for Somalis [in the United States]. The populations in those cities continue to grow not just from new refugees but from Somalis who initially settled elsewhere and moved to join family or friends”, (Edwards, Sept 2, 2001). Somali friends have suggested that the reason for choosing Columbus is the fact that the cities of Minneapolis, Toronto, and Columbus form an easily accessible triangle through the Midwest.

Columbus is home to Somalis who have fled the war at home directly and others who have arrived in Columbus from another city in the West at the behest of relatives or friends who have preceded them. According to local sources, the population in the city in 1996 was 40 Somalis; in 2000, it was 14,000, and in

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2003, it is 20,000. Columbus as a whole has a population of about 1.5 million people, and therefore the Somali community represents greater than 1% of the population. The rapid growth in population has in many instances led to misunderstandings between the existing populations and the relatively new arrivals.

For many members of the Somali refugee community in Columbus, the transition to life in the United States has been marked by difficulties in language acquisition, adjustment to culture, and finding the economic means to support themselves. Numerous articles from the Columbus Dispatch have mentioned the difficulties of the Somali community. “Culture shock and language differences have been tough adjustments for children of Somalian (sic) immigrants attending classes in Columbus schools, the president of a Somalian (sic) association said”, (Ortega, June 8, 1999). “Somali residents have been traveling a road worn down by ethnic groups that came before them: They see their path pockmarked by fear, ignorance, unfair treatment and a lack of respect for their customs. ‘We feel targeted,’ said Hassan Omar, president of the Somali Association of Ohio, which also is on Cleveland Avenue. ‘Our businesses have been robbed and burglarized, even the Somali center’”, (Meyers, Dec 6, 2000).

It should be noted that the local media’s coverage of Somali residents of Columbus has tended to focus on issues of difference related to dress, language, and religion. For this reason, Somalis in Columbus tend to be regarded as a
monolithic Other. Creation of this other has the tendency to create isolation, and while parents discussed the idea of working more closely with other ethnic groups in the city, this has to date not been entirely successful.

These issues of culture clashes are often related to the differences in appearance between Somalis and Americans, and the issue of Islam and Islamic practice. For example, in an article in the Columbus Dispatch, a local reporter writes: “In culture clashes with Americans, Somalis’ devotion to Islam is probably the primary source of conflict, especially when the religious duty to pray at specified times each day conflicts with American work schedules”, (Edwards, Sept 2, 2001). These differences in religious practices are a significant barrier for finding employment, as indicated, but can also be links that strengthen a community and provide a path toward preserving cultural identity and knowledge while living in a foreign country.

Other instances of religious differences have appeared in the divisions between Christians and Muslims and the distribution of religious materials defaming Islam and Muslims. Again, from the Columbus Dispatch: “Some members of central Ohio’s Somali community say they’re irate about a Christian tract distributed in the Westerville area that attacks Islam”, (Hoover, Oct. 12, 2001). Members of the American community have also discussed their intentions to convert Muslim students to Christianity. For example, an evangelical Christian in a Columbus high school noted that the Somali immigrants were a “virtual
mission field” and that “she had an obligation to save them from an eternity in Hell” (Goodstein, May 27, 2003). This New York Times article continued with suggestions from an evangelical teacher, who was quoted as saying, “don’t bring them [the Somalis] to church because they will misunderstand the singing and clapping as a party”, (ibid.). It should be noted that all of the parents to whom I spoke were aware of the differences between Islam and Christianity, and were also able to differentiate between a party and a worship service. This is an example of a particular part of Somali experience in Columbus that influences how parents create an environment to preserve the positive aspects of inter- and intra- community interaction while giving children the knowledge to mitigate the negative effects of evangelizing.

The issue of being a Muslim in American post-September 11th is important to the Somali community and many of the people who participated in this study. Several interviewees spoke of the issues they faced because of their names or other characteristics identifying them as Muslims. For example, a parent told me a story of his attempts to secure financial aid at Ohio State University. Having been approved for financial aid, he went into the office on the 12th of September 2001, to find that his name had been removed from the records and that more money for his tuition and fees was overdue. His expression of frustration with the system seems to echo broader issues within Islamic communities and the United States.
I went to see the head of the department...I said...[w]ether you like it or not, my name is Mohammed, and I am a Muslim. I have right to get, what I have to get, from here. What I ask you is, after September 11th you don’t have rights if your name is Mohammed? Or if you are a Muslim, you don’t have rights, in the whole country? Because I was September 10th {sic} and I have these papers from your office and everything is right, and then after September 11th they throw out my name. So why? (Abdi, parent).

Islam and Islamic groups have become increasingly essentialized as “monolithic realities” (Falk, 2000, p. 148) and the Somali community, made up of Muslims, is no exception to this practice. Refugees occupy a particularly delicate position in the domestic debate on human rights for Muslims. One of the parents I interviewed for this study was unwilling to be tape-recorded, because he did not want his voice identified. Another expressed unease about the interviewing of his child, not only because he was afraid that the child would be unable to properly express what it meant to be Muslim, but also because he was concerned that speaking to me about issue of religion might influence the child’s religious views. In a world where “social and political life appears to be dominated by ideas of revenge and violence” (Ahmed, 2003, p. 59), parent’s concern for their children is justified vis-à-vis Islam and Islamic values. Abdi’s statement above reinforces Falk’s point that
there is little doubt that there is a generalized Islamic sense of grievance that overrides the very deep intracivilization cleavages (on the level of state, class, religious tradition, and geographic region) that currently exist in the Islamic world (2000, p. 154-155).

This is also important for the Somali community of Columbus. Self-identification for the Somalis in this study was strongly tied to being Muslim and therefore an important part of the development of a cultural transmission model.

**Objectives of this study**

There were two main institutions in Columbus that provided the venue for research in this community. The first was the International Academy of Columbus, a public charter school which teaches children from kindergarten to 6th grade, most of Somali descent, and all (except the first year students) with some American public school experience. The second institution was a *duqsi*, or *madrassa*, in Arabic, where children from the Somali community go on weekends in order to learn Arabic and the Qur’an. This study focuses on children from the International Academy who also attend a *duqsi*, and consists of interviews with the children and their parents. Both of these institutions were started by members of the Somali community in response to a need for a supportive and familiar place for their children to study.

I began by observing members of the Somali community in school and at work, and later completed a number of interviews with parents and children. My
intention has been to create an understanding of how parents transmit cultural knowledge to children. I found that parents use the International Academy and *duqsi* to transmit cultural knowledge about being Somali, religious information, and specific messages regarding the child's place in the world and community. They supplement children's education at the International Academy and *duqsi* with instruction at home. They also attempt to control the environment using what I consider large-scale techniques: by living in neighborhoods with other Somalis, by creating and participating in new institutions like the International Academy and *duqsi*, and by building a stronger community through organizations or elements of civil society. Controlling the environment allows parents to transmit the parts of Somali culture they consider important while filtering aspects of American culture they perceive as negative. This group of children and parents is of particular interest because parents were raised in Somalia and therefore participated in Islamic education there, while their children, raised in the United States, participate in Islamic education here, in schools created for the purpose by their parents and the community.

The objectives for this study are to create an understanding of elements which transmit cultural information from parents to children; to discuss how these elements *filter* negative influences and *sustain* other values and ideas, and what these values, ideas, and influences are; and finally, to tie specific issues of ethnic experience into the larger consideration of how cultural transmission
takes place, focusing mainly on children’s experiences. I am also interested in how Somali children function in the community, how their parents feel about what they are learning and the influences that living in the U.S. has on them, and whether they would consider returning to Somalia. In the wake of terrorist attacks on the United States, and in an era that tends to view Islam and Muslims with some degree of suspicion, I was also curious about parents and children’s experiences relating to this event. All of the interviews took place over a six-month period in 2003, and the memories of September 11th and what occurred after were still fresh for many of the parents I interviewed. These questions provide some insight into what it means for Somali parents in Columbus to raise children in the United States, and what it means for children to grow up here.

**The International Academy of Columbus**

The International Academy of Columbus was founded in 2002, with the mission of providing “high quality, global consciousness, and competency based education programs” (International Academy Handbook, p. i). In addition, the school will, “graduate students who are successful life-long learners and responsible citizens of their school, community, neighborhoods, and beyond” (ibid.). The school allows Somali children, many of whom speak the same mother tongue, to interact with each other in an environment that guarantees their freedom to adhere to their religious principles as they and their parents see fit. The International Academy consists of grades K-6, and expects to add one grade
level per year until it has reached $12^{th}$ grade. This depends on space, funding, and ability to hire qualified teachers. The International Academy is located in the north of Columbus. The entire population of children for this study had previously attended other schools in the Columbus area and this aspect of their educational experience plays a role in their experience at the International Academy.

The International Academy opened in the fall of 2002. The school is located on the north side of Columbus, directly across the street from a large brewery. The outside of the school has been recently painted with bright colors, and signs in Somali and English direct visitors to the office. After entering the front door, visitors are greeted by one of the Somali administrators of the school. Forward and to the right, stairs lead up to an open library, which contains two computers connected to the internet and several bookshelves, not yet full of books. To the left are the classrooms, which include kindergarten through sixth grade. Directly to the right is the entrance to the cafeteria. Children’s time for lunch varies depending on their age, with the younger children eating earlier in the day. Lunch is provided by the school for every child and very few (if any) bring food from home. Straight ahead, past the library, is the exit to the playground. Prior to its existence as the International Academy, the school building was a go-kart rental facility. Thus, the playground consists of a great deal of grass, interspersed with a meandering concrete track. There is an unused lap
timer to the left as one exits the rear. To the right are two basketball hoops and an asphalt court, and directly ahead, about a half-mile in the distance, is a fence which marks the end of the playground. Past this fence is a road. Boys at the school tend to play basketball, soccer, or football, while girls tend to walk around the go-kart track talking quietly in groups of 2 to 5 persons. Occasionally girls will interact with boys, especially to compete for the limited number of basketballs or soccer balls. Some days the smell of brewing beer is quite strong; other days it is unnoticeable.

The inside of the school is decorated with pictures of the best student in each grade, as well as the teacher of the month and the administrator of the month. The classrooms are generally busy, cluttered even, in a way that seems to encourage children's interaction with each other and their teacher. In several of the classrooms, desks are arranged in islands of four instead of the traditional rows all facing one direction. Each island will contain exclusively boys or girls, never a mix of the two genders. Generally, each desk has the name of a child on it. Children keep some of their supplies in their desks and others in lockers in the hall outside the classrooms. Classrooms usually have posters and signs on the walls with messages for children related to character development, children’s scores in behavior incentives, or other things related to the school experience.

Teachers have access to multimedia equipment and computers. Some teachers have a computer at their desk, but I never saw these computers used in
classroom instruction. Teachers generally rotate in and out for various classes: for example, the Arabic teacher will visit all the classrooms every day rather than stay in one homeroom. Children are therefore not in the halls between classes but are in the halls during lunchtime or, in the case of the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, when they are going to science classes which are taught by one specific teacher with his own classroom.

In the second year of instruction at the school, there were enough children that the school board rented office space in an unused bank building across an adjacent street. This street was not busy and the building itself was completely unoccupied except for the two sixth-grade classrooms. The school board is hoping to add more classrooms in the form of modular buildings in the area which is now the playground.

There were approximately 160 children in the school at the time I did the bulk of my observation. The classroom teachers are primarily American-born, either white or of African descent, although there is a small number of non-Americans in administrative or classroom positions. The school is facilitated by several members of the Somali community, who help classroom instructors and administrators with language, discipline, and logistics. Class sizes are fairly small, typically under 20.
What is *duqsi*?

“Duqsi” is a Somali word that refers to a place where children learn specific aspects of Islam and the Qur’an. In the *duqsi*, children learn passages from the Qur’an in Arabic, and work to memorize them so that they are able to repeat them for their instructor and their parents. The *duqsi* is characterized by strict discipline. Boys and girls sit in different classrooms, although the girls may be taught by a male teacher. I never saw boys at the *duqsi* taught by a female teacher, although it may be possible in specific circumstances. A *duqsi* is not exactly the same as the Arabic *madrassa*, which many times will also include education on specific subjects. However, in terms of the understanding of *madrassa* in terms of Qur’anic education focusing on memorization of *suras*, discovering the correct ways to practice Islam, and learning Arabic, the meaning seems to be nearly the same.

Development of the *duqsi* was initiated by members of the Somali community who wanted to add an aspect of specific Qur’anic education to the development of their children. In addition, it was an opportunity to provide further character training and moral development to children in the community. It should be noted that *duqsi* is a generic word and as such, there are several places in Columbus where *duqsi* or *duqsi Qur’an* takes place. The school which I visited consisted of several rooms in a rented building, where children typically sat on the floor and were instructed by a member of the Somali community in
Arabic and Somali. The methodology in the *duqsi* is based primarily on Arabic instruction through the use of whiteboards, along with the recitation of Qur’anic verses and the Arabic lessons presented. Leaders of the institution pay monthly rent and typically supplement fees collected from students with their own incomes.

**Conducting fieldwork in Columbus; assumptions and bias**

In completing this study, I focused on a particular sub-group of the Somali community. The parents and children who I interviewed were all connected in some way to the International Academy and a *duqsi*. I did not take into account the broader community, or children who attended only the International Academy and not the *duqsi*, although one child I interviewed was not currently enrolled in *duqsi*; nor did I interview children who attended public schools but went to the same *duqsi* as other children in the study. The goals for the study are addressed to an extent by the questions, but also by observations I made while I was volunteering at the International Academy and the *duqsi* I visited.

To be able to conduct the study effectively, it was necessary to make a number of assumptions. First, I assume that parents attempt to provide their children with effective skills for being members of their communities and for finding jobs in the United States; that is, to become part of American society, in an economic sense and possibly, in a cultural sense. Second, I assume that the preservation of what it means to be Somali, what I am titling “Somali culture” and
have previously defined as required information, is important to parents and affects their educational decisions. I also entered the study with the assumption that every Somali I would interview would be Muslim and that Islamic faith and practice would be central to their ideas of culture as previously defined.

One effect of this method of research is the fact that I became quite involved with the community under study. Because I volunteered at the International Academy, it was impossible to remain distant from the children, their parents, and many of the issues they faced in their lives. I came to see the International Academy as a sort of refuge for parents: a place where they could send their children and be free of the worry of harassment, food that was not *halal*, and language that their children, in some cases, could not understand. Parents also have the security of knowing that a member of the staff is not plotting to convert their child to Christianity, which would be not only destructive to parents in terms of religion, but also in terms of cultural values which are transferred through the teaching of Islam.

One important bias that I had going into the study was my understanding of the refugee status of the Somali community. I had the impression from meeting members of the community that the Somali parents I met would be struggling with work in America, identity issues, and the roles they were playing in their children’s educational experiences. While some of these things may be true, I also discovered that as a whole, the parents I interviewed were very active
participants in their children’s education. Parents did not speak of themselves as refugees. Many were working multiple jobs in order to support their families but considered themselves very much a part of American society. Children had also not considered for the most part returning to Somalia. The main issue that parents had with life in the United States was the fact that their working lives kept them from being able to spend as much time as they would like educating their children, and that they were continually challenged by the environment of the United States. As indicated by the quotes from the Columbus Dispatch, the American media has a tendency to describe the Somali community in terms of a ghettoized group; but my experience was that the parents and children I interviewed are simply in the process of creating a meaningful definition of community in Columbus. The language issues people are having, duly noted in the Columbus press, are not as in a practical sense as meaningful within the Somali community itself. Most parents want their children to be proficient at English so that their futures are secure, but also want their children to remember their parents’ language as well.

Because I have previously experienced Islam in an African setting as a Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania, I went into the International Academy with an understanding of Islam as essentially equivalent to Christianity, with the same god, a monotheistic philosophy, and similar ideals of respect for neighbors and fellow people. I also understood Islam to have a particular respect for “people of
the book”: Christians and Jews. When I began the study I was sympathetic to what I understood to be many of the difficulties facing Muslim parents in terms of raising their children and living in the United States in 2003. After working at the International Academy and seeing the respect and care that teachers have for children, as well as each other, and me, as a visitor, I feel a certain obligation to attempt to deconstruct the seemingly common notion of Islam as “regressive, fraudulent, and violent”³ (Goodstein, May 27, 2003, pgf. 3), while respecting the diversity of people within the Somali community and presenting some critiques.

Besides my experience with Islam in Tanzania, I was also a teacher, in a rural secondary school with students from ages 14 – 23 years of age. I therefore brought a particular understanding of “education in Africa” to interviews, especially with parents. When I was speaking to a parent and they noted that their experience of education in Africa was different than their child’s, I understood in a very tangible way to what they were referring. There is a stereotype of education in Africa that children are always respectful and polite, that parents support teachers in discipline, and that children learn subjects through memorization or by rote. The truth about school in Africa is of course much more nuanced than this stereotype; nonetheless, I mention it because although I am unable to compare personal experiences of education in Somalia, I

³ I found this quote in an article in the New York Times and it seemed to be indicative of a broader discourse in some parts of American society regarding the nature of Islam.
am able to perceive to some extent the differences between the way parents report their experiences and how children at the International Academy receive education and interact with their peers and teachers. I am reporting a similarity in variation, based on personal experience.

Despite my goal of deconstructing myths regarding Islam and Muslim communities, I hope in this study to ask some critical questions of the community. For example, one of the issues facing Muslim women and girls in western countries is the issue of head covering, or the *hijab*. Knowing that this issue is of fairly critical importance to members of the Somali community as well as the Columbus community at large, I have asked girls why they wear the *hijab*. Unfortunately, none of the girls I spoke with could articulate any specific reasons for covering their head, besides that it was a part of their religion. I will discuss this issue further in a later chapter.

I believe that by asking critical questions about the community and the practices involved, I may be able to return to the community a snapshot of their children’s educational experiences, both secular and religious. Paulo Friere’s idea of “raising critical consciousness”⁴ and returning to the community a picture of their lives is part of what I believe any study should attempt to accomplish. I hope that the combination of critical questioning and cooperative experiences

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will produce a study that accomplishes my goals of raising critical consciousness and enriching my own knowledge.
CHAPTER 2: ISLAM, REFUGEE COMMUNITIES, AND THE UNITED STATES

This chapter deals with current knowledge in the following areas:

• Perceptions of Islam in the United States and elsewhere
• Cultural studies of Somalis in other cities such as Toronto, London, and Melbourne
• Political history of Somalia and the causes of flight
• Religious education in refugee and immigrant communities
• An overview of Islamic communities in Africa and the United States.

I have divided this review into two chapters in order to focus attention first on aspects of culture and Islam, and second on education and strategies behind educational choices. This chapter informs the discussion of the element of *duqsi* and Islamic education in the cultural transmission model, while Chapter 3 informs the discussion of the International Academy and the environment in the model.

**Islam and the United States in 2003**

In McGown’s study of Somalis in Toronto and London, she notes that “Islam, and Muslims, are frequently portrayed as essentially Other in both academic journals and popular journalism” (p. 216). McGown cites work from Daniel Pipes and Bernard Lewis⁵ in revealing the presence of essentialism in the

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academic community, noting further that work from both authors depicting Islam as a monolithic block has been published in such prominent mainstream media as the *New York Times* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. The impacts of such views are many and varied, but in terms of parents and students, certainly include resistance to allowing prayer time for students or employees; unknowingly providing food to students that is forbidden to Muslims; or discriminating against Somali women based on their wearing of the hijab. Each of these issues has occurred in Columbus in varied form and in some ways these events may influence the choices parents have made for their children’s education.

How Islamic education functions as a tool to filter or sustain aspects of Somali culture depends on how Muslims are perceived within their communities and how they perceive themselves within their communities. Ahmed (2003), referring to Muslims worldwide, notes that “Muslims...felt especially vulnerable after September 11.” (p. 24). The “with us or against us” approach to foreign policy has led to this monolithic perception of Muslims and Islam, and therefore, to a feeling on the part of Muslims that their beliefs and religion have been singled out for attack or discrimination. Ahmed suggests that this discrimination has resulted in Muslim communities moving to a state of “hyper-asabiyya” which he defines as an “exaggerated and even obsessive loyalty to the group” (p. 14). Asabiyya is the word for ‘honor’ or ‘loyalty’ and refers to the relationship between an individual and a larger group, such as a family, clan, religious group,
or community. This hyper-asabiyya is a way that communities may find themselves locked into struggles for honor or dignity; it is both a cause and symptom of violence and monolithic thinking on the part of the members of a particular social group.

Ahmed suggests that we are entering a “post-honor” world (p. 14), and that this world is increasingly defined by societies which do not maintain ideas of traditional honor and those which maintain a fierce sense of honor (p. 58). The divide between these two ends of the spectrum can create a justification for violence or revenge, as one group dishonors another in order to regain a sense of its own honor. This situation leads inevitably to a redefinition of what it means to be honorable, especially in times of crisis. For Somalis in Columbus, honor and “asabiyya” exist in at least two forms. First, what is ‘honorable’ and ‘dishonorable’ applies to interactions with outsiders, in particular, with Somali women and non-Somali men (for example, see Phillips, August 3, 2003, & Myers, G., December 26, 2000, *The Columbus Dispatch*). Second, as indicated in the opening quote of this paper, Somalis state that attachment to community is part of the ‘common sense’ of their cultural tradition. I use these concepts, ‘asabiyya’ and ‘hyper-asabiyya’ as reference points for the categorization of *duqsi*, Qur’anic instruction at home, and control of the ‘environment’, all of which enable cultural transmission.
A monolithic view of Islam in the United States and in Columbus in particular can lead to other forms of discrimination. Articles in local and national media discuss tensions between the African-American and Somali community (Latta, Jan 13, 2002); between Christians and Muslims (Hoover, Oct 12, 2001, Goodstein, May 27, 2003); and between suspects and the law enforcement community (M2 Presswire, June 20, 2003). These conflicts exist in other Somali communities, as described by De Voe (2002) and McMichael (2002) in their scholarly work on Somalis in St. Louis and Melbourne, Australia. The experience of being Muslim in the west (and I am including Australia in the definition of the West) means, in the post-September 11th world, to confront issues of discrimination based on religious affiliation. Often women bear the brunt of this discrimination because the wearing of the hijab shows a religious affiliation which is not immediately obvious in the case of men.

**Being a Somali Muslim in a Western City**

The question of Somali identity and Islamic identity outside of Somalia are closely connected. For example, McMichael (2002), notes that “many [Somali women] emphasize that Islam and Somali culture are inseparable” (p. 179). Other studies, such as DeVoe’s work on Somali women in St. Louis, suggest that women and girls are in fact the “carriers of their group’s ethnic identity” (p. 243) specifically around the issue of the hijab. She also notes that “For the Somali community the social integration of their girls and young women is not
important; following religiously proscribed and gender-based behaviors takes precedence” (ibid.). What is important about these two works is that each describes Somali culture in different cities as being closely tied to several common themes: one, that life in Somalia was “having a clear social and moral order that was defined by the framework of Islam” (McMichael, p. 178); two, that “the new socio-cultural environment in which adult refugees find themselves can often appear to be without recognizable social markers and signposts” (De Voe, p. 243); and three, that the Somali community tends to operate as a larger relatively homogeneous group, despite differences in clan affiliation (Turnbull, March 11, 2003).

The belief in Somali homogeneity is often used by the press in Columbus as a way to categorize the community. Participants in this study spoke of the divisions between clans in Somalia and these divisions are well documented in the political history of the country; however, other participants also spoke of the connections between Somalis of all clans and the fact the issue of clan affiliation was not important in the United States. As in McMichael’s study, this is based largely on the fact that parents believe that they were able to raise their children in Somalia without worrying about the influence of American culture or other religious viewpoints that might turn their children away from Islam and therefore, Somali culture.
These issues of culture are closely tied to issues of language. One of the most important issues for members of the Somali community in Columbus is language, be it English, Somali, and Arabic. Discussions of language in the local media abound; parents discuss their use of language, the worry that their children will lose the ability to speak Somali and therefore their culture, and the issue of children providing English translations for parents and thereby usurping the authority of their parents within family structures which are considered traditional. The community has started schools specifically to deal with the issue of language which allow children to work on language before being placed into mainstream public schools. However, these schools, sometimes known as “welcome centers” have been received with mixed feelings by the Somali community; first, parents feel that their children should not be isolated from the larger American community (Bush, July 7, July 31, 1999); while second, they hope and believe that the English their children learn in these schools will help them fit in better to the schools they attend later.

As previously mentioned, Western views of Islam tend to be largely monolithic. In the Somali community, this has several different meanings. After the events of September 11th, attacks on mosques occurred, both in Columbus and

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6 I collected a series of articles from The Columbus Dispatch, written between 1998 and 2003. In this five year period, I found 29 articles related to the Somali community in Columbus, an average of 4.2 per year. In those 29 articles, I found 65 references to language, communication, and the issue of Somali refugees’ difficulties with English. Clearly, this issue is one of the most significant facing the Somali community as well as Columbus at large. However, it is so typically mentioned that this issue may be reinforced and propagated by the media’s discussion.
in Toledo, the site of the Midwest’s largest mosque. While local media has attempted to explain the views of Muslims in Columbus and the Somali community\(^2\), this has the effect in many cases of stereotyping the Islamic community as a homogeneous block, when in fact, even within the sample for this study, there are significant differences in the way parents discuss Islam and Islamic education. McMichael’s study in Melbourne echoes this aspect of Islam and the west, noting that within her research group “Somali women hold diverse ideas about Islam and the appropriate expression and practice of Islamic faith” (p. 181), despite the fact that Islam is often seen as “a unified and authentic Islam” (p. 180).

Finding the dividing line between what is Islam and what is Somali is difficult because in many ways Islam in refugee communities provides such an important lifeline to preservation of values. Cultural studies of Somalis in Toronto and London indicate that “in a Somali framework, the individual is responsible for his own actions before God, where they concern religion; but also to his family and relations, particularly when they are in need” (McGown, p. 137). Also, McGown’s work shows that Somali and Islamic value systems are closely linked and “intrinsic to one another” (p. 136). The fact that Islam and Somali are used interchangeably in many studies reinforces the idea that practice of Islam can mitigate the tension between Somali values and the values of the

\(^2\) For examples, see Everhart, M., (Jan 1, 2002); Latta, T.Y., (Jan 13, 2002); Hoover, F., (Nov 16, 2001).
host community in part because it allows parents to choose which values and ideas are transmitted to their children.

**Somalia’s political history and the creation of refugees**

Somali culture and history is particularly complicated in terms of politics and ethnic and clan identity. The arrival in the U.S. of large numbers of refugees from Somalia is directly related to the civil war which began in 1991 and has, in some ways, continued until the present, although the current political situation in the country seems to be primarily anarchy interspersed with the rule of warlords. Despite this lack of central government, there exist within the country specific relationships between pastoralists, cultivators, and clan elders that allows for a continuation and development of trade, religious, and political ties.

Understanding the nature of Islam in Africa and the method of arrival on the east coast of the continent provides additional background for Somali culture. Many aspects of Islam in Africa make up practice of Islam in America among the Somali community.

Mazrui (1997) suggests that the start of tyranny in Somalia began in October 1969, when General Mohammed Siyad Barre took over the democratic state which had characterized Somalia since its independence in 1960 (p. 8). The Barre regime was characterized by “regional sub-cultures” and “social class competition” (Geshekter, 1997, p. 72). The beginning of the downfall of the Barre state began in 1981, at the end of the failed attempt to wrest control of the
Ogaden region from Ethiopia. Barre’s idea of “pan-Somalism” failed and the backlash was a huge influx of refugees from Ethiopia, disintegrating support for his policies, and inter-clan humanitarian disasters (ibid., p. 76 – 77). Ten years later, in 1991, Barre’s state finished its collapse and left the country stateless, under the control of the thugs and military leaders who were able to survive the repression of the last 10 years of his regime.

At the time of this writing, Somalia remains essentially stateless, although there are many aspects of the economy and politics that are functioning. Many Somali citizens still remain outside of their country, especially in Kenya. According to Hyndman (1999), “a select number of refugees – less than one percent of the total – may be resettled abroad” (p. 108). In fact, the United States’ allocation for refugees from all countries has declined since the early 1990s. In 2002 there were 70,000 spaces allocated for refugees, down from 142,000 in 1992 (ibid., p. 109). Of these 70,000 spaces, 22,000 are allotted for refugees from Africa (U.S. Department of State, 2001).

**Islam in Africa and the United States**

Islam in Africa first arrived via the Indian Ocean in the East and across the Sahara in the West. The development of the religion in the region occurred because of the strong geographic connection between the Muslim center of the developing world in the Arabian peninsula and travel down the eastern coast of Africa (Pearson, 2000, p. 44). The West, or Maghrib, was “a peripheral refuge”
(von Sivers, 2000, p. 22) for dissenters from the development of orthodoxy in the 9th century. In the middle of the eighth century, refugees and Berbers “founded a number of small mountain and oasis states” that eventually supplemented their income through trade between Baghdad and the Spanish empire, primarily around gold and copper (ibid., p. 22).

Islam in Africa, therefore, was brought to the area by those who traded in commodities both ordinary and luxurious, as well as through groups of dissenters who fled their homelands to reject the development of orthodoxy and dogma. African Islam, therefore, developed differently than that of the Arabian peninsula. Somalia’s Islamic history relates the conflict of the identity of Somali people to both Asian (Arabic) and African, or Somali. In an article exploring Islam and East Africa, Kapteijns (2000) suggests that Islam had the effect of uniting individuals from various clan backgrounds, as well as providing an issue around which leaders could inspire the people, particularly around the issue of country identification whether Arabic or African. Most followers of Islam today in Somalia are Sunni, and Islam has, for better or worse, contributed to the development of a singular Somali national identity, exploited by political leaders and generalized by outsiders, often unable to comprehend the diversity of clan cultures. Kapteijns

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also points out that the region has also had a significant “exuberant mystical” Islamic aspect as well as a “sober reformist one” (p. 244).

The immigration of Muslims to the United States took place in a series of well-documented and distinguishable periods. The first was between 1875 and 1912, with the majority of immigrants arriving from an area of the Middle East known as “greater Syria” (Smith, 1999, p. 51). According to Smith, the “vast majority” of these immigrants were Christian, with a “small percentage” Sunni, Shia, ‘Alawi, and Druze (p. 51). The second wave of immigration occurred at the end of World War I, with the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The third wave lasted throughout most of the 1930s and was characterized by limits or quotas placed on the immigration of certain people from certain countries. The fourth wave occurred between 1947 and 1960, and “saw considerable expansion in the sources of immigration“ (ibid., p. 52). The last wave stems from changes in law passed by Lyndon Johnson in 1965, which repealed the quotas based on racial diversity in the U.S. Smith claims, “Immigration from Europe thus declined, while that from the Middle East and Asia increased dramatically, more than half of the newcomers Muslim (1999, p. 52). These waves of immigrants may provide a contrast to immigrants who are now arriving in the United States because of war or civil unrest in their countries, such as members of the Somali community, who have arrived in the United States due to fear of persecution at home.
CHAPTER 3: IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES AND EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

This chapter will deal with current knowledge from the following areas:

- Characteristics of refugee communities and education
- How education and culture are related
- How refugee communities use education to preserve culture.

Literature in this chapter provides a framework for discussion of how education, both secular and religious, contributes to the transmission of culture in the Somali community through the International Academy, duqsi, and education at home.

Refugee and immigrant communities and religious education

There has been significant research on the topic of how Islamic education has been organized from the point of view of the educators and community. There are several conclusions that are made in the current body of literature regarding how Islamic education exists in the communities, both within what is typically considered the Muslim world as well as within countries and communities outside this culture. For example, in his article Islamic Education and Scholarship in Sub-Saharan Africa, Stefan Reichmuth (2000) describes Islamic education there as a mediating and differentiating influence, which serves to “distinguish status” among Muslims and the non-Muslim community (p. 420). In addition, the education of children in Muslim communities often takes place in areas in which the state has little or no ability to provide for public education,
thereby becoming “a full sector of its own in many African countries”.

Therefore, Islamic education fulfills a specific role in many existing communities in the United States and Europe, both within immigrant and “indigenous” populations. Specifically, this role has a lot to do with the education of children and the passing on of the Islamic body of knowledge as well as providing structure and guidance to the community as a whole. Second generation immigrants have been described as “lost” (Husain & Vogelaar, 1994, p. 232) when they have not taken part in Islamic education as a result of their parents being unable to construct and run schools.

Some authors have indicated in their research about the nature of Islamic education that it is primarily concerned with memorization of the Qur’an (Goldziher, 1912, p. 198 – 207). According to Wagner and Lotfi, the subjects of study were “reading, writing, recitation, and rituals associated with religious prayer” (1980, p. 239). In their work, Traditional Islamic Education in Morocco: Sociohistorical and Psychological Perspectives, they suggest that “pedagogical style is one of the best-known and most criticized characteristics of Qur’anic schooling, past and present” (p. 245). The typical expectation for these schools is that children who attend them learn little in the way of cognitive functioning, and rather, with the focus on memorization, are at the end of their educational

10 I use the term “indigenous” to refer to the institution of African-American Islam. The term indigenous is misleading in that African-Americans are not an indigenous population of North America.
track left with fairly little in the way of applicable problem solving skills. Wagner and Lofti titled one of their papers, “Learning to Read by Rote in the Qur’anic Schools of Yemen and Senegal”, thus reinforcing the popular belief in the pedagogical deficiencies in this form of schooling. However, the skills applicable may be less quantitative than previously measured: they may increase social status (cultural capital) or help children to build other skills, such as memorization, that are not measured (and may not be measurable) by western academics.

According to Camilleri (1986), children from immigrant cultures develop an identity of themselves that is a combination of their parents’ worldview and their own experiences in the country to which they have emigrated. He goes on to say that, “When [children] adopt Western traits they rarely try to achieve a coherent synthesis with the original system” (p. 81), i.e., the cultural system of their parents. One of the difficulties the older generation has, according to Camilleri, is “rigidifying” (p. 81) their culture in order to preserve it in the face of Western influences, which reduces the ability of their culture to grow, adapt, and become responsible for all of the implications of life in a Western country. The consequences of these readjustments may be seen in the form of “strategies of advantage maximization” where subjects use parts and pieces from each culture to reinforce or gain from their respective institutions. In addition, the host groups “are ill disposed to judge and behave in accordance with the actual personality of each foreigner” and this causes the host community to project a specific image,
which “mainly implies rejection since it focuses on the socially disadvantaged
with whom the problems of coexistence with nationals have not been solved”,
(Camilleri, 1986, p. 83).

Ostberg (2000) in her work describing the social roles of Pakistani
children in Norway, cites “formal educational training through the Qur’an
schools” as a contributor to the shaping of children’s embodied knowledge (p. 100). This knowledge allows them to function in Norwegian society in the dual
role of Pakistani Muslim and secular Norwegian. Kolars (1994), however, quotes
an American born child of Muslim parents from Bangladesh who says, “I think
that it is good that we have a secular school system because it doesn’t leave
people of different religions out and make them the oddball”, (p. 491).

In terms of the International Academy, Kolar’s discussion is important,
because students there are, to an extent, removed from the greater Columbus
community. How they create identity in the U.S. is therefore through a
combination of the four elements I have previously discussed: the International
Academy, duqsi, instruction at home, and the environment. These experiences
may or may not include input from other American children, but as I observed at
the International Academy, do include input from various media sources,
including the internet, American popular videos, and various music.

Children of immigrant parents are often forced to choose between their
parents’ way of life and the views which are espoused in the schools they attend.
For the Somalis in this study, the necessity for this ‘forced choice’ is reduced because the International Academy provides an educational venue which controls children’s access to views which are different from those of their parents. This is one way in which parents control the environment around them and filter perceived negative influences.

**The relationship between education and culture**

Research on Islamic education suggests that it provides an important framework for living within a community in a way that rejects much of what typical modern Western society views as important. Nurudeen Alao, in *Education in Islam: The challenge of Numbers, Breadth, and Quality*, says “there are three additional purposes of Islamic education. For the individual, Islamic education is a means of liberation, a path to independence and self reliance...The second purpose is to create a civilized universal community that is free of hatred, free of discrimination, but is compassionate and benevolent towards one another with each contributing to the welfare of all, [and]...Thirdly, [sic] Islamic education must, of necessity, instill the discipline of hardwork [sic] and nature and the use of the hands to turn the gifts of nature towards more useful ends” (1993, p. 109). Galadanci puts it even more clearly: “Children...would know how to behave at home, and in public and how to respect their parents, teachers, and elders
generally.” (1993, p. 100). These schools illustrate that Islamic education provides more than rote memorization of Qur’anic texts – it is an integral part of cultural transmission.

In addition to the community structure and guidance aspects of Islamic education, there is also a belief among Islamic organizations in the United States that this education makes up for the deficiencies of the American educational system, especially the separation of church and state, which, “to those from Islamic cultures...is perplexing at best and unthinkable at worst” (Pulcini, 1990, p. 128). This separation “eliminates purpose” and instead of making it possible for children to perceive the connectedness of Islam and science, instead “has elevated doubt and conjecture to “scientific” rank in methodology, and regards doubt as an eminently valid tool in the pursuit of truth” (Abusharif, quoted in Pulcini, 1990, p. 128). Therefore, Islamic groups make strong efforts to develop their own schools and institutions and to either use these institutions as the exclusive educational facilities for their children, or at least, as a significant part of their education. Barazangi (1991), in a study entitled “Islamic Education in the United States and Canada”, discusses how the concepts of Islam can be reconciled with those of the Western system of education and specifically methodology for

11 The issue of Islamic education in sub-Saharan Africa is much more complicated than the scope of this writing. There was significant resistance in many areas to the introduction of Western education by colonial authorities, which furthers an existing division between this type of pedagogy and what would be considered Western pedagogical style. For further reading on this topic, see Al-Amin Abu-Manga, Resistance to the Western system of Education by the early Migrant Community of Mauurna (Sudan). More research on the effect of colonialism on the evolution of African education and pedagogy needs to be done.
integrating curricula in order to allow children to “understand the organization of the two belief systems (Islamic and Western) and arrive at a synthesis for their own beliefs” (p. 171). Perhaps as important is his next curriculum objective: “Abate separation or compartmentalization of Islamic and Western knowledge, but without losing the basic principles of the Islamic system or eradicating group security, such as ethnic or linguistic identification” (p. 171). Therefore, it is Islamic education which provides the framework in immigrant communities not only for the synthesis of a responsible and moral worldview, but also a cultural identification which is important in allowing children to fit into their new homes.

Islam and the role religion plays in the development of young people seems to be little understood in the United States. In addition, as the world continues to become more globalized, people and cultures from around the world often meet in the West and become part of Western cultures.

**How education works to preserve aspects of culture**

Somalis in Columbus often mention that their children are at the mercy of American pop culture and influences that they are unable to control. Education is one way to control children’s exposure to elements of the new culture which parents may find inappropriate for their children. In other cities, private education is the chosen avenue for education for this very reason. For example, McGown (1999) notes that for some in the London Somali community, “it is the
discipline of British private schools that is attractive” (p. 110). However, this depends on the financial resources at the disposal of the family. In Toronto, one woman says “I don’t see staying here. Society is corrupted; things are out of hand. I want to bring up my kids back in Somalia” (p. 113). McGown also says that “many parents see education as a critical issue because they recognize that the home plays a limited role in transmitting values to children” (p. 103).

For these reasons education of all types has an important role in Somali culture in the West. Schools are a place which can represent both a haven from the influences of Western societies and also a negative influence. Especially in London, Somalis note that the system tends to promote Christian education by law, which has led to the withdrawal of Somali students en masse by their parents.\textsuperscript{12} Because Canada’s education system is provincially regulated, Ontario has been able to build a less religious system than in Britain, incorporating “secular humanism” into the curriculum. Of course, this means that Somali children in Toronto and London must attend \textit{duqsi} on their own and their parents must include this time in their schedules, a difficult process when a parent is working multiple jobs.\textsuperscript{13}

Education can both preserve and break down culture. Parents are concerned that “they are losing their children” (McGown, p. 105), because of the

\textsuperscript{12} McGown notes that during the winter of 1996, 1500 Muslim students were withdrawn from religious education (RE) in Batley, West Yorkshire, as a “result of a coordinated campaign among parents” (p. 103).

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., (p. 104).
focus on Christianity (many schools teach about Christmas and Easter, perhaps without discussing Jesus directly)\(^\text{14}\) or because of classes like sex education, which are often viewed as inappropriate topics for Somali girls and boys. However, education can also preserve culture, because it can allow children to interact with other Somalis in order to preserve language and religious values. Because parents and instruction at home cannot provide continuous guidance, a school in which children are guided as to religion and culture can help parents feel more secure about their children’s future.

**Investment in forms of capital**

Capital may be considered “accumulated labor (in its materialized form, or its ‘incorporated’ embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). Cultural capital can thus be said to refer to investments parents make in forms of ‘cultural’ knowledge which are transmittable to their children. While Bourdieu’s work has been interpreted by many sociologists to refer to ‘highbrow’ forms of culture\(^\text{15}\), such as participation in the arts, music, and concerts, others have interpreted Bourdieu’s work differently, suggesting instead that there is no distinction between “cultural capital and ‘ability’ or technical skills” (Lareau & Weininger, p.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., (p. 107).
\(^{15}\) For example, see DiMaggio, 1982; Dimaggio & Mohr, 1985; Robinson & Garnier, 1985; Ganzeboom, De Graaf, & Robert, 1990; Mohr & DiMaggio, 1995; Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 1996.
580). They further suggest that a more useful definition of cultural capital is a combination of technical and social skills that depends on the individual’s position in their society; Bourdieu states that, “what is ascribed to skill and to dignity, to doing and to being, to the technical and the symbolic, varies greatly according to the hierarchical position of title and jobs to which they give access” (1996, p. 119). These investments in capital lead to higher social standing and in terms of education, to "evaluative norms favoring the children or families of a particular social milieu" (Lareau & Weininger, p. 589). For Somalis, Qur’anic knowledge may be considered a form of cultural capital; when a child has memorized the Qur’an, that child’s standing in the community is elevated. Parent’s investment in Islamic education in the form of duqsi therefore fits, at least partially, into a definition of cultural capital which is quantifiable and transmittable.

Education in the sense of cultural capital is part of the landscape within which the Somali community exists. The argument that Qur’anic lessons are part of the social skills and ability that exist as cultural capital and affect the position of a child within the Somali community is a logical consideration for Muslim societies. This knowledge can also be considered highbrow, in terms of its artistry and performance potential, in the same way that western sociologists consider western forms of dance, symphony, or art the currency of cultural capital. Somali parents therefore work to transfer cultural capital to their
children, in the form of Islamic knowledge, secular skills, and technical ability. As indicated, the conceptualization of transmission of culture in this study includes four elements, which parents use to sustain culture in specific forms such as language, or to assist children in gaining better positions or opportunities within the immediate society (Somali Muslims) and in society-at-large (the United States).

Multiple interpretations of cultural capital for Somali parents and children exist. Scholars have created accounts of cultural capital which include the ability of parents to relate to teachers and administrators, in addition to the more widely understood definitions which deal with participation in cultural events. Knowing the appropriate vocabulary and speaking the same language may increase parents’ “effectiveness in getting teachers to respond to their complaints, ability to compensate for perceived deficits in children’s schooling” (Reay, 1998, quoted in Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p. 584). Reay defines cultural capital as “a broad array of linguistic competencies, manners, preferences, and orientations” (ibid.) and this concept of cultural capital is particularly relevant and applicable to the International Academy of Columbus, where the language of the teachers is English and the language of the majority of parents is Somali. The relationship between a child's teacher and that child's parents is to a large extent facilitated by the Somali administrators and aides at the school, who provide translation. Lareau and Weininger (2003) suggest that a vocabulary which includes
educational terminology is important for “full participation” in interactions with teachers (p. 596). Education and cultural capital are closely linked, for both parents and children, and influences the experience of each in religious and secular education.

Perhaps one of the most useful models of the relationship between culture and immigrant societies is to be found in Swidler (1986). In her model, Swidler proposes two forms of societies and lives: settled and unsettled. Within these two classifications, she argues, culture takes on two separate purposes. In settled lives, culture “provides the materials from which individuals and groups construct strategies of action” (p. 280). Within unsettled lives, however, it is ideologies which “establish new styles or strategies of action” (p. 278, emphasis in original). This model is seemingly appropriate for immigrant cultures such as the Somali community of Columbus, in the sense that while traditions and rituals may have changed, the ideology of Islam has essentially remained the same. Swidler suggests that ideology “may be thought of as a phase in the development of a system of cultural meaning” (p. 279) and that they provide the unsettled group with a framework to develop rituals. Further, she states that ritual changes reorganize taken-for-granted habits and modes of experience. People developing new strategies of action depend on cultural models to learn styles of self, relationship, cooperation, authority, and so forth. Commitment to such an ideology, originating perhaps in
conversion, is more conscious than is the embeddedness of individuals in settled cultures, representing a break with some alternative way of life (p. 279).

The experience of becoming a refugee, and the corresponding process of immigration, represents the break with alternative way of life Swidler proposes. The taken-for-granted habits, in the case of this study, include parent’s experience in *duqsi* and educational institutions of Somalia, and it is clear from many of the discussions that the commitment to ideology is strong in the majority of the parents with whom I spoke.

Swidler’s work is further supported by scholars such as George Farkas, who suggests that Swidler’s interpretation of culture as a “tool kit of skills” (1996, p. 11, emphasis in original). Farkas attempts, in his work, to create a synthesis of education as human capital, with economic outcomes, benefits, and predeterminants; and cultural capital, which emphasizes status and stratification. Farkas’ work is also of use to this study, because parents’ goals for their children take into account the possibilities of economic gain in terms of a good job in the future. Parents’ status in the workplace, however, is in many ways a function of their social status, “wherein the cultural hegemony of middle- and upper-class status groups operates through school and workplace reward systems that are loosely, if at all, tied to actual productivity” (Farkas, p. 10).
The cultural capital models of Bourdieu, Swidler, and Farkas inform some of the discussion of the results of the interviews and observations of this study. A cultural capital model provides a framework for understanding the relationship of Somalis in Columbus to other members of their community and to their children’s teachers. It also creates a starting place for future work on refugee communities, who essentially inhabit the middle ground between Swidler’s unsettled and settled lives. Parent’s choices and children’s experiences in education may be analyzed using each of these: as investments in human capital; as creation of tool kits of skills; and as building useable cultural capital for the next generation to take advantage of in their development of social status. The International Academy, *duqsi*, instruction at home, and the environment (controlled by parents) all contribute to the process of children’s accumulation of cultural capital and form the basis for transmission of culture.

The issues of cultural continuity and transfer of cultural capital are particularly significant for Somali refugees in Columbus because while parents were educated in Somalia, in most cases their children have been born in the United States or elsewhere. The cultural continuity of the relationship between parents and children is therefore strained, while the investment in cultural capital in the form of Islamic knowledge and academic skills continues. Parents make choices for their children that increase their understanding of themselves as Somalis and Muslims, and schools like the International Academy and *duqsi*
provide ways for parents to influence the continuity of culture while mitigating the perceived negative aspects of American culture.

**Research questions**

Based on these readings, there are three research questions which this study attempts to answer:

- **RQ1**: What elements do Somali parents in Columbus use to transmit culture to their children?
- **RQ2**: What parts of culture do these elements filter or sustain?
- **RQ3**: How do children experience this transmission, filtering, and sustaining of culture?

To answer these questions, I spent several months observing children and adult members of the Somali community at the International Academy in Columbus. I followed this period of observation by intensive, guided interviews with children and their parents. I will discuss the choice of methods further in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

As a researcher, I was drawn to the Somali community, duqsi, and the International Academy of Columbus for several reasons. First, I have a particular interest in African issues, both those related to the continent and the Diaspora. Second, through studies of African culture at Ohio University and experience on the continent as a Peace Corps volunteer in the early 1990s, I have become increasingly interested in hearing the stories of people from Africa told in their own words. Third, I studied in Athens with a Somali man who talked to me about what duqsi was like during his childhood. Last, I had ready access to the International Academy and parts of the community through faculty and student connections at Ohio University. For all of these reasons, I chose to focus my research mainly on the International Academy, with some limited observation of duqsi, although this topic was discussed at length in interviews with parents.

My interest in hearing and recounting stories of African people in their words prompted me to focus on qualitative research methods for this study. I am attempting to discuss specific elements of cultural transmission in the Somali community and how these elements work to sustain and filter values and ideas, ultimately leading to children’s experience. In the words of Lofland and Lofland (1995), I “started where I was” in this research (p. 11). I began making a connection to the International Academy by getting rides there with another researcher who was working on language issues. This researcher introduced me
to the fourth grade class and their teacher; I met the principal and the Somali
administrators in the school, and soon I was helping children with reading and
language issues. Other members of the school community were happy to speak
to me in Swahili, and although I was at the International Academy only about
once a week, before long I would be asked to watch a classroom during prayer
time or to watch children on the playground.

To answer the research questions I developed, I chose to focus on two
research methodologies: participant observation and intensive interviews. These
techniques have been used in ethnography and to answer qualitative questions in
many studies. Models for my study included Stambach (2000), who lived,
observed, and interviewed members of a Tanzanian community in order to create
ethnographic accounts; Lareau (2003), and her work on race and class in schools
in the United States; Friedl (1994), with her study on ethnographic construction
of women in Iran; Hessini (1994) and her study on the hijab in Morocco; Davison
(1996) and her ethnography of Kikuyu women in Mutira, Kenya; Ali (2000) in
feminist research into ‘race’ with children in London; and many, many others.
Participant observation and in-depth or intensive interviewing are agreed on as
possible methods for research of qualitative questions (Cook, Fine, & House,
1995; Darlington & Scott, 2002; Lofland & Lofland, 1995).
Participant observation

Participant observation is “research that involves social interaction between the researcher and informants in the milieu of the latter, during which data are systematically and unobtrusively collected” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 15, quoted in Fine, 1988, p. 12). It includes interaction with community members in one of a number of roles, such as friend, supervisor, observer, or leader (Fine, 1988, p. 17, 49) and includes “looking and listening, watching and asking (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 18). My early interactions with the Somalis I knew functioned to build my ability to later conduct participant observation. These included discussions outside of the International Academy with Somali friends; study of political circumstances surrounding Somalia’s history; and travel to Columbus to meet with members of the Somali community on a trip organized by friends and colleagues. These interactions helped with the ongoing challenge in this project: to develop relationships with the people of the Somali community, both children and adults. I chose to use the International Academy of Columbus as a starting point and a venue because the school was desperate for extra help, especially with reading. Being at the school and helping children with reading therefore provided an easy way to meet parents and children. Several of the parents I interviewed were employees of the school or otherwise closely connected to the school community.
My role in the school varied from supervisor to friend (Fine, 1998, p. 14-17). I was introduced to the fourth grade class, which supplied most of my interviews with children, on my first visit to the school. During the next few months, I was really more of a participant in the sense that I helped teach, tutor, or supervise nearly every day I was there. I didn’t speak to children directly about my research until I began the process of interviewing, for two reasons: one, I hadn’t focused my research enough to speak about it with much credibility, and two, I wanted to simply interact with children and the Somali adults at the school as a teacher or guest for as long as I could. Since I knew the study could change, I used the “shallow cover” description method described by Fine (1998, p. 19) and by Lofland and Lofland (1995, p. 36).

I was greeted by most students every day I came to the International Academy. I tried to use the Arabic/Somali greeting “salaam alaekum” with children, or to speak kiSwahili with children and adults who spoke that language, and at times would sit in Arabic classes with children, listening and attempting to grasp some of the meaning of the lessons. In this way, I walked a fine line with the children whom I would later interview: I knew some African languages, I asked questions of the Somali administrators at the school, and I was friendly and helpful with reading. However, because I would occasionally step into a classroom to read through a lesson while a teacher was away, I occupied a middle ground between friend and supervisor. Generally, if the choice had to be made
between discipline and friendship, I chose the less authoritarian route, which occasionally led to classroom chaos, but also to some freedom on the part of children to discuss with me their thoughts about the school and their behavior. During this initial period I did no interviews and, while becoming closer to the fourth grade class, remained basically an outsider in the school.

The turning point in my experience was when I was asked to accompany the children to the science museum in Columbus, COSI. The teachers needed a bit of extra supervision, since it was a fairly large group. I wound up spending the bulk of the day with one child, who remarked at the end of the day that “if he had been with the other children, he just would have been sent back to the school for misbehaving”, as a large group of the older children had been earlier in the day. I took this time with this child as an opportunity to ask some questions about school and to observe and reflect on the way children interacted with their teachers and their peers.

Later that month, I had the opportunity to drive a vanload of fourth grade children from Columbus to Amesville, in order to facilitate a cultural exchange between a rural elementary school (Amesville) and an urban elementary school (the International Academy). I dropped children off in the morning at Amesville and returned them to Columbus the same evening, after they had spent part of the day with children from Amesville. Because it was past the end of the school day, I drove children to their homes, with the help of an adult member of the
Somali community who later adopted a “key-informant” role in the study. Returning children to their homes late in the evening did two things: one, it allowed me to talk to the children in smaller groups, especially near the end when there were two or three children left in the van; and two, to meet some parents as they came out to see who was dropping off their child. In one instance this was negative, as a father wondered why a man was dropping off his young daughter so late at night (it was nearly ten at night by the time all the children were delivered home), but in others parents were happy to say hello and thank me for driving their children home.

After I had participated in this event, I was again given the chance to drive some of the children to Athens, this time for a conference on “Islam in Africa and Southeast Asia” where children participated in one morning’s event, along with their new friends from Amesville. Through these trips and this intensive time with the children, I decided which children I wanted to interview. Again, while I was usually occupied with driving the van and attempting to control the children, it was also an opportunity to observe and reflect on the way children interacted with each other and me. There was a moment in each of these trips at which the children forgot that I was their driver and focused their attention either on each other or on things going on outside, which, briefly, allowed me to become an observer rather than a supervisor. Also, the child who was sitting in the front seat adjacent to mine was always available for specific questions, should
I so choose. Driving is a unique opportunity to observe that I had not previously considered, although taking field notes during the trip is generally impossible.

Although the conceptual model of cultural transmission I have created to focus this paper starts with parents’ choices, I began the process of selecting parents for interview by meeting the children I thought would talk to me in a relatively open way about their experiences. I interviewed parents with a picture of their child in mind, so that I could understand, to an extent, how the child’s experience was related to their parents’ choices.

The period of observation took place between January and May of 2003. Observing the children and the way they interacted with each other between and the American and Somali teachers as well as the Somali aides at the school helped me to build a set of interview questions that was reasonably well informed and asked relevant questions. Attempting to create this set of questions without participating in the working of the school for at least a short while would probably have been counter-productive because the interviews, especially with children, tend to be limited in time and very focused on specific topics. It took five months for children to be willing to talk to me (and by that time, the children that weren’t interviewed were wondering why they didn’t get a chance to answer my questions) and for me to feel comfortable enough with my two main contacts at the school to request their assistance in arranging interviews with the corresponding parents.
I knew from previous experience that observation was a reasonable method with which to begin this research. “[T]he observation of naturally occurring everyday events yields the fundamental data for building a more abstract [or theoretical] understanding of the basic properties of human existence” (Johnson, 1975, quoted in Howard, 1987, p. 67). The theoretical understanding I was trying to build is reinforced by Geertz’s discussion of intrinsic understanding and fixed (and thick) description; observation was a valid method for creating the ethnographic account to which Geertz refers, based on my desire to hear the stories of the community, which I thought were both interesting and important.

In my observation, I was looking at some particular aspects of the educational experience and the practice of Islam in the Somali community. These aspects included:

- how children in schools interact with each other and adults around them;
- the form of education at the International Academy: classroom structure, lessons, discipline, and other aspects of the educational experience;
- education at the duqsi: content of the lessons, children’s attitudes and behavior, and other aspects of this educational experience;
• the level of parent’s participation in school life, in particular with the International Academy;
• the role of Islam in education both at the International Academy and at the duqsi.

I chose to observe these aspects of educational experience because they were in front of me and because they helped to increase my understanding of how members of the Somali community, especially children, felt about their experiences in different settings.

As Geertz notes, “There are three characteristics of ethnographic description: it is interpretive, what it is interpretive of is the flow of social discourse; and the interpreting involved consists in trying to rescue the “said” of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms…but there is, in addition, a fourth characteristic…it is microscopic” (p. 21). Reporting children’s experiences in cultural transmission is to an extent ethnographic and Geertz’s suggestions fit with the choices of participant observation and intensive interviewing. Part of the study is attempting to capture a microscopic slice of a discourse describing how values and ideas are transmitted, then filtered and sustained by educational and environmental elements of Somali life.

**Intensive interviews**

Intensive or in-depth interviews are “guided conversation[s] whose goal is to elicit from the interviewee...rich, detailed materials that can be used in a
qualitative analysis” (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 18). Intensive interviewing attempts to “discover the informant’s experience of a particular topic or situation” (ibid., emphasis in original). Despite these advantages, there are some weaknesses involved in interviewing as opposed to observing. In this study (and all interviews), there is an inherent power differential between the researcher and the researched. When the interviews are taped, transcribed, and interpreted, the power of the researcher to decide what to keep and what to leave out, how to interpret elements of the discussion, and what meaning to ascribe to elements of the interviews make the results questionable. What’s more, “interviews allow access to what people say but not to what they do” (Darlington & Scott, 2002, p. 51). Despite these weaknesses, I chose to interview children and parents in this study in order to ask some specific questions that I could not find answers to through observation and informal questioning.

I worked and volunteered at the school for several months before I felt that I was in an appropriate position to begin meeting with parents and children to ask the questions that I had begun developing. I thought that it was important to develop a set of questions that I had based on observation as well as what I had read about the community and designed into the research. In addition, questions came up during the observation that I had not originally considered which were added to later interviews. I (correctly) deduced that if I participated in children’s educational experience as an assistant, they and their parents would feel more
comfortable about discussing their views of education, culture, and religion. There were some limitations to this comfort level, however. Children with whom I did not interact often were less likely to be open in interviews. Male parents were extremely open and willing to discuss most aspects of their life with me, but the interview I conducted with a female parent felt less open and was shorter.

As indicated, I have proposed some assumptions to focus and drive the study. I wanted to find out how parents and children’s educational experiences were related – whether they were the same, different, or connected at all. I assumed that parents used education to provide their children with experiences that would help them to become members of society and contributors to their community. I also assumed that children’s educational experiences had something to do with culture and religion as well as learning math, reading, and science. With this in mind, I divided my questions into the following general topics:

• how parents and teachers discuss religion and culture with children;
• why parents make the choices they do for their children’s education;
• what children think about their educational institutions;
• how parents’ religious education was conducted;
• how children’s religious education is similar to that of their parents;
• how children think about religious education;
• what parents hope children will gain from reasons religious and secular education.

For adults, I began each interview with some general questions about where the informant was born and how long they had been in the United States. I moved to some focusing questions about specific experiences in religious practice and experience, and in the last section, moved into discussions about community and more abstract questions about culture and values. Interviews with children began in the same way, with a set of focusing questions, and moved in the second section to questions about their religious and secular education experiences. In the their section, I asked children to speculate on some different possibilities for their education and behaviors. The full text of interview guides are contained in Appendix B.

I attempted as much as possible to get the answers to the questions in the guides while allowing informants to discuss the topics in whatever way felt most comfortable to them. This process was effective in soliciting some free discussion of topics and also allowing me to ask questions. Two of the parents I interviewed did not work at the International Academy nor did I see them there to pick up their children or talk to teachers. In this case, interviewing was clearly a useful technique because it allowed me to reach more widely into the community than I would have been able to had I limited my interviews to those directly connected to the school. During the interview process, I encouraged
adults and children to ask questions of me if they were curious about the research or my experience. Some took me up on this while others did not. Interview transcriptions are included in Appendix A.

The interview group for this study consisted of 11 individuals, 6 parents and 5 children. There were 5 male parents and one female, and 3 female children and 2 male. I would have preferred to have a more evenly divided group of parents in terms of gender, but, because of cultural and language issues, it was more reasonable to interview male parents. Interviews were conducted in English, and normally took place at the International Academy, although some parents preferred to meet at another location, based on their schedule and where they were working. Most of the interviews were audiotape recorded, except in two cases, where the individuals being interviewed felt more comfortable with me taking notes by hand and listening to their answers. During these interviews, I was constrained by the necessity to note important statements while wanting to explore further some of the issues raised by this participant, who had very specific opinions on a variety of subjects apropos to the project. I attempted to strike a balance between asking the questions I thought were important and keeping up with the notes. I was afraid that without adequate documentation, it would be impossible to remember later what the relevant points of this discussion were. This necessarily limited the number of questions I was willing
to ask. I have changed the names of all the informants in the transcriptions as is generally standard practice.

As a whole, the interview process was very useful in obtaining information from the research group. Being able to return to audiotaped interviews after continuing with observation for a period of time allowed me to develop new questions and build on the answers which had been given by previous interviewees. In addition, having a tape recorder on the table meant that I was free to explore topics which were not on the list of questions if there was a need to do so. This allowed for a more fully developed conversation of the topic at hand, although the transcription was longer.

Interview transcriptions are included at the end of this volume. Please note that I have changed the names of participants. Also, the researcher is noted as R consistently throughout the transcriptions. As indicated, most of the interviews have been transcribed from audiotapes which were recorded during the interview. When the audio was poor or if it was difficult to understand the passage, this is marked with ellipses or a question mark. I have attempted, as much as possible, to use passages in this writing which were clear and easily understood during the transcription.

**Selection of participants**

An important component of this research was the connections I was able to make with specific members of the community during the period of
observation. These connections gave me access to parents of children I expressed interest in interviewing, and allowed me to get a working understanding of how the *duqsi* and International Academy functioned. These ‘key informants’ made this research possible and also checked my work, in the sense that we were able to discuss conclusions and ideas later. Fine (1988) suggests that key informants “have access to persons and knowledge” (p. 51) and that their role may be of “sponsor and...of source” (p. 51, emphasis in original). In this study, adult key informants acted both as sponsor and as sources, in terms of access to parents. Developing key informant relationships with children was more difficult. While there were some children with whom I developed friendships, my relatively limited time at the International Academy and *duqsi* meant that it was more difficult to build specific relationships of this sort. However, children were anxious to be interviewed, even though they didn’t know what the questions were to be, and in some cases, shared stories with me about their interactions with other children and adults outside of the intensive interview process.

I built this study around two formal institutions: the International Academy of Columbus and a *duqsi* that was located on the north side of Columbus. I chose these venues because I had entré to them through collegiate connections, geographical proximity, and interest in the Somali community. I chose to focus my participant observation process on the International Academy for a number of reasons. First, my knowledge of Somali language is extremely
limited. It therefore made more sense to conduct observation in a venue where English was the language used in many of the interactions. Second, children’s interaction and activity with me, other children, and other adults are less restricted at the International Academy than at duqsi. At the International Academy it was possible to greet children casually, observe them in class, on the playground, at lunch, and elsewhere, but at the duqsi it was only possible to observe children entering, leaving, and in class. While I did visit the duqsi, my observation at the International Academy was more fruitful in terms of generating data.

Parents and children were selected for interviews through the process of developing relationships with Somali members of the staff at the International Academy. I decided to interview parents and children who went to the academy and were involved in education at any duqsi in Columbus. I didn’t feel it was necessary to limit my interviews to students who went to the same duqsi, although I did work only with children who went to the International Academy. Parents were either employees of the school or members of the community who were recommended to me by members of the staff. Again, this allowed me to reduce the time it took arrange interviews and, probably more importantly, because many of these parents knew me and had seen me teaching their children, they generally trusted my intentions.
For my first interviews, I met with Alena after meeting with her father, Yusuf, at the International Academy. I chose to interview them first because Yusuf was one of the key informants for this study. In addition, my impressions of Alena were that she was outgoing, very clever (and sometimes mischievous) and happy to talk to me. Yusuf was also very helpful during my observations in answering all the small questions I had about duqsi and the International Academy. I then interviewed Khaled and Alif. I wanted to interview Alif because I knew him as an outgoing boy who would not hesitate to express his opinions in class. His father worked at a location away from the International Academy, so the interview took place there. Next, I interviewed Salaam, a Somali mother who came to the International Academy after I had been there for a while. Her perspective as a woman was important in this study. Hal and his daughter Ayana were the next two people I interviewed. Hal works at the International Academy and he and I had spoken during my observation about issues surrounding the Somali community. Next, I interviewed Ahmed and his son Sami. Again, Ahmed worked at the International Academy and I knew his son from class. The last pair of participants were Baliya and her father Abdi. I chose Baliya because I had listened to her interact with other children in the classroom and on field trips and was interested in her perspectives on her experience. Her father provided the longest interview in the study and we met in a neutral location away from the
International Academy. These 11 people allowed me to focus my observations and to better understand much of what was happening within the Somali community.

As previously mentioned, key informants were the people who gave me the opportunity to discuss my impressions and my results. Outside of formal interviews, these individuals discussed with me where the duqsi came from, the history of the International Academy, their impressions of the Somali community in Columbus, and other aspects of their lives. They also helped me to understand in much more detail what duqsi means to children in Somalia, and how duqsi works; they also helped me build an appropriate set of research questions through revision. In one case, the key informant was a leader at the school, and in another, was a colleague from Ohio University who was also Somali and working at the International Academy. The key informant is the person I interviewed first, to make sure the tape recorder was working, the questions were appropriate, and the answers meaningful. These informants were essential to the observation and interview process because they allowed me to develop effective questions for parents and children, work in the community, and build relationships with students.

**Working with children**

There are specific ethical considerations to consider when doing research with children. As an adult who occasionally acted as a classroom teacher, I was expected to function as a policeman on some occasions. Children would come
to me in the event of a conflict with another child. If a fight broke out in a classroom while I was present, I felt that I had a responsibility to try to help the combatants work out their differences, or at least to stop the fighting. As Fine notes, “In [the event of danger] an adult participant has a moral obligation to assist [children] in a way that is “protective” (1988, p. 27). When on field trips, there were occasions on which I grabbed a child to stop him from running into the street without looking. On other occasions, however, especially with play that could be described as “mischievous”, I took the role of passive observer and did not intervene, even though I knew the children’s classroom teacher or supervisor would have.

Robinson and Kellet (2004) suggest that there are four researcher’s perspectives on children, including child as object, child as subject, child as social actor and child as participant/co-researcher (p. 85 – 86). In the third perspective, children “act, take part in, change and become changed by the social and cultural world they live in” (Christensen & Prout, 2002, p. 481, quoted in Robinson & Kellet, 2004, p. 86). In this study, I attempt to include children in the research process as social actors who take part in and are affected by the world, both as members of families but also as autonomous individuals. While I did not base this study on post-modern studies of power dynamics, nor conduct the research with the intention of fully developing a feminist or critical research agenda, I nonetheless have attempted to approach the children in the study from the social
actor point of view and to report as accurately as possible their impressions of their lives.

Alderson (2004) suggests that “active participants willingly take part in research that has flexible methods: semi-structured interviews with scope for detailed personal accounts” (p. 100). Participants in this project were interviewed after I had observed them for some time, after I knew that their responses to the questions I had to ask could be participatory or interactive, and after they had seen me enough to know about my research intentions and could refuse to answer questions or interact with me. In this way I aimed to minimize, to an extent, the power differential at the school and in interviews. It is understood that the interpretation of the data now lies in my hands, and not theirs. This is a serious ethical consideration for this and other qualitative studies. The more involved and empowered is the informant, the greater the possibility of them feeling “regret, shame, or anger” if researchers write reports which are disrespectful or inaccurate (Alderson, 2004, p. 100). I have attempted to portray the informants in this study as accurately and respectfully as possible.

Another issue with children in the Somali community is the belief of parents that they are adequate and appropriate teachers to their children the ways of Islam, ways to live with their neighbors and people outside of Islam, and how to make sure their children follow Islam in the future in the ways they have been taught. As a researcher, it was important to consider the impact of
questions which young children may not be equipped to understand or process. Clearly, any research must be conducted with the utmost respect for parents and their religious views, children’s religious rights, and the Islamic community’s integrity. Children were curious about my religious background and I attempted in discussions to answer that I was not affiliated with any particular religion, because I felt as though one of the keys to this study was to respect, in as large a way possible, Islam and Islamic values. In addition, it was important for parents to understand that my position as a researcher is not to convert their children away from Islam (it is possible, as a white American, to be viewed as ‘stereotypically’ Christian), and that my role is to both learn about the community, for the sake of academic knowledge, and to return to the community, in the form of supplemental instruction and a more informed world/self view.

Before I conducted this study, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University. Parents were informed of the parameters of the study and were asked for permission to interview their child. Each parent and child was read a description of the study and each parent and child signed a release form to indicate that they had read or been read these documents. Audiotapes have been kept in a locked file cabinet and will ultimately be erased or destroyed. Names of all participants have been changed.
**Methodological limitations**

There are some specific limitations to this method of fieldwork in this particular study. In terms of participant observation, one major issue was the fact that I do not speak or read the Somali language. Had I spoken Somali, the observations both at the International Academy and *duqsi* would be significantly more rich and varied. In addition to this limitation, my Arabic language skills are also weak. This would have been useful at *duqsi*, but only in terms of discerning when the lesson was focusing on Arabic and when the instructor was speaking Somali. The two languages share enough phonology to make it difficult for a non-speaker to determine which language is being spoken. This phenomenon affected the observation at the *duqsi* and at the International Academy because I was unable to know what children were talking about in those small moments when I recognized there was something interesting or important taking place that I could not understand. It is possible to turn this limitation into an opportunity, however, by asking for language lessons or at least for a lesson on a couple of greetings. This gave children an opportunity to interact with me and shifted the power arrangement so that I was the student and they the teacher.

Another dichotomous limitation/strength was my role as sometime classroom teacher and reading tutor. Participating in the children’s lives as an authority figure disallowed, to an extent, the development of trust or friendship, but also allowed a way in to the classroom that seemed natural and accepted.
Without the opportunity to participate in classroom activities, I would likely have been seen as less like a well-intentioned graduate student and more like a spy.

Another limitation was my inability to develop an effective key informant relationship with a child. I did spend one day with a child at COSI, but this relationship was not developed too much further in the succeeding weeks. In some ways, the entire fourth grade class were key informants for this research; however, had I been able to cultivate a bit more strongly one or two relationships with some of the children in the group, it would certainly have led to the opportunity to ask more questions. I am not sure, however, that parents would have been entirely comfortable with this relationship. I felt as though it was important to obtain parents’ permission before speaking to their children about any significant issues relating to their experiences.

Despite these limitations, the combination of participant observation and intensive interviewing led to the collection of data that was extremely rich and interesting, in which several parents and children were very open and (I believe) honest about their experiences, beliefs, and values. With this data I will attempt to answer the research questions posed at the end of chapter 3 and develop an understanding of the cultural transmission method parents use to inform their children.
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

There were three questions I hoped to answer through observation and intensive interviews. They were:

• What elements do Somali parents in Columbus use to transmit culture to their children?
• What parts of culture do these elements filter or sustain?
• How do children experience this transmission, filtering, and sustaining of culture?

Interviews and observation have allowed me to conclude that for the Somalis I worked with, there are four elements which are used to transmit cultural knowledge to children. These elements are the International Academy of Columbus, *duqsi*, instruction or education at home, and control of the environment. These four elements form the basis of a cultural transmission and also filter and sustain certain aspects of Somali and other cultures. This filtering and sustaining contributes to Somali children’s experience, not necessarily by isolating children from these influences, but by countering them through instruction and guidance.

To conceptualize this process, I have created a model for cultural transmission which includes Somali culture, the four elements Somali parents use to transmit culture, and which parts of Somali and other cultures these elements filter or sustain. This model is shown in Figure 1 below. This chapter will explain
this model and more specific aspects of observation and interviews at the International Academy and elsewhere in the Somali community.

Figure 1: Cultural transmission among Somalis in Columbus
Elements of cultural transmission

The parents I interviewed for this study all came from Somalia in the 1990s. Some had lived in other countries before arriving in the United States and many had lived in other American cities before settling in Columbus. All had been educated in Somalia, and all had graduated from at least high school. One parent had experience running a family business, while others had been teachers, at the primary, secondary, and college levels, and one who had worked as a mechanic. All spoke English and were working at least one job in Columbus. This group of parents is by no means a cross section of Somali refugees in Columbus; as mentioned earlier, there are many members of the community who speak little English and would not be comfortable in an interview situation. Because many of the women of the community remain at home to care for children, I felt fortunate to have interviewed one female parent, although her views on Islamic education and the role of education in raising children were not strikingly different from those of the men I interviewed.

There are four elements I found to work together to transmit cultural knowledge to children in the Somali community. They are, from Figure 1:

- Environment
- Duqsi
- Instruction at home
- The International Academy
These four elements are dependent on each other in several ways. Environment is influenced by Somali culture and American culture; the institution of *duqsi* changes in response to living in America, to an extent; the International Academy exists because parents want a place to send their children that will reinforce what they teach at home. In addition, cultural transmission in influenced by the Qur’an and the interpretation of Islam in the community. I propose that the Qur’an’s influence both on Somali culture and cultural transmission is one way, in that the Qur’an is not changed by these parts of life. However, it is reasonable to believe that different cultural circumstances may lead to reinterpretation of the Qur’an and some aspects of Islam. For this model, it is enough to realize that the Qur’an, Islam, and Islamic life are fairly stable, unchanging influences on Somali culture and parents’ strategies for cultural transmission to children.

In the rest of the model, each aspect influences and is influenced by the aspect of the model it is connected to. Thus, Somali culture influences the transmission aspect, and the idea of Somali culture is also influenced by this transmission. Other cultures influence Somali cultures as Somali culture influences the culture of Columbus. Children’s experience also influences what is filtered and what is sustained, as children are also social actors in their own right who make individual decisions about their lives.
**Environment**

The first, and what is for many parents of the greatest concern, is the environment. Parents discussed their environment often in interviews and during observation. Several parents mentioned the difference between their educational experiences in Africa and those of their children in Columbus. For example, Yusuf told me:

Over here you have to stay very busy just to pay your different kinds of bills, and just free time you have only Saturdays and Sundays...in Kenya it’s different, in Kenya they have the Christian people and the Muslim people, as you know, because everyone is equal...the church is close, and the mosque is close, and the kids can go on wherever they, where it’s comfortable. And in the United States it’s kind of tired, because you don’t have to go anywhere because it’s only Saturday, Sunday we can go, to do that. In Kenya you don’t have to do that because you work only 8 hours or you go to school 8 hours and then you free. In the other time you can practice your own culture, your own religion, that is.

The environment is stressful for parents because they have less time to spend with their children, and children have less time to spend on religious education and on learning their culture. Yusuf’s statement was reinforced by Khaled, who said:
My child might be getting two days a week. Or, maybe two hours or less than two hours to learn the Qur’an. But me, I was getting more, three evenings, like I had, like, ah, school.

When Somali parents talk about the environment, therefore, they are referring to the amount of time their children have to spend learning religious and cultural knowledge. Parents also mentioned some negative aspects of what they considered American culture.

For example, Abdi told me that:

You see over here, kids are go, when they eat, breakfast or lunch, they don’t listen the teacher, they don’t want to go to school, class even, staying outside, and smoking even, some of them.

Khaled told me that:

Now we are afraid, for the outside children. Because they might steal your child, might be they harm your child, might be...hit with car. But there [in Somalia] we don’t afraid that. Because our environment. We don’t have an environment to take children without reason.

These statements show that parents believe that there are negative influences within the American culture and that their children must be protected from these negative influences.

Parents use the environment to transmit culture by attempting to control what surrounds their children. They choose to send students to specific
institutions like duqsi or the International Academy in order to mitigate the negative influences of other cultures. Abdi told me,

We are looking for a community school that was giving the kids what we taught at home. We have to look for that environment in school. Because when you are young, the environment is more teach you what you learn at home...so you have to have, to look for the environment, at least close to home, what we tell kids at home.

This indicates that one way that parents choose to manipulate the environment in which their children operate is by sending them to schools which reinforce what children hear at home. Duqsi and the International Academy are two of these schools.

Another aspect of the way that parents use the environment to transmit to culture to their children is by living in neighborhoods with other Somali families. When I spoke to children about their friendships, they all mentioned having friends in their neighborhood who did not attend either the International Academy or duqsi. These children were generally Somali. In addition, when I asked Somali parents about why they had come to Columbus, many of them mentioned that they had come because they had a relative in town or family with whom they could live or interact.

The International Academy was started by members of the Muslim community of Columbus. Members of the Somali community worked together
with others from the community to open the International Academy. Parents also started *duqsis* in Columbus so that their children would have a place to go to study the Qur’an and Islam. Creation of these two institutions is a way that parents have used the environment to transmit culture to children.

The environment represents for parents an opportunity to transmit positive messages to their children and something that they must work to overcome or work against in terms of its negative messages and influences. They use the environment to their advantage by adopting large scale strategies to control the influence of the environment on their children, like living in neighborhoods with other Somali families and opening educational institutions.

**Duqsi**

Many parents believe that Islamic education is a way that their children can understand how to be good members of their community and good citizens in their country. There is a clear distinction in the United States between the value of what many call “subjects”, i.e., reading, social studies, and the like, and Islamic education, such as *duqsi* Qur’an. The purpose of subjects is to prepare students for finding a job, supporting their families, or for learning English, while *duqsi* is a place where children go to learn religion and is one of the elements parents use to transmit culture to their children.

...so what they learn from duqsi is our culture, and our religion, so that’s the big difference (Hal).
At duqsi they get, they get how...to live other people, how to share with other children, how to...learn prayer or practice the religion (Khaled).

Duqsi, yeah. At least we teach how to read, how to write the whole Qur’an...also we teach language, Arabic as language. They learn by themselves, the religion. (Abdi).

Duqsi, as you know, they have to know, they have to learn some their own cultures...as we know every human they have to teach their own kids their own cultures. If they are Christians they have to teach them Christianity, the Bible, whatever it says, also Muslims, what the Qur’an says (Yusuf).

My observation of duqsi included visits to one facility on Morse Road, in the north of Columbus. The duqsi is a rented office space that community members use for instruction. The children sit on the floor and work together with an instructor who sits on a chair at the front of the room and leads the children in recitation of Qur’anic passages. When I was there, girls and boys had their own classrooms and children were also divided by age. There were four classrooms for younger children and one larger, open room, where some teenage boys were hanging out talking with older members of the community.

Duqsi is important for parents because they believe that learning Qur’an, Arabic, and how to be a good Muslim is important for their children’s understanding of being Somali. Several parents talked about what the most important parts of their children’s religious education were. Salaam told me that
“Qur’an is the most important of them”. Abdi said that going to duqsi helps children with “Good things, to keep up, they try to mostly, guide away from drugs...from using drugs, alcohol”. Yusuf said at duqsi children “have to learn some their own cultures”, and Khaled said that he send children to duqsi “because when a person, he is a Muslim, he knows everything what is wrong...because Islam is a way of life”. Parents have chosen to send their children to duqsi because they learn how to be a Muslim and in a broad sense this what parents are hoping to transmit to their children.

Parents often mentioned the fact that making time for duqsi could be difficult, given the fact that they were often working multiple jobs. One parent chose to forego duqsi for his child at this time, preferring to wait until the child was a bit older to focus on Qur’anic education outside of the home. Most parents, however, believed that learning the Qur’an and how to be a good Muslim in the duqsi was a crucial part of growing up Somali. These issues are always reflected in one form or another in refugee literature. Because ‘Muslim’ and ‘Somali’ are so closely related, teaching Islam to children is a major part of the cultural transmission model.

In terms of the sociological relationship between the immigrant experience of the Somalis in Columbus and Swidler’s (1986) work on settled and unsettled lives, it is apparent that the development of institutions like duqsi are part of how ideologies “establish new styles or strategies of action” (p. 278,
emphasis in original). Parents have created a place where their children can go to learn the appropriate ways to pray, the Qur’an, and some of the skills that are required to be a Muslim in Columbus (or anywhere). These institutions eventually become tradition, and then, according to Swidler’s model, become common sense, a part of the culture so “unselfconscious as to seem a natural, transparent, undeniable part of the structure of the world” (p. 279). What was common sense in Somalia, the melding of secular and religious education in one building, and an environment in which all parents worked to take care of the community’s children, will eventually be replaced by a new set of common sense. The new common sense may manifest itself in terms of educational or religious expectations and hopes, new forms of religious institutions, which may be (and already are) different from those at home, or different relationships between members of the Somali community and other communities within Columbus.

**Instruction at home**

The third element of the cultural transmission model is that of education or instruction at home. Many of the parents I interviewed for this study performed some type of education at home, whether specifically related to the Qur’an, like Khaled, or in a way more related to setting a positive example, like Hal. Abdi told me that

the school is nothing, the parents become teachers for their kids at home...whatever school you send, no matter what. The kids are over there
for 6 or 4 or 5 hours a day, when they come home if you don’t control
them, and even control what they learn from school, you missed that
part...close to 80% of kids are fail.

Khaled told me that he taught the Qur’an at home. “I have to” he said. “The
meaning of the lessons, the reading, how to read it, because the Qur’an is very
hard.” Hal suggested that the teaching he did at home was less formal and more
through example. “All me actions are teaching, everything you do depends on
your culture, background, and everything else, so children learn at home from
the example and culture I exhibit.” Hal does not feel that specific Qur’anic
instruction at home is necessary for his children to learn about Islam, but that his
example and way of life will be enough. Whether parents take an active role in
teaching the Qur’an at home or allow their children to learn from their example,
they are nonetheless aware of the influence they have on their children’s
experience.

**The International Academy**

At the International Academy, children learn subjects like arithmetic,
social studies, and English. Parents generally speak of the International Academy
as the same as public schools in terms of the content of the instruction. The
reason that parents choose to send their children to the International Academy is
not necessarily because the quality of instruction is better, or because the
content of the lessons is better, but because they know that the environment at
the school will reinforce what they are teaching at home. For example, Abdi told me
the important parts over there, we have these prayer time, the whole student body, they have to go to pray, the kids. Another thing that they have is wearing their scarves over their heads and no one can bother them for their, religion. [They] accept also the...Somali language.

According to Khaled, one reason for sending his children to the International Academy was because

most of the Americans here, sometimes some of them they don’t have any religion. Most of the teachers [at the International Academy] are Muslim. So, the child he get a belief, a way of life. Better than other public schools that we have here.

In general, the teachers at the International Academy reinforced Islamic beliefs. One day, when I was eating in the lunchroom with some of the other teachers, I began a discussion with one of the male teachers. This teacher was not Somali, but was Muslim, and because he overheard me discussing the issue of a student teasing another about his “girlfriend”, he told me that he viewed this word, “girlfriend” as perhaps the most profane in the English language. For him it meant that girls and boys were spending time together in a way that was inappropriate. He clarified by suggesting that relationships between girls and boys which included academic discussion and scientific experiments were
entirely appropriate, but that physical contact between men and women who were not married was sinful. My impression is that the Somali parents interviewed for this study would, in general, support and be reassured by this point of view.

Although Abdi and Khaled send their children to the International Academy because they believe that the school reinforces some of their beliefs, some parents believe that public schools would also pass along the values which they consider important in terms of secular education. For example, Salaam told me that “certain public schools are really the same. Public schools they have, there are a lot of Somali kids...and they’re taking every subject they used to take.” I asked Ahmed what would be different if he had sent his young child to a public school instead of the International Academy. Because he worked at the Academy, it was easier for his son to attend that school, due to logistical considerations. He told me,

nothing actually is different. If he wants to go to another public school, his mom...leaves in half an hour, so she doesn’t have time to prepare him, and she doesn’t have a car. But nothing is different.

I asked Hal whether it helped to preserve culture for his child to be at the International Academy with other Somali students and he replied, “I think only language, only Somali language at the IAC, they may not forget their language here”.
Despite the fact that parents have different motivations for sending their children to the International Academy, the main benefit every parent talks about in terms of this type of education is the fact that their child is acquiring skills that will allow them to be a productive member of the community in the future. Parents said that the reason for education at the International Academy was so that they could graduate and pursue their personal or academic goals. “At the school it’s very important for my daughter to get her graduation” (Salaam).

“Subjects right now they is in school, just we teach all together, that way they go to college, college, they are desiring whatever they want to me” (Yusuf).

“[Education can provide] a good opportunity in their future and to help their community” (Hal). Part of Somali culture, then, is having not only the Islamic knowledge necessary to be a good Muslim, but also to have the skills or technical knowledge to function economically as a member of the community and the society at large.

Most parents believe that the combination of instruction at home, religious instruction in the duqsi, and education at the International Academy would help their children grow up into contributing members of their communities, good Muslims, and Somalis in the sense that they would remember the language and what it means to be Somali. No single element is effective alone, especially in the United States. Children could not attend the International Academy and receive no instruction at home or duqsi and learn
what they needed to know to be a part of the society, because the influence of the environment or other cultures would be too strong (as several parents have indicated above). These four elements work together to transmit culture to children. In doing so, they both filter and sustain certain values, ideas, or influences that parents believe are necessary for their children or which may be harmful to their children.

**Filter and sustain**

I have chosen to use the verbs ‘filter’ and ‘sustain’ to describe the way the four elements discussed above control what parts of Somali and American culture reach children. I have chosen the verb filter because I envision culture and the acquisition of culture for Somali children in this study to be something which leaves out certain aspects of negative influences from non-Somali cultures while allowing appropriate parts of those cultures to be transmitted. The verb sustain implies a more active approach to culture than “preserve” which makes sense for this community, which is very active in working to make sure their children have the tools and knowledge necessary to be Somali. The lists of items in Figure 1 that are filtered and sustained were compiled from parents’ interviews and my own observations at the International Academy and are by no means complete.

Elements of the cultural transmission model filter negative influences in several ways. Parents believe that knowledge of the Qur’an and Islamic value systems will help their children avoid negative consequences in the future related
to punishment, loss of control, and immodest behavior. For example, Khaled told me that there are only two ways to go: “the way of the prophet and the way of the hellfire”. He also said that as a parent, he is responsible for teaching his children about the right way to go. For Khaled, then, the most important way to filter the negative possibilities of the future or the negative influences is for he, himself, to guide his children to the right ways to live. In Abdi’s case, his teaching includes making sure that children don’t make bad decisions about using drugs or alcohol, which he sees as being a problem for young people in the United States, partially because of the environment in which they live. He expressed his concern about where he was living in our interview.

Especially where I live right now, we’re in this, some other persons are living in our area. They use alcohol outside and I wonder, if our kids, in 3 or 4 years, are with them?

Transmitting Somali cultural knowledge to his children will help filter the possibility that his children will be with his neighbors, drinking alcohol, in 3 or 4 years.

Yusuf suggested that part of what Islamic knowledge could prevent was a person losing control of her or himself.

We know a lot of people don’t have religion...so, if someone doesn’t have anything, then he will angry and then, and he’s gonna happen whatever he
says. So he can do whatever he wants...and he does not control himself, and then the next time you see the person is going off, and wrong place. If a person has religious knowledge, they will not lose control of themselves because they will be thinking about what God is thinking about their behavior. Others can also mention to this person that God is watching them and this may make them change their behavior.

Parents also want to filter immodest behavior. During this study, I almost never saw a girl student without a hijab, even girls as young as kindergarten aged. Although parents did not talk about this aspect of cultural transmission explicitly, I deduced from my observation that wearing the hijab is part of female Somali culture. Girls also tended to keep to themselves on the playground and in class, although this seemed to be more true for the fourth graders (and younger) than the fifth and sixth graders, who seemed to mix a little bit more. At the International Academy, girls never wore clothing that could be even vaguely construed as immodest. They normally wore long dresses, and although there were occasions where I saw a girl in trousers, they were typically worn under a dress.

Generally, parents want to make sure that they have input into their children’s lives and that their children keep their way. The elements of the cultural transmission model all contribute to parents being able to have input into their children’s educational experiences, either directly in the case of
instruction at home, or indirectly, through relationships or expectations that they held for the Somali administrators at the International Academy and duqsi. They are therefore able to spend more time on education and instruction, albeit by proxy, with their children.

Somali parents in this study tended to talk more about the positive things that their culture sustains than the negative things the culture filters. Parents in the Somali community tend to focus on their ability to provide their children with tools and skills for their use rather than giving them the knowledge to avoid negative outcomes. This idea was summed up by Yusuf, who, in his answer to “what are the most important things education can provide for children?” said,

Our first is to help them, to be good citizens, to know more and to increase their generations, that helps us be, that this child, supposed to be a help, in the future, all of humankind.

Parents sustain their values of being good members and contributors to the community by giving their children academic knowledge, Islamic knowledge, and social skills, using the four elements of cultural transmission.

Language skills are part of the social skills that parents pass to children. Discussions of language permeate the International Academy, the duqsi (although at the duqsi the discussion is related to Arabic), and in children’s and parent’s discussions about the best ways to prepare for the future. Parents are afraid that
their children will lose touch with being Somali, and the language is a significant part of this identity. Salaam told me during the interview that her daughter will never forget, her, my language as long as she is going with the, community, the school and the Qur’an, she is not going to forget her language. But if she, if I go far away from my community, she never learn because every time she goes to school and she learn English only...because my kids, if they do not understand my language...

Salaam had difficulty even expressing what it would be like for her if her daughter did not know her language. For her, language is one of the most significant identifiers of Somali identity and culture. Without the language, her daughter will not be able to understand her and what she really means, no matter how well she speaks English. Cultural identity is embedded in language; without it, one cannot function as part of the society and therefore does not have ‘culture’ as defined in chapter 1.

Children in the International Academy are also taught to understand what it means to do right and wrong. Around the school are posters describing scenarios in which students may find themselves and the ‘right’ answer to the question. These posters give children an explanation of what it means to do right and wrong, what it means to have character, and how they are expected to behave in school. Children also take cues about their behavior from the adults around them, especially those who are Somali. While every adult at the
International Academy has the right (and obligation, in some cases) to correct children if they misbehave, children will most often take their direction from someone who is Somali, whether or not the person speaks in Somali language. Adults sustain their own values of right and wrong by providing positive examples for children at the International Academy. While they have high expectations for children and their behavior, they also make themselves available to listen to children and their concerns. Sustaining values and ideas requires adult input. Controlling the environment, sending children to the International Academy and duqsi allows parents to delegate some of their authority to others who will assist them in assuring that their children are well cared for and guided along the right path.

**Children’s experience**

Children’s educational experiences in Columbus and at the International Academy are in many ways similar to those their parents had when they were growing up in Somalia. Children attend classes at the International Academy in English, math, social studies, Arabic, and science. The children interviewed articulate the difference between classes at the International Academy and the duqsi by talking primarily about the differences in the ways they learn and the differences in the content of the classes. Some children also noted that they had a tendency to be better behaved at the duqsi than they were at the International
Academy. For example, Alena, an 11-year-old girl, said of her classes at the International Academy and the duqsi,

I love my duqsi because I’m learning my traditions and stuff, and what I need to be learning when I grow up, and what I need and what I’m supposed to know, and...at International Academy...I learn the subjects because I can pass college, or high school, middle school...so, they’re both important.

Other children were not able to speak in such abstract terms about their experiences, although most of the children differentiated between learning the Qur’an and learning subjects. When I asked Baliya what she learned at duqsi that was different from the International Academy, she replied,

That one I learn, Qur’an, and what I’m supposed to learn to be a Muslim, and here [at the International Academy], I learn math, science, social studies, art, physical education...[at duqsi I learn] what I’m supposed to know to be a Muslim...suras...prayer, and, Qur’an...This one is speak in English, there we speak in Arabic and, and Somali.

Somali children of this age are just beginning to understand some of the cultural reasons for attending duqsi. While many understand that remembering and learning their language is important, they are often still at the stage in their thinking where the reasons for going have less to do with learning how to be Somali and more to do with being a “good Muslim”, which is a less abstract
concept than understanding culture. This also held true for some values like modesty or the wearing of the hijab. None of the students I interviewed articulated a value behind the wearing of the hijab, as I had expected, but noted that it was a part of their religion.

Children had varied views of what the reasons for attending duqsi were. Some children, like Alena, noted that duqsi is a place to learn about what it means to be Somali (culture), while others noted that not attending duqsi was important “...so we don’t have to forget our religion.” (Ayana); “because you can learn more about your religion” (Baliya); “because if you don’t you’ll go to hell” (Alif); “…because you learn the Qur’an” (Sami). These children are involved in duqsi to learn about the Qur’an and Islam. Alena said “wherever you are...you have to hope there’s...duqsi...because that’s where you tradition...that’s where Allah sent Muslim people”. The Somali community is moving in this direction: as Swidler suggests, the ideology of Islam is creating for some an understanding of tradition. For all of these children, duqsi is something which connects the past to their experience here in the United States, whether based on Islamic study or learning about Somali culture. Parents describe what their children get from duqsi in several different ways, but mostly, it was in regards to teaching children how to live in the world. For example, when asked what their child gets from education at the duqsi that he does not get at the International Academy, Khaled
told me “they get, at duqsi they get...to live other people, how to share with other children, how to...learn pray or to practice the religion.”

At the International Academy, Somali children are energetic and motivated. They speak Somali with each other whenever they can, especially outside of the classroom, and speak English with their teachers and guests like me. As described before, I had the opportunity to interact with small groups of children when I drove them to Amesville or Athens for various events. The children were loud, boisterous, and open with each other and me during this time. In fact, during one of the trips, I had to stop the van I was driving until the children calmed down enough to let me proceed safely. Coincidentally, during this stop, one of the student’s parents called my colleague who was acting as navigator. When he heard that the van had stopped because his child was misbehaving, he asked to speak to the student. After a loud scolding, which everyone in the van could hear, the child remained seated and quiet for the remainder of the ride. At duqsi, around Somali instructors, every child tends to be on his or best behavior. However, at the International Academy or on field trips, where the authority figures are American, they tend to be less disciplined, more prone to “misbehave”, and more likely to express their opinions of what is happening around them. In interviews, some children told me that the penalties for misbehaving at duqsi were greater than for misbehaving at the International Academy; others said they behaved in the same way in both places, which is true
for some of the girls I observed. Somali children build their experience on testing the limits of discipline in both places and create an identity appropriate for wherever they are.

The majority of this study was completed during the first year of the International Academy’s existence, which was difficult for both teachers and students because their roles and experiences at the Academy were brand new. When I did some observation of the school in the second year, it seemed that students knew more what was expected of them and were more focused on their lessons and less on testing teachers and administrators. My primary observation group, the fourth grade, had grown a year and moved into a new classroom with a different teacher. More observation would indicate how these changes affected their performance in the classroom and their ongoing experience at the International Academy.

**Being Somali in Columbus**

The Somalis in Columbus experience a multitude of issues related to both their refugee status and their identification as Muslims. I heard of discrimination, difficulties in finding time to pray, differences between parents and children’s education, and worries about the experiences of children in the United States. These experiences reflect what McGown writes about in her work with Somalis in Toronto and London; what McMichael discusses in her writing on Muslim women in Melbourne; and what DeVoe discusses with regards to Somalis in St. Louis.
I have written earlier in this paper about Abdi’s personal experience in dealing with issues of discrimination immediately after September 11th, 2001. He also told me about the experiences of his son in a particular Columbus school.

So I send him to that school...especially after 9/11, they bother him, for his name, and Arabic students. His name was Mohammed so they call him even Bin Laden, or some names...they called Bin Laden, they called some names, but they didn’t...the name, he don’t know, I myself am his father, I don’t know Bin Laden. I hear the news, I don’t know, I never seen in my life.

Abdi spoke to administrators and teachers at the school but they “tried to do nothing about it”. What Abdi is afraid of is that his child may lose interest in education and “hate to go to school”. As to most parents, this would be disastrous to Abdi because it would leave his son without the requisite skills for surviving in the United States. He was happy to be able to send his daughter to the International Academy to avoid this problem, but his son was too old to attend.

When an article in the New York Times appeared in May of 2003 citing an employee in the Columbus school district as saying she regarded the Somali students in her school as a “virtual mission field” (Goodstein, 2003, pgf. 35), Somali parents in the community expressed their concern and outrage to the school board and other officials. This is an example of the reason parents choose
to send their children to the International Academy. The staff at the school respect Islamic values and this allows parents to avoid the possibility of a teacher working to convert their child to Christianity, which would be devastating for parents. As Khaled told me, “if they lose the real way, and go to hellfire, than I get banishment”. Abdi’s and Khaled’s experience with discrimination or bias impact their children both in terms of their academic knowledge and their Islamic knowledge. The International Academy and the *duqsi* are the community’s answers to the question of how to avoid these issues.

The ‘cultural capital’ which is passed from parents to children in the Somali community consists partly of Islamic knowledge, which includes memorization of *suras* and learning Arabic. The technical skills and abilities children gain from their educational experiences have to prepare them for two lives: one, the life of a Muslim who is part of the Somali community; and two, the life of an American, with the requisite economic and social pressure unique to refugee and minority communities. In contrast to their children’s experience of two separate schools for ‘subjects’ and ‘Qur’an’, parents describe their educational experiences in Somalia as a combination of regular school and *duqsi*. Most parents went to *duqsi* in the afternoon every day, after they had finished primary or secondary school, and often in the same building they studies subjects in the morning. Because of this arrangement, it was possible for them to memorize much of the Qur’an in a very short time, as Khaled told me.
It is different, it is different, because, my child might be getting two days a week. Or, maybe two hours or less than two hours to learn the Qur’an. But me, I was going more, three evening, like I had, like ah school...[a]lways we are complain, they watching TV, too much TV, so, they, maybe one year I have complete the whole Qur’an, or two years, maybe. But io years, they can learn only 2 or 3...sura or chapters.

This issue is important because children spend most of the day at the International Academy, and subsequently, it is difficult for some parents to take their child to the duqsi on the weekend, because they work during duqsi time, or because they are otherwise involved in supporting their families. Living in Columbus requires that many parents work more than one job in order to support their families. Several of the parents I spoke to had more than one job; one was working two jobs while also finishing a degree.

How parents educate their children about Islam and the Qur’an varies between families. Some parents teach their children chapters from the Qur’an at home, while others note that acting as an example for their children is the most important aspect of the education of their children. For example, Hal told me:

...all my actions are teaching, everything you do depends on your culture, background, and everything else, so children learn at home from the example and the culture I exhibit...if I don’t help them [my children] school and duqsi are nothing.
It was important for Hal’s child to go to *duqsi* because it is a way of preserving and remembering religion, but the cultural knowledge passed from generation to generation in this case consists not only of religious knowledge but also a conscious decision on the part of the parent to teach by example things like manners and culture.

Members of the Somali community interviewed for this research unanimously expressed their tolerance for people surrounding them: their communities, their neighbors, and of other religions. Yusuf expressed this by saying, “What I think is, that a neighbor is a neighbor...if he’s Christian or Muslim, we have to, you have to respect, your neighbor”. Learning how to live within their community is one part of the cultural knowledge parents are working to pass on to their children.

While there are several specific aspects of cultural knowledge that are sustained and filtered by the process of transmission, in broad strokes, there are two: religious knowledge and secular knowledge. For Somalis, the process of educating their children is twofold. As Khaled said,

Education is two: Education of the religion and education of the, ah, the education we know that for school is education and for Islam education. So our most important is that, it’s not only that we give the children to food, nothing, they grow up, even if you refuse their food, maybe it’s someone else or something, or some helper, some humanity person who
comes in and helps them, and give a food. But food is nothing. Because, yah, the ah, the real life, is two. Ah, go his way, the education way, and the religion way. Because when he grow up, he understand what is wrong and what is right. If you help, if you don’t help him when he is young, he miss that time, he miss that, he can do nothing, that time.

It’s a dichotomous situation, in many ways, because the very thing that many parents discuss in terms of Somalia itself, time, and a supportive environment, do not exist in the same ways in Columbus. Thus education becomes a survival tool, in addition to its role as a quest to improve oneself. The downside to education at the International Academy is the fact that children do not mix with other cultures and ethnic groups. Ahmed told me, “I advise my son, I need, I like my son to become a good, ah, multicultural...some different friends, and American, and Asian, Indian, Africa, that’s good for me”. If education is a process of building knowledge about the world, then educational strategies that create homogeneous schools like the International Academy are at odds with the goals of education. Living in Columbus means that Somali parents balance the goal of seeking knowledge, “even [as far as] China” with their goals for cultural transmission.

**Other experiences**

One of the most difficult questions to attain an answer to was whether parents felt as though they had better connections in their community if they
brought their child to *duqsi*. Answers to this question varied significantly and were usually not connected in any way to the intent of the question, which was to determine if parents were able to connect more fully to other Somalis by participating with their child in *duqsi* or other religious education. Parents felt that community was a way to preserve their language, to have a place where their children would always be able to speak Somali and to understand what it meant to be Somali. Others felt that being a part of a community meant the community of Columbus and that expanding the definition of community to include other ethnic groups would allow the Somalis in the city to become more successful in business and in other aspects of being American. In general, however, the most common theme related to community was the fact that this group of people has the potential to be a positive influence on children and children’s development; to counteract the negative effects of American culture and to reinforce the idea of what is right.

I was interested in whether parents and children thought that returning to Somalia was a possibility sometime in the future. Alif told me that if he went back to Somali he would “get eaten...[by]..an alligator! Or birds”. When I asked Ayana how her life would be different if she went back, said, “I can’t imagine it” and said “Of Somalia, I think I’ve seen one [picture]”. Baliya mentioned returning to Somalia to visit her grandparents as something she had already done. Salaam mentioned that she would like their children to get their degree in the United
States and then she would return, and Ahmed said that it would be difficult because things and people were different. Hal told me:

Would I like to go back, of course, every minute. Everyone is there. I am out of my country for a few years, but you Americans are out of your countries for a few centuries, and still they are going back, like African-Americans. They want to go back and see where they came from, and could I simply forget that? ...I remember my school, where I used to work, everything – it’s not simple to forget that.

The difference between parents’ desire to return to Somali and their children’s perceptions of their cultural home are significant. Children have created an understanding of Somali culture in Somalia based on stories, knowledge, and religious teaching that is with few exceptions, outside the scope of experiencing their country directly. For most, or all, of the parents in this study, it is financially impossible to consider returning to Somalia for a visit or in order to educate their children about Somalia. The reality of Somali life in the United States is not less authentic than that in Somalia, but must be different. Parents do not place particularly high importance on educating their children about specifics of living in Somalia, while Somali culture itself is preserved through language, education, and interaction with members of the Somali community. For parents to discuss specific aspects of Somalia and their departure from the country may be more painful than they would admit to me, a relative stranger. I would also
hypothesize that parents would be reluctant to share specifics of life in Somalia with children of this age (6-12) for other reasons. Perhaps parents believe that teaching their children about Somalia will make them less focused on being citizens of America, or will take away children’s desire to become fully part of American society, which would hurt their chances for good employment and social standing in the future. Also, parents believe that they are part of American society. They contribute to the economy by working, sometimes multiple jobs, and teaching their children the ways to be part of their communities, not just their Somali community, but their American community as well.

Children, like their parents, hope for an easier time in the future. The interviewees in this study hope that they will become doctors, engineers, basketball players, architects, and painters. Parents believe that providing their children with education in subjects will provide them with the tools they need to succeed in these professions, while children also believe that excelling at the International Academy in their academic subjects will give them these skills and the opportunity to go to college. One child I interviewed (Alena) said that she thought that maybe “people might live in peace...maybe then it will be freer, like have a lot of money...”. Alena believes that the combination of education and religious knowledge will provide for her the tools to achieve this future, where she has enough money to be freer, work less than her parents, and be a part of her communities.
I have chosen to conceptualize cultural transmission in the Somali community of Columbus in terms of four main elements: the environment, *duqsi*, the International Academy, and instruction at home. While the specific practice of these elements varies between families, all four exist in some way for all the children I interviewed for this study and for the majority of children who I observed during this research. For parents in the Somali community who do not send their child to the International Academy, their child’s acquisition of academic knowledge will still be complete; however, that parent’s ability to influence and control the environment will be reduced. Parents in this situation may make up for this deficiency by increasing the amount of instruction at home, requiring more attendance at *duqsi* or other religious instruction, or they may do nothing. The experience of individual children varies, but each of the children in this study experienced each of the four elements in the model and some process of filtering and sustaining of values and ideas. These children will continually create their own understanding of Somali culture based on these ongoing experiences with familiar and foreign values, ideas, and influences.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Somalis in Columbus, Ohio, transmit cultural knowledge to their children through a combination of four elements, which include religious education, secular education, instruction at home, and through manipulation of the environment in which their children live. These four elements sustain aspects of Somali and American culture which Somali parents consider valuable, while filtering aspects or future possibilities which parents find inappropriate or destructive. Children build their knowledge of culture based on these experiences as well as parts of American culture which they find valuable or appropriate.

Parents and their children exist in what they view as an isolated community, and therefore, parents feel that their work in transmitting religious values is more difficult that it would be if they and their children were living in Somalia. Because parents are often balancing multiple jobs and attendance by their children in two separate schools, one Qur’anic and one secular, the process of properly educating children in the correct way to pray, be a part of the community, and be a good Muslim is partially done by parents at home. To reinforce what is taught at home, a school like the International Academy is important to parents. Within this school, there are Somali aides who assure that their children are fed food which is halal; who will make sure that parents are notified in the case of disciplinary problems but who also will not hesitate to
correct a child themselves if they misbehave; and who will make provisions for a child to pray during the day, fast during Ramadan, and teach or reinforce other aspects of Islamic life. Therefore, schools like the International Academy of Columbus have a specific meaning for these parents: their children are educated in the subjects they must know to be productive members of American society at the same time they are protected from the negative effects of the society that parents perceive as present in other public schools.

There are several issues related to ethnicity and the experience of refugees and immigrants that parents confront in Columbus. For example, language is a significant issue for Somalis in Columbus in the sense that parents want their children to learn English so that they can find good jobs and graduate from college, while also hoping that their children will continue to speak Somali whenever they can. Again, the International Academy partially fulfills both of these goals because children are surrounded by other members of the Somali community but are taught by Americans. Both children and parents mentioned that the opportunity to go to school during the day with other Somali children was important to them because they could speak their language. For children this meant being able to talk about problems in their mother tongue, while for parents it meant their children would have the freedom and opportunity to speak and remember their language.
Every Somali in this study was a practicing Muslim, and being a Muslim in America was important to parents. This issue came up in several ways, including an unwillingness to be audiotaped due to fear of the tape falling into the wrong hands; stories about blatant discrimination post-September 11th; and conversations I had with parents about asking appropriate questions of their children, especially in terms of religion and religious education. I also heard that it had been difficult for some to find opportunities to pray while they were at work and that they were not allowed to take the time to pray. Conversations like these extended past Columbus: I also heard of this happening in Minneapolis and Toronto. Because Somali identity and Islamic identity are closely linked, these issues affect every one of the people I interviewed for the study.

Considering the high value Somali parents place on their community and religious identity, and the close ties parents have to the memory of their childhood environment, where they grew up surrounded by people who would correct them and assure that children were on the right path, it is a logical conclusion that Somalis would tend to create and develop close community ties based on their self-identification as Somali Muslims. The philosophy of the International Academy contributes to the development of a self-supporting community that looks after its children and builds a strong coalition in the city. Creating business opportunities and building strong economic opportunities for other members of the community will reinforce the ability of the community to
further rely on itself. Although some parents spoke of liaisons with other members of other ethnic communities, it seems that the highest priority for Somali parents is to assure the religious and educational development of their children and, to some extent, isolate them from the negative effects of American culture and media.

**Unanswered questions**

This study raised a host of questions that were unanswered in the course of interviews and observations, such as:

- How do children perceive their experience in terms of cultural adaptation, i.e., do they feel like they are becoming more American than Somali?
- What is the relationship between African-Americans and the Somali community? This has been mentioned in Columbus media but not examined in academic work. Answering this question relates closely to the perceptions of media culture, specifically among the “hip-hop generation” discussed by Forman (p. 51), and strongly affects the generation of Somalis in school in 2003.
- What are children’s perceptions of American media culture? How do they perceive pop culture?

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16 See Latta, T. Y., (June 5, 2003). Culture clash.; ibid., (Jan 13, 2002). Facing up to race. All from *Columbus Dispatch*, Columbus, Ohio.
• What is the relationship in Columbus between students at the International Academy and students at other schools? Is there a stigma attached to one particular school in the city based on ethnic composition as suggested in research of other school districts and communities?

• Was the experience of *duqsi*, community, and education in Somalia as it has been described by parents? How is the notion of education in a homogeneous community romanticized by immigrants and/or refugees?

• How do Somali children feel about developing friendships with American children and do they have friends who are not Somali?

**Opportunities for further research**

The goal of this study was to develop an understanding of the ways that parents transmitted cultural knowledge, or “what a child needs to know to be Somali” to their children. In addition, the study outlined some of what is sustained and filtered in the process of cultural transmission and how this contributes to children’s experiences. The research has been a microscopic examination of a small number of parents who choose to send their children to the International Academy of Columbus, a secular school where children learn “subjects” and *duqsi*, where children primarily learn the Qur’an and other parts of being a “good Muslim”.
There are significant opportunities for further exploration on this topic. In fact, this study has just begun to examine the Somali community in Columbus. There are multiple opportunities for expanding this research, such as to:

- include teenagers and youth into the study to determine their level of involvement with Islamic culture and institutions;
- visit multiple *duqsis* in order to determine some of the differences between them and how participants in different *duqsis* perceive their experience;
- interview children in public schools to determine their perceptions of their experience and compare with that of children in schools like the International Academy;
- conduct further research on the issue of cultural capital and investigate the role of cultural capital for parents in schools where Somali students are the minority instead of the majority;
- develop a study that would analyze more specifically aspects of integration and nationalism among Somali students in Columbus;
- create surveys which determine whether and how parents consider the issues of human and cultural capital;
- answer questions more specifically about Somali culture; for example, much of the literature is concerned with men’s use of qat. Determining if this issue is as significant as it is made out to be by the media and current scholarship
would be useful in developing more insight into Somali culture and “fitting in” to American culture.

This list can and should continue. It should certainly include further study of minority Islamic communities anywhere, not just north America, in order to analyze and understand the role that Islam and Islamic institutions play in developing and preserving a sense of culture and belonging among these communities. It should, perhaps, also include further consideration of sociological models of cultural capital and its transmission. These models, especially those which relate cultural capital to practice, would provide a substantial framework for the development of future studies.

I also believe that telling the story of any group of people should be accompanied by pictures. It was not appropriate for this study to videotape participants or the surroundings, but a future study would ideally include pictures or videotape of the school, the duqsi, and, when appropriate and safe, participants in the study. I would also like the parents and students with whom I worked to have the chance to use a video camera to tell their own story; that is, to go into a duqsi and school and shoot what is important to them and share it with the researcher and others. Pictures would make the discourse alive and real in a new way and would give parents and children a new way of viewing their experiences and themselves.
Although I have included specific quotes from interviews in this document, the interview transcriptions are ideally read and imagined as a conversation between two people who have been in contact for some time and who are familiar with each other. The conversations I had with members of the Somali community were personal, open opportunities for them to share with me what they thought was the most important information about their culture and school I could take with me and tell others. Reading the interviews as a whole gives a much better idea of where their intentions, hopes, dreams, and memories lie.

It is hoped that this study may be a door for expansion of understanding of the Somali community in Columbus. By no means is it a complete representation of the community and the goals of parents and children for education; instead, it is a small moment in the lives of a small number of people who were willing to share their experiences with me. Reading our conversations has allowed me to understand a bit better how they cope with life in the United States and what they hope for their children. The environment here may be different than that in which parents grew up, but I strongly hope that they may continue to find ways to preserve the most important parts of the life in Somalia: strong community, networks of support, and willingness to share their stories with those around them.
REFERENCES


**APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS**

May 12, 2003, Alena (child)

R: OK, you ready?
A: Mmm hmm.
R: What’s your first name?
A: A.
R: How old are you?
A: I’m 11.
R: Where were you born?
A: Umm..Kenya.
R: Go, go...(to someone else). Where did you grow up?
A: Grow up? I left umm...my country when I was five.
R: You left Kenya when you were five?
A: No...[interruption]
R: So you said you were born in Kenya, and I said where did you grow up.
A: Um, when I left um Somalia and I came to the U.S. when I was like 5 years old.
R: So you were born in Kenya and then you went back to Somalia?
A: Yeah, I went to Somalia when I was five and then I came to the United States.
R: OK. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
A: I have one sister and two brother.
R: OK. Where do you live now?
A: Columbus.
R: In....OK, that’s fine. Do you live with your mom, your dad, or your grandparents?
A: Mom.
R: Your mom?
A: I live with my mom.
R: Is there other family or friends that live with you also?
A: No.
R: OK. What schools do you go to?
A: International Academy.
R: OK. Go to...
A: And duqsi...and that’s it.
R: What subjects do you learn at those schools?
A: Um...International Academy I learn reading, writing, social studies, math and science.
R: OK. What do you learn at the duqsi?
A: Qur’an
R: Mm hmm.
A: Uh, um, and we read from the Kitab, and that’s in Arabic.
R: So..uh..you were at another school before you came to the International Academy right?
A: Yeah.
R: Like a public school or somethin’?
A: North Linden.
R: North Linden? What was the best part of that school? What did you like best about going there?
A: North Linden?
R: Yeah.
A: Umm...that’s..you mean my favorite subject or something?
R: Mmm...your favorite subject or, like, maybe you had a favorite teacher there, or just something that you liked about it...
A: Yeah, my favorite teacher was um this...my um...um I had two favorite teachers, one was um my teacher, and one was Miss Day, ah, um, my friend’s teacher, she was really nice, her name was Miss Yarborough...
R: You had a French teacher?
A: No, my friend’s...
R: Oh, your friend’s, I thought you said French, OK. What was the hardest part about going to school there, or the worst part?
A: Umm...the worst part was, like I had it, if I, I’d go to um, like, P, like um, hmmm, detention room...
R: To the principal’s office or something like that?
A: Yeah that was the place.
R: How often do you go to the duqsi?
A: Saturday Sundays, two days a week.
R: OK. How long have you been going there?
A: Siince...it opened.
R: Um, how many years is that, is it a lot?
A: Uh, since I was six.
R: Since you were six, and you’re eleven now? (pause) What do you learn at the duqsi that’s different than what you learn here?
A: Here, we just learn like subjects in English, and there we learn subjects in Arabic, and that’s really important we have to learn, um, they are, they’re good for the Kitab, and that’s what we learn in duqsi that’s different from here.
R: OK. (to someone else) Why aren’t you in your class? Did you get a book?
OK, go ahead, go. No not here, sorry, go, please.
A: It was her teacher, Miss Stradm, last year, so that’s what she says.
R: (to someone else) I mean really, go, to your class.
A: What did you just say?
R: I told him to go to his class.
SO: Hey, what’re you guys doing?
R: I’m interviewing A for my project.
SO: Your project, like what?
R: For my um, for my Master’s degree, so I can graduate, like Heather is graduating.
SO: Mm hmm. OK.
R: (to A) Next. What do you think are some...well, actually, you know I just asked you what you learned at the duqsi and
A: What’s different from here.
R: Is there anything else that you can think of that’s different?
A: Mmm mm.
R: OK. Do you learn at home from family members? Anything?
A: Umm...like everyday...I practice my...like, when we go to duqsi, um, like we have homework like we do, like um, yesterday I started my new um lesson and we had a homework to learn that was due, so I learned, I learn the 5 days, Monday, Tuesday, through Friday, and when I go there on Saturday, like, I can, I can, I know what to learn so I can pass on.
R: So you practice during the week at home and then...
A: Yeah, then I so, I sort of have stuff to do every day. Learn what we learn there and just do it and then say and then...
R: (to someone else) I’m going to interview you in a couple of weeks.
SO: Couple of weeks!
R: Aren’t you going to be here over the summer?
SO: No.
R: Well, I’ll come find you at the duqsi.
SO: Duqsi.
A: He doesn’t go to our duqsi.
R: You go to a different duqsi.
SO: Yes.
R: I’ll come find you anyway. Don’t worry.
SO: Awww!
R: (to A) So...you practice at home, is there someone who teaches you at home?
A: My Mom.
R: Your Mom does.
A: And I go to my grandma and grandpas right now when my Mom ain’t home, so, I go to my grandpa and grandma’s house and my uncles, they teach me everyday.
R: Cool. Do you like the duqsi or the International Academy better?
A: Ahhh...
R: Or can you say that?
A: (laughs) They’re both the same to me.
R: Mmm hmm.
A: I love my duqsi because I’m learning my traditions and stuff, and what I need to be learning when I grow up, and what I need and what I’m supposed to know, and I, at International Academy, um, I learn the subjects because I can pass college, or high school, middle school, I like, um, so, they’re both important, like here I have to learn these subjects to pass college...
R: Mm hmm. OK. Do you like your teachers?
A: Yes.
R: Where does your favorite teacher teach, at the duqsi or at the International Academy?
A: One of my teachers teach at the International Academy, that’s my teacher Mrs. G. and one teaches at the duqsi, and that’s Man, um. Mussa.
R: So you have a favorite, your favorite teacher, you have a favorite teacher at each place.
A: Mmm hmmm.
R: Do you, you pray during the day? (pause) Five times?
A: Five times a week.
R: Five times a day.
A: Yeah.
R: Do you think its important for Somalis who live here in America to go to duqsi.
A: Yeah!
R: Why?
A: Um, wherever you are, there, you have to hope there’s like, duqsi. Because its really important to be learning duqsi, because some people say that its really important to go to duqsi because that’s where you tradition, you, that, that’s where Muslim people, where Allah sent Muslim people um, if you don’t do it, so...
R: OK. I have just a few more left. What’s the first thing you do when you wake up, everyday?
A: Every day? Um...every day, I go to the bathroom, I brush my teeth and stuff.
R: OK. What time do you come to school during the week? You start at 8:30, right?
A: This school, yes.
R: And..goe ahead.
A: Uh, like, my bus, where I live, my bus comes at 7, 7:40, 7:45, so I get here by 8 o’clock...or so...
R: What about on the weekend, when you go to duqsi?
A: It starts 10, ten o’clock, till like 12:30.
R: Do your parents always take you?
A: Sometimes my mom and sometimes my brothers.
R: What is the very most important thing you learn at the duqsi?
A: Qur’an.
R: Qur’an?
A: Mmm hmmm.
R: What about here, what’s the most important thing you learn here?
A: Subjects, like math, science, and stuff.
R: Is there any subject you think is more important than another...for the future?
A: They all are. They all are. Cause maybe I’m going to grow up and go to college and be a scientist. Or maybe I’m gonna be a teacher, and teach reading or writing, or social studies, so...
R: OK. Do you think its important for you to go to school together with other Somali students?
A: Me...sometimes. Like, sometimes when like, Christian people, or sometimes like Muslim people, they’re both the same to me, because Muslim people, like, they speak to, some of them, they speak my language, some of them don’t. So, like if some, like this school, the International Academy, there’s all Muslims, except for some of the teachers, and um, everybody here speaks my language, except for some people, and that’s really important, like, if I’m like feeling sad or mad or something. I can tell the other person, because she understands my language and stuff and she’s one of m, one of us, so...
R: Mmm hmm. What do you think would be different if you went to a different school during the week, like, um, the public school, if you were still at North Linden, how do you think it would be different for you now?
A: That would be really hard.
R: Really?
A: Yeah. Like, like right now, like, right now, North Linden, if I go there now, now I’m in fourth grade here and I go to duqsi that would be really hard, like here, at International Academy, like my math teacher is teaching me plus, like math, stuff like...um, divisions and stuff, and um. I’m learning that, and my at North Linden, she’s teaching me like, like, my math teacher in International Academy is teaching me division, and at my North Linden teacher, um, she’s teaching me divided by. And at duqsi I learn Qur’an so it’s really hard to do, like one of them, I passed that, I have to learn, I don’t know, division or divided by, so I have to learn division and divided by, and parts of the Qur’an...that’s really hard.
R: Mmm hmm. So, if you were at North Linden, it would be hard because the teachers don’t have the same way of speaking about things?
A: Yeah. Yeah. The teachers, they have different ways to teach...
R: Yeah.
A: So each teacher is different.
R: Do you think, do you think you act differently at the duqsi than you act here at the International Academy...
A: (laughing)
R: …and why?
A: I act different there and here, because here, sometimes I act foolish…
R: (laughs)
A: (laughs)
R: OK…
A: Sometimes like, at duqsi I, I’m wearing the full hijab, and like I sit, and I like read my kitab, and then when the teacher comes, we have to [interruption]
R: So, why do you think you act different here than you do at duqsi?
A: At duqsi, I just, I told you, I like I sit, and I read and I act all quiet, and when I, and when the teacher comes, I just go, say what I learned and stuff, so I can pass on to the next lesson, and um, here, sometimes I act foolish and get in trouble and stuff, and there, sometimes I do that, for playing around, here I play around too much, and like here, I, its really different where, how I act. at school or at duqsi.
R: So…maybe you don’t get yelled at as much here?
A: Mmm hmmm. But sometimes I get, here, sometimes I get yelled at more than duqsi, and sometimes I get yelled at more at duqsi than at here.
R: Do you participate in other activities outside of duqsi or International Academy, like do you do sports, or...
A: Yeah, here I do sports like basketball, and baseball, I do baseball and basketball, and at duqsi, we don’t do any sports.
R: Right. When you do like, like after duqsi’s over like on Saturday afternoon do you go play soccer, or football, or...
A: Sometimes we play at…basketball...
R: (to someone else) Are you her cousin?
SO & A: Brother.
R: You’re her brother? (pause) (to A) Go ahead.
A: We play basketball, and, every day we play basketball, and when I go out, when my Mom lets me go outside and play basketball, sometimes we play soccer.
R: Mmm hmm. Do you go to school here with your best friend? I’m thinking that’s a yes.
A: Yes.
R: Alright. Do you have other friends who don’t go to the International Academy?
A: I had at North Linden?
R: Yeah, maybe friends you had at North Linden that you still see, or...
A: I, um, my best friend is here, I only see A here, that’s the only one um, that we used to go to North Linden together, and only A goes to this school that I knew from North Linden, so nobody else goes to this school, except A.
R: So, most of your friends from North Linden you still are friends with?
A: They don’t go to International Academy.
R: Right.
A: Most of my friends at North Linden don’t go here.
R: But you still...they’re still your friends, I mean.
A: I don’t know anyone if they’re not from here.
R: Oh, so, so your friends are, like because you’ve come here, your friends are all here now.
A: No, only A.
R: But, you have other friends besides A.
A: In this school?
R: Anywhere.
A: Mmm hmm.
R: Where do they go to school?
A: Who?
R: These other friends.
A: I have a friend in fifth grade.
R: Doesn’t go school here?
A: She goes here.
R: OK.
A: And my other friend, I’ve got, this my other friend, she goes to North Linden, but she lives by me so I see her every day at home.
R: OK.
A: So most of my friends I see them.
R: So...so you have friends who don’t go here and you see them pretty often because they live close to you or...
A: Yeah.
R: OK. Do you have, I’m sure this is true, this question, do you have friends that don’t go to the same duqsi as you, they might go to a different duqsi?
A: Yes.
R: OK.
A: Like Saleqwa, Balyha, Johara, Rahma we go to the same school, but we don’t...
R: (to others) Shhh!
A: But we don’t go to the same duqsi.
R: Last one...oh no, there are a couple more...have your parents told you about what their life was like before they lived in America?
A: No.
R: So they never talked about that?
A: They don’t.
R: Do they ever tell you about how it was when they were growing up, and what their religious education was like?
A: No...
R: Do they ever say, when I was a kid, duqsi was like this, or duqsi was like...
A: Yeah
R: Did they say that?
A: Duqsi has changed from the latter days until now, because back then, it really was much harder than here.
R: How do you mean, harder?
A: Like, in Somalia, duqsi is like um, more like, more like, like boring stuff, like they just have to read and sit down, but here, like it turns out to be fun and stuff.
R: Hmmm.
A: So, and my mom was telling me back there, now, here is much better.
R: Its much more fun here.
A: Yeah.
R: Because there’s a lot more for kids.
A: Yeah. My bus is here.
R: Your bus is here? OK, I’ll ask you the rest of the questions next time.

5/19/03 continued

R: How did you get sick? Cold?
A: Mmmm hmm
R: Mmmm hmm, were you playing in the rain or something?
A: No. I...
R: So you remember what we were talking about?
A: No.
R: At all?
A: Uh huh do.
R: In general what were we talking about?
A: OK, we were talking about where I live, ah,
R: Duqsi...
A: Where am I from...duqsi...OK
R: Why you go to duqsi...
A: Yeah, yeah.
R: So I think the last thing I maybe asked you was, I said, do you think its important for you to go to school together with other Somali students?
A: You asked me that.
R: You remember that?
A: Yeah.
R: OK, what about this one, I remember this. Do you think you act differently at the duqsi than you do at weekly school?
A: Yeah, you asked me that.
R: And I said why. And then I said...have you...no, maybe it was here...have your parents told you about what their life was like before they lived in America?
A: Did I answer that?
R: I don’t remember you answering that one.
A: Did they told me...um...Oh, they said...
R: They never told you?
A: Like what?
R: Well, you were born in Kenya, right?
A: Yep.
R: How old were you when you were there?
A: I don’t know. I was just born there and I left.
R: So you left right after you were born. But your parents lived there for a long time before you were born, right?
A: Yep.
R: So they never said when we were in Kenya we used to...we used to worship at this mosque, or that mosque...
A: Oh no...
R: Or we used to...nothing like that, or, we liked Kenya better, because it was easier, or?
A: No.
R: They never talked about it at all?
A: No.
R: I wonder why, why do you think...
A: I don’t know.
R: They just don’t want to talk about it?
A: Yeah.
R: They never...OK, let me ask you this question.
A: OK.
R: Did they ever talk to you about, like, well, you ever, you ever heard that thing that American kids...I mean, you’re an American too, but sometimes we make this joke like, our grandparents say, Oh, when I was a kid, I used to...
A: (laughs)
R: ...go to school in the snow, I walked uphill both ways, did you ever, did your parents ever say, when I was a kid my school was like this...
A: No.
R: Really. Your mom never says you’re not learning enough in school, or you’re getting so smart, or...
A: She says that.
R: Yeah.
A: But she doesn’t talk about what happened back there.
R: Yeah. OK. So, what do you think. I mean if you would just imagine, if you went back to Somalia...
A: Mmmm hmmm...
R: OK, if everything was cool and you went back...
A: Mmmm hmmm.
R: ...what do you think it would be like?
A: Mmmm...I’d be scared...(stroking chin)
R: Really? You’re thinking, you’re thinking hard over there, I can see that.
A: I wish I had a moustache (laughs).
R: (laughs) Why would you be scared?
A: Uh, I left when I was a little baby, I left at like 5, and I’m probably sure that something’s going on, um, like people like, doing bad stuff to my baby sister...
R: Yeah. (to someone else) Can you come...I’m...
A: Busy.
R: Busy.
A: That’s the word.
R: Alright.
A: OK.
R: So, it would be scary.
A: Mmmm hmmm. Why?
R: I’m trying to, I’m trying to figure out, like, whether you think it would be good in some ways, bad in some ways, and how you think it would be good and bad, or if you just think it would be too scary, like my...you feel like, because you told me last time that your culture as a Somali is important to you. So its important for you to be an American but also Somali.
A: Yes.
R: So, some people say that, and I think maybe this is true, like for, maybe not for you but for your parents, because they grew up there, like maybe they would feel better, instead of living here, where, you know you have to work so much harder because, in some ways you have to work harder, you don’t have the same family like support, so I’m trying to just, that’s what I’m getting at...
A: Yeah.
R: ...you know, like...
A: No, like when my mom takes the passport, it would be like, um, we’d be going on a vacation, to Somalia.
R: Really?
A: Mmmm hmmm. Um, and um, before I tell my mom that when she says, I’ve got some days when she says we’re going to Somalia, um. I started getting scared and then I told my mom I was getting scared she’s like, she said why are you scared, and I was like, because I left there when I was a little, a little kid, and I probably don’t remember anything...
R: Mmm hmm.
A: ...and like, maybe, maybe when I go there it will be all the kids will be like, staring at me, and going, look at that American girl, she came back...
R: Yeah.
A: Yeah, and my mom...and my mo...and my mom said don’t be scared because you know their language, so you can speak their language when they’re saying something.
R: Yeah.
A: So, I was like yeah, OK. And then I would sit down, like, maybe going over there now is not going to be that hard.
R: Yeah. Hmmm. That’s good. OK. What...what do you want to be when you grow up?
A: I want to be an engineer.
R: You want to be an engineer? You know I’m an engineer.
A: You are?
R: Mmmm hmmm. My first degree is in engineering.
A: Where you been?
R: Electrical. I did electrical engineering.
A: Hmmm. I want to build houses.
R: You want to be a...architect, or a mechanical or civil engineer?
A: What do you call it who builds houses?
R: An architect.
A: Yep.
R: Cool.
A: Coz’ I’m going to build my own house.
R: So you want to...you’re going to go to college.
A: Mmmm hmmm.
R: And, in, can you think of what you think it will be like, let’s see, you’re 11, right?
A: Ah hah. Turning twelve.
R: When?
A: July.
R: When, what’s your birthday?
A: Third.
R: July third? Cool. What do you think you’ll do in ten years? You’ll be...21.
A: How am I supposed to know?
R: I don’t know, just guess.
A: Will I be in high school or college?
R: You’ll be in college.
A: What am I going to do?
R: I mean...what do you think will be different for you, besides being older and being in college? This is just one of those things where you get to imagine, like, your future.
A: OK. Ahhh...what’s gonna happen....
R: You’ll be almost graduated from college, probably, at 21.
A: I’ll be part of a...(?).
R: (laughs).
A: Maybe um, people might like, live in peace, a little bit, like for now, like now you have to work always, raise kids and stuff, maybe back...then...what I...maybe then it will be freer, like have a lot of money...
R: Mmmm. So you won’t have to work so hard.
A: Mmmm hmmm.
R: That would be cool. Hmm. Well, I hope so. That’s the last question. You have more you want to talk to me about?
A: Uhhh...
R: Anything else you want to say, before you go, I don’t know, about school, or religion, or...duqsi, or your friends...I know its hard, because we only had five questions we didn’t have time to get warmed up, and then...coz’ you took off your goatee.
A: (laughs). Let’s see...any questions, like...
R: Anything you want to ask me?
A: Ask you?
R: Mmmm hmmm.
A: I could have keep...
R: OK. One question.
A: OK.
R: One or two.
A: What are you?
R: What am I? That’s a good question. I’m an American.
A: OK.
R: I’m a...student. A sociologist.
A: What’s a sociologist?
R: Someone who studies society.
A: What’s society?
R: Society? Society is like, the word for all the people who live together...
A: Yeah, I understand that.
R: Like social science, you have that.
A: Yeah, I understand.
R: Yeah. Ummm...I’m an engineer, but I don’t really do that anymore.
A: What do you do?
R: I go to school... I’m a student. Like Miss Heather, same thing, we go to... we go to the same school.
A: What’s your heritage?
R: My dad is from Sweden...
A: What’s that?
R: Sweden, you know, is a country in Europe.
A: Oh.
R: And his...
A: So you’re a European.
R: My... his parents, his, sorry, his grandparents came to America in 1901.
A: America?
R: Yeah. From Sweden. So my family has only been here since the beginning of the 1900s.
A: Oh, you lived here a long time.
R: Yeah, compared to you. That’s true.
A: When did you come here?
R: I’ve been here my whole life. I was born here.
A: When?
R: I was born... I’m 33.
A: OK.
R: I was born in 1969.
A: 69. So you’ve been here since 1969.
R: From 1969.
A: Cool. Okey dokey.
R: Thank you! Thanks for being so helpful.
May 12, 2003, Yusuf (adult)

R: What’s your first name?
Y: Y.
R: Where were you born?
Y: Somalia.
R: And how long have you been in the U.S.?
Y: 5 years.
R: How old is your child?
Y: 10 years, 8 years old.
R: When you were 8 years old, what was, what would you say was the most important part of your education? When you were her age, your child’s age?
Y: When I was 8 years old? I was trying to learn more education, to be graduate for university.
R: OK. So was the most important part, what was the mo, the most important thing you were doing as far as education that you think?
Y: To be educated and to help my kids too.
R: OK. So, can you please describe your education when you were growing up, like all of it, did you do duqsi, and primary school, secondary school, everything?
Y: Yeah, I do different kinds. I used to work in school, something like that, like now, KG to 6th, in my country also, working for the school, today, and 5th grade to 8th grade when I finished my, um, high school I was three years teaching.
R: OK.
Y: And then I was trying to help out my community too, in kind, and everything that they wanted if I can, also, I like to help the, all kids, so, I teaching a lot of different kinds, their own culture too and their own education whatever they want. Also I like to help with them, I try different plans, to make it, at least to go an have his home. I was a mechanic too, in my country, I was also an, excuse me, an, I was also to help the old, adults kids, adult persons, kind to do whatever they want to. So, and I also like to teach kids too, their own culture.
R: OK.
Y: Qur’an, whatever they need to be gonna help, help them to be good citizens and kids.
R: Did you, so you when, when you were 8 years old you started going to duqsi, did you go before?
Y: I used to go, yes, I used to go to duqsi bwana. Every child is supposed to be going to duqsi and school to, together, so when you come back from school you have to go to duqsi, you can’t, you don’t have to, so when you come back at school, eat, go back to duqsi and then after that do your homework and then sleep, then you have to get up and repeat, that’s what it is. And I was helpful, to
all the old people, also parents and neighbors. I was trying to help, and kind they want.
R: When you were a kid.
Y: Mm. When I was 8 years old. Still I do, up to now I do that.
R: Sure. Where were you, when you, when you were talking about that, where were you?
Y: Somalia.
R: In, in which city?
Y: Kismayo.
R: Kismayo.
Y: At the capital city
R: OK. Can you describe how your religious practice has changed during hard times, like during the civil war, or when you were moving to the U.S., and how did you manage to continue practicing during times that were difficult?
Y: Tired.
R: Used to be, yeah?
Y: We are still am, practicing, so still we do, and I do still, because when you, between you and God, to do that, practical, its not done for someone, and also its am, it’s the culture, for Islamic culture, to do that, that was our life and it was be there. And also, it’s kind of tired, because, although we had free time to go everywhere, but right now, here, we’re busy today, a lot of things, bills, different kinds, rent, also gives the kids time, um, though it’s different, was, you have to own your own house, or your parent’s house, because you don’t need to pay a lot of bills, back there.
R: Right.
Y: Over here you have to stay very busy just to pay your different kinds of bills, and just free time you have only Saturdays Sundays, so as, whenever you can, you can do that, whenever you time to help your kids, to educate to be am, good citizens, that is what we try to do, so...that’s what we do.
R: So, even when everything was, when it was difficult, when you were in the process of moving to Kenya or wherever you were living at the time, you managed to keep up with your religious practice?
Y: Yeah, because in Kenya it’s different, in Kenya they have the Christian people and the Muslim people, as you know, because everyone is equal, because wherever you are, wherever you have been, they are in Kenya, because it is too close, the church is close, and the mosque is too close, and the kids they can go on wherever they, where it’s comfortable. And in United States its kind of tired because you don’t have to go anywhere because its only Saturday, Sunday we can go, to do that. In Kenya you don’t have to do that because you work only 8 hours or you go to school only 8 hours and then you free. In the other time you can practice your own culture, your own religion, that is.
R: Will you describe what is involved in your practice of religion here in Columbus, how do you practice, sounds, so you kind of answered that in the last question, but how often do you go to the mosque, or how often do you...?
Y: Its kind of tiring me out, right now, but actually we practice in the world too, wherever we are, because we um, because we busy, so then still the prayer time, everything is going in, on time...[interruption, tape stops].
R: OK. So you were telling me about how you practice in Columbus, so every day, what happens every day?
Y: Because us, as a Muslim we have to pray 5 times a day.
R: OK.
Y: So, wherever you are, because if you are in work, or if you have an, if you have free time, to go home, to go to the mosque and then pray, that’s what we do, because right now if, if you are working the free time when I have my break, until I’m...the time is changing, anytime, because right now its going to up to the em, 1:30, so it’s two hours from now, so the times changing. We changing also the break time, so 1 o’clock, 1:30 we pray here, and then when I go home, around 10, ah eh, 5 o’clock I pray, aslant, and pray magrib about 8:30. Um, isha is going to be um, fourth, at, as in 10...
R: OK.
Y: ...so...
R: So...go ahead.
Y: So, it’s a daily.
R: Yeah.
Y: Daily, 5 times a day. So that’s what we do every day.
R: What about weekly? Anything you do weekly, that is, like do you, like, you know Christians go to church every Sunday, so for you is there anything that happens every...
Y: Weekly we have only Friday because we have to go. Fri, Friday is the part of the prayer time, and is the big sentence, usually every Sunday or usually on Saturday, so as we us, we have to pray 5 times a day including Friday too.
R: OK.
Y: So that’s, every morning, every night, every evening, you have to pray.
R: What about, are there things that happen, like, every year, like Ramadan, of course, and Eid, do you...
Y: Yeah.
R: You’re able to, you practice those?
Y: Yeah, we practice those, because one of them is the once of the month every year.
R: Right.
Y: And also there is hajj, to go Mecca, if you have wealth if you don’t have it, you’re not included there. And we also have zikaa, charity.
R: If you have...
Y: If you have wealth too, that’s including the people that have more money, but the money depends, to was, make a round there.
R: Have you done the hajj?
Y: Not yet.
R: Not yet.
Y: I’m not gone yet. Because I’m waiting until I become a teacher and then I get my passport helps to go.
R: Ah. OK, the next question is, what is the most important thing education can provide for children, in your opinion?
Y: Our kids...kids...every person, we don’t know what their opinions they are, because they are different, they have different opinions, and different love, whatever they love. It’s like, some kids, they love to be a doctor, some kids want to be a teacher, you can’t know, but you can only try their best to be educated, general education, because its comes from us, so you. that will be their desire, when they grow up, whatever they are going to be they love it. So my opinion is that kids, important that they have to learn a lot. Any kind, to learn different cultures, to learn different an, education, and then, when they are teenagers, they can desire whatever they want. We don’t know what, their hearts, whatever they like it.
R: Mm hmm.
Y: But, subjects right now is in school, just we teach all together, that way they go to college, college, they are desiring whatever they want to be.
R: Mm hmm.
Y: Always is going to be a journalist, they always, always going to be a doctor, always going to be...you don’t know that, so our first is to help them, to be good citizens, to know more and to increase their generations, that helps us be, that this child, supposed to be help, in the future, all of humankind.
R: Yeah.
Y: Whatever he are, if he are here, or if he are, goes another place too. Try to make a good citizen in every way, that’s what we a try to do.
R: I need to get a [tape stops]. OK. Why have you chosen to send your child to duqsi as well as here?
Y: Duqsi as you know, they have to know, they have to learn some their own cultures.
R: Yeah.
Y: Because, it’s hard when they, if someone says I am Muslim, he can say whatever he can, he wants. He can say whatever he thinks about it, so we have to teach our kids. As we know every human they have to teach their own kids their own cultures. If they are Christians they have to teach them Christianity, the Bible, whatever it says, also Muslims, what the Qur’an says. So if someone has
faith, mostly, they can’t get any problem because they will think about the future, what is going to happen to his faith, about, his God, or what he’s going to do about it. If someone doesn’t have religious, he’s got a problem, so...
R: Because you can’t, you’re saying you can’t connect the two, your faith and your culture?
Y: No, I mean that what I am saying is about. To be a good citizen, we have to, know a lot of people, they don’t have religion. But, as, something, if it gets something angry, or something, he can harm himself, or he can do whatever he thinks about it. So if this person has a little bit of faith or religion, he will think, if you do a bad deed, you will go, where only, God place go, God will forget about you. If you do good things you will get paradise, and good things, so, he will have already, he does something he will think about it what is going to happen in his pa, his future.
R: Mm.
Y: So, if someone doesn’t have anything, then he will angry and then, and he’s gonna happen whatever he says and, evil, it take chances, the person to do that. So he can do whatever he wants, and, he, he, he does not control himself, and then, next time you see the person is going off, and wrong place. That was, to choose, the person to be good and his, his religion or his culture to risk, and especially for, to be, to giving the people whatever he leaves them.
R: Sure.
Y: Yeah. And he doesn’t have, even, he doesn’t give his parents a respectable. If he don’t tell anything from the faith or, the religion, whatever he believe, so, we need to try to save the, human, humanity. If its Christian, or if its Jewish, or if its Muslim. So someone says hey, God is watching you. So as you can scare up, you say, OK, you’re right. Maybe when he’s angry you say, sit down. I telling you true now, this is not good, you wanna go hell or you wanna go, like that? This, so he’s gonna be scared a little bit, and he’s going to be a good citizen.
R: OK.
Y: Otherwise, I don’t know who you’re talking about, I’m going to do what I can, with the...
R: Right.
Y: That’s the problem you see people.
R: So it...[PHONE RINGS]. So I think you, you’ve answered this question, the next question I had was, is it easy or convenient for you to bring your child to the duqsi on the weekend?
Y: Its easy for me, because uh, they will learn and they will be communication for other kids, too. If parents and home always, not going to fit, the child. They need to practice too, to see the other kids, and then, they will learn, and then they will be happy to play with the other kids, and to see their own cultures. So, they must practice this.
R: So do you do any religious education at home, do you teach Arabic, or the Qur’an, at home?
Y: Sometimes. If I have chance.
R: Yeah, right.
Y: (laughs).
R: Life is hard?
Y: Yeah, hard (laughing).
R: And, if you compare what’s happening to your child now, and the education that you had when you were growing up, how would you, how do you think it’s different, between the two?
Y: The education that I having when I was a child was different than now because we have fewer, a lot opportunities to do that. We have trained, we have, a lot of opportunity.
R: OK.
Y: To learn, and then, they have a lot of practice. As you know Africa, where you’ve been in Africa, you have different kind, you can’t, get more source about it, even to practice you can’t get in Africa.
R: Yeah,
Y: So here they have different way, I think they will be higher than me when they learn a lot of things here. If I’m, if I don’t do, to more education, they will be higher than me I think.
R: So there’s a lot more opportunities.
Y: Yeah,
R: What, how would you say it’s the same, the education between you and...[tape stops]...So, you said children that have more opportunities here, what is, could you, if you compared the two educations, like how would they be, the same.
What has stayed the same throughout your education and your child’s education?
Y: Actually they’ve never been same. Because I was education is more real, to me more real in everything we learned. And here, they have a different, I mean they work together African come up, only, you work only by yourself, or you another kid, so you have to memorize whatever you have. And here they do everything’s practical, and everyone they go internet and they can make up something whatever they want, with internet, they have a lot of resources.
R: Yeah.
Y: But at, at, that time we don’t have that resources, to do that. So, it’s much different.
R: There’s a lot more coming at children, I mean...
Y: Yeah.
R: Information.
Y: Yeah. A lot more is coming because a lot of things, a lot of new stuff is coming, with, for them.
R: OK. And, what, so the religious education aspects like learning the Qur’an, learning how to pray correctly, how does that part, is that the same? Did, does your child learn those things the same way as you learned them? Like, just the aspects of Islam itself?
Y: Yeh, as, same I was learning, they have to learn too. Because, um, there are no teachings the same I learned, because, we don’t have any the kids to learn, because, they have, that, whatever we teach them, whatever they learn, in the Qur’an, and the same things from the Qur’an we didn’t do, we have to believe also the Qur’an, what it says, for we follow or whatever, says the Qur’an. And, same thing.
R: OK.
Y: Yeah. The pray time, because, they are, they do practice Islam. The kids do – between 15 years old, they can do their own practice. Now they are doing, sometimes they pay a little bit, and sometimes they are not, because they can’t afford it. But that’s to show them, that they practice, next time they will be equal, and they when they grow up, 15 years old, they can do whatever they can, the best that they can.
R: So when they’re 15 they make the choice of how they want to continue the practice.
Y: Already they learned because they do they do their own they choice. Because now we don’t tell anything because they are, practicing now, but they have to do it. So they do it.
R: OK. Do you think that together the International Academy and religious education like the duqsi give your child an understanding of Somali culture that they wouldn’t have if they didn’t go to both places? Like if they only went here and didn’t go to duqsi, would they, understand Somali culture in the same way?
Y: It depends. On the parents how they, they treatment, because some, they are not going to duqsi still, because we are, some, we, them are not close being also to duqsi.
R: Right.
Y: Yeah, they have their own class or they have it in home or, whatever the parents they are teaching. That’s it. It depends how they like, their parents. You can’t afford to go your child, to bring them to duqsi. And problem, but whatever they want. If they like they can keep at home, if they like they can bring them. It depends how they like it.
R: OK.
Y: It’s not our fault to, to say, you have to bring your child...
R: To duqsi.
Y: Yeah.
R: Do you think that if a child does go to, my question really was, like, along the lines of why, why a parent sends their child here to IAC, which is, you know, a
child has many Somali children around them, so, it’s, from what I understood, I thought that they would be able to understand Somali culture, pretty, pretty well, just by coming here. But, most, it seems like, maybe not most but many of the children also go to duqsi. So I’m wondering, my question was kind of trying to find out, what is it that makes, why would a parent choose to send their children to so, so many different schools. When they’re really busy like you say or they have a lot to do, what is the benefit from having both, schools?

Y: For both schools? I think it depends you have the...I think, what I think is there. Because the child was been here and then he go over there and he get same person or same child over there to play with them. Ah, is good for them that they, they will see each other still, the weekends, and they play along, they know, better the other kids. But still the child’s, chow, is their like, a lot of activity to do there, if they don’t get it, they will refuse.

R: Right.

Y: (laughs) Yeah. But ah, actually we don’t have most of them, in duqsi this childs. Only we have, few.

R: OK.

Y: Yeah. If you. It’s close, the duqsi. Most of them come different place. Different neighborhoods. But some people, they love to go, to send their kids, and some people they ah, they tired, they was, ah, 5 days in school, just, let them rest and we teach a little bit in home. As they, if they have chance. If they don’t have they have to send them to duqsi.

R: So, if a parent can’t teach at home then, you’re saying definitely they would take them...

Y: You have to go duqsi. You have someplace, yeah.

R: OK. Interesting. OK, this is kind of a...what are the most important ways, in your opinion, children develop their morals and values and thoughts about the world?

Y: (laughs).

R: That’s kind of a stretch. It’s sort of an abstract question, but...

Y: Yeah, it’s kind of hard. I think, what I think is, nobody knows (laughs).

R: Right,

Y: Whatever, whatever he knows.

R: Do you think, do you think it’s...[tape stops]...I’m going to try and put that question this way. Like if you had to say, children go to school, so they have their teachers, they have their parents, and then they have other children. Which is the most important way that they are educated to be good citizens? Where do they get the most...?

Y: Parents and teachers.

R: Parents and teachers.
Y: All the people who have, more, if they are, understand each other they will, they will be more, mistiful to help the kids.
R: And if they don’t under, if, if the, if the children have a problem with their, relating to their teacher, then the, you think the parents sort of have to step in and...
Y: Yeah.
R: Yeah.
Y: I think the parents, he can do the best he can, to understand what is the kids goals. Because if they don’t know, between that, teachers they teaches the lessons, or, um, misteach, and parents, they don’t see what the teacher gives it, or ah, they don’t care about the child, or worry about the, work and they come just leave and they go, and the parents they go, go. Because it isn’t enough, in support, home.
R: Mm hmm.
Y: If they get support from the parents and they say hey, you doing a good job, keep going, what you gonna do, or, every day they can call and say sit down, what you gonna do next year, or what you, what you ah, refer, it’s good. And what do you think of this class, where you gonna go, what, time you go, take what you like, math or things, what you gonna be, in your future? You have to open your heart and you are supposed to be, good, you supposed to be look like, and, be happy to home. When he’s home. And when he’s school too. So he will be a good student and go, in, citizenship, person.
R: OK.
Y: That’s what I, what I, my opinion (laughs).
R: Yeah.
Y: Other people, they are different, I think.
R: Um, next question is, how do you think your views are different from the views of people that aren’t Muslim that live maybe next to you, or close to you?
Y: What I think it is, that a neighbor is a neighbor. As also we see in the Qur’an, or intonation, prophet Muhammed.
R: Mm hmm.
Y: He was almost wishing a lot of time, in his neighbor. And he says, many times he says, Gabriel came to me, and he says, look your neighbor, look your neighbor, until I thought, when cheat, when I died, my cheat. So the neighbor is neighbor, whatever he are. If he’s Christian or he’s Muslim, we have to, you have to respect, your neighbor.
R: Sure.
Y: He is living too, if he doesn’t have any religion too, you have to respect that. So, we should teach, sufficient then how to give that. Even smile, or do whatever you can, if you can’t help, just leave them alone.
R: Sure.
Y: Don’t argue in front them, don’t give, don’t give a hard time for them. If you,
if they need your help you can do whatever you can. If they don’t, leave them
alone. Just you have to say hi when you see them. That’s it (laughs).
R: Just say hi and smile.
Y: Yeah.
R: OK, this is the last question. Um, has sending your child to the duqsi and the
International Academy affected the way you are involved in your community?
Just, I guess, what I mean by that question is, um, do you see yourself as being
more involved with your neighbors, less involved with your neighbors, or more
involved with the people who you consider your community, like other Somalis
or other Muslims?
Y: To send, for the, International Academy... I don’t understand (laughs).
R: Yeah... the second part... I’m glad you’re helping me.
Y: Yeah.
R: Um, if you, I guess what I’m getting at, is, by sending your child here, to the
International Academy, have you made some connections with other parents, for
example, that maybe you didn’t have before...
Y: OK [tape stops].
R: This is the last question. I think what I was thinking was that, some parents
who came, you, I know you’re very involved in the community.
Y: Yeah.
R: But I was thinking that some parents maybe didn’t know as many people, so
that, if they sent their child to the duqsi, and sent them to the International
Academy, it would help the parents to meet other parents, and also, help them to
become more involved in, Islam, in religious activities, maybe. That’s what I was
kind of trying to get at with that question. Has it helped you to meet people, to
become more a part of the Somali community, that’s what I was wondering.
Y: Yeah, actually what I understand is, to meet the parents, I don’t have a chance
at that time to meet the parents. But some they involve, when they hear the
school, some they already was in duqsi and then they was involved also with the
school. Because, um, they was like to be kids to be, an, same cultures and then,
they don’t worry about it, and, sometimes they don’t worry about their
homework, they will ask us to help them homework. Also they are getting
communication about inform whatever they think about it. When they call in
school they, and someone speak English, they don’t understand, and, they have
to find someone to help them, to take them at school too. But mostly they more
because they get their own language and they have the English also the kids, the
kids they learn English more education, and more, any questions they having the
will feel free, their own language together.
R: Mm.
Y: And positive with us. And some girls. And some they lucky, they was in this duqsi, and then, the same time they come to this, and, and school. That was because um, we don’t have chance to find, more involved to call the parent, and ah, to practice, that’s the people they are human being, that they don’t really have time. If they have times. If you are, only we have two days, and you have two days only, you can’t make it earlier, because hard also...kids they need time.
R: Ah.
Y: Community they need time. You can’t do that part. But mostly they will go, if they have child they will go to the playtime, or even mosque, they get whatever they can get over there.
R: So I think this thing that you talk about with time is really important.
Y: Time, it’s really important.
R: It must be, because, I, I think I’ve read that somewhere too, that people say that when they were in Africa going to school, that they always had, there was more time.
Y: There was.
R: To learn.
Y: Only they was working on 8 hours. If you go education, obviously you have to go 8 hours. You’ll have my time in the second, second shift, for education there too.
R: Right. So now you’re working, you, yourself work here, and then you also work second shift.
Y: Yeah, second shift.
R: OK...that’s all.
Y: Thank you very much.
R: Shukran...no, thank you.
May 19, 2003, Khaled (adult)

R: What is your first name?
K: K, A, K.
R: And... where were you born?
K: Somalia.
R: How long have you been in the United States?
K: Ah, six years.
R: OK. And how old is your child, um, let me say, how old are your children?
K: Umm, the oldest one is 13 years, the youngest one is, um, 5 years.
R: And for you when you were growing up, what was the most part, the most important part of your education when you were 5, 6, 7?
K: Yes, I also learned, learning about the Qur’an, it’s the Islamic book, creation...
R: Mmm hmm
K: After that I would go to school, I finished high school, till, ah, university.
R: You finished university too?
K: Yeah.
R: OK. Can you go into a little more detail about your education when you were growing up? Um, you said you did duqsi?
K: Yes, I’ve gone to duqsi, I go to, ah, elementary school, then go to middle school, I go to, ah, high school.
R: OK.
K: I go high school for a main subject, special for my education, then I completed another two years at university. I got a BS degree in education.
R: You’re a pilot.
K: Yeah, a pilot (laughs).
R: OK. And at duqsi, um, from what I know, there you study Qur’an...
K: Yes, I study Qur’an...
R: And Arabic...
K: Ah, always in Arabic...
R: Yeah, of course, because you have to know Arabic to read the Qur’an.
K: Yeah.
R: OK. And... can you describe how your religious practice has changed during hard times, like during the civil war in Somalia, or during the time that you were moving?
K: Yes...
R: How would you manage to keep up with practice?
K: Ah, religion is always a complete science, its not a practice only. It’s a, life, ah, a way you can, ah, Allah, is created for the two hate things. The hated things, is the, human being, and the ching. You know that, ching?
R: Mmmm...
K: The evils.
R: Ah, ok.
K: He bring. Why he created for the two, to worship him, to Allah. to worship him to Allah. So that’s why, everybody, in the world, have to worship to Allah, or what you call him, the God. So that’s is not, ah, I don’t get only hardship thing, when I was grow up, but I go out, I learn Qur’an, I learn how to pray, I learn to help to people, and then, I using the, sal, remaining this Qur’an, and, after that, I become a abeltie, then I work on boat military, so, we are, I am very happy for that, because that’s my religion.
R: Mmm hmmm.
K: Uh...
R: And even when, so it sounds like even when you were moving, or traveling, or, you said you lived in Kenya...
K: I was living in Kenya, I used to live in Kenya, especially Mombasa, yes, in Mombasa most of the people are Muslims...
R: Yeah.
K: ...so we having common mesjid, with which to pray and worship, or, also then I coming America, I using in home my, there is a community of Islam is there, there is a mesjid also in America, so we pray there, and we practice always. We pray five times a day, we make a fasting, we make zakat if you have the ability to have wealth, and we pay for ah, hajj, or pilgrim, if you have money to go, ...and so...and we do the hajj, the pilgrimage, if you have the money to do it...so we practice always while we are here.
R: Have you done the hajj?
K: Not yet.
R: Mm hmmm.
K: I don’t have wealth enough now to go to hajj.
R: And here in Columbus, it sounds like what you’re saying is that your religious practice has always been very consistent.
K: Very consistent, yeah.
R: And even here in Columbus.
K: In Columbus, yes, In Columbus consistent. We usually go, five mesjids, Islamic mesjids, communities, so we practice there.
R: How long have you been in Columbus?
K: Ah, mostly, when I was in America I was here. Only 2 houses before. Only twice in 6 years I was out of the country. So almost 6 years I was in Columbus.
R: OK. And your everyday practice of religion is prayer 5 times a day...
K: Yeah, prayer,
R: Zakat...
K: Uh, zakat...
R: Zikr...
K: Uh huh...fasting, Ramadan.
R: That's once a year?
K: Um hmm, once a year.
R: Right.
K: Because if you were ah, if you more, ah, achan, or if you want, you can do for 5 days.
R: Oh. So...
K: Like at the, at the prophecy date. Sunah, it's called sunahs. Sunahs means, it's not compulsory for you, but if you do it, it's good for you.
R: So, most...
K: But, hamabad, is compulsory, for everybody.
R: OK.
K: But ah, but ah, sunah, means, prophecy date, and is good for every Muslim people, but if you don't, do that, you don't get put in banishment, or, something bad like that.
R: So every, every year is Ramadan and sometimes...
K: Sometimes...
R: ...if you...
K: ...want...
R: ...you would,..
K: ...prophet he did for like example, every week, for ah, Thursday, or Monday, he did. Some people, some people they do that.
R: Do you fast every week?
K: No, sometimes I do, sometimes I don't.
R: Ah, that's interesting.
K: Sometimes I did for like, ah, ah, because Muslims they have two, ah, festivals, for, id-fitra, means when the Ramadan is finish...
R: OK.
K: ...is id-fitra, the other one is, al-haqq, when it's the, be (?) time. Sometimes also, the, ah, the pilgrim of the hajj, there are two days or 10 days before you can fasting, as shown.
R: OK.
K: So, sometimes you do that.
R: And, you celebrate, like, maulidi?
K: Maulidi, some Muslims they do that, but, it's not, we don't have a book from that, our prophet, or, and his, ah, command, we don't have that day. Some Muslims they do that. So some people they do, from, these, these hundreds years after. One who was complaining about the Egyptian, was a Muslim governor, he do that, because he said, Christians they do that, their prophet they do for a celebration, and he was a...so this is a little bit of confliction for the Muslims. Some people they say, ah, that's not, ah, religion.
R: I see.
K: It’s the idea of the person, so we don’t follow the prophet’s birthday, and ah, some, ah, ca, commandments of the prophet they don’t take also...
R: I see.
K: …so I believe that people. That religion is, is not ah, an idea of a person, or it’s not a, come from a book, religion is a law, and it’s a rule, and it’s a way of, ah, life.
R: Mm hmm.
K: So, that’s why, ah, why we use only, one diem, whole diem.
R: I see.
K: And what he, written in the, from the Qur’an, and that the hadiths of the prophet that talking our way. So we use that, that hadiths, we use that.
R: OK. Um, and for your children now, what do you think, just in your opinion, is the most important thing that their education can give them?
K: The most education important thing is an Islamic way, Islamic religion. Because...
R: So that they know the right...the right...?
K: Because the lives is two. The lives is...two. One is the life, the near life, the life you are living. Because, maybe in my age we be only seventy, sixty, maximum 80, maximum, 100. And we’ll be finished.
R: Right.
K: But the real life we’ll be back. So...the real life, you go, there is two way only. The way of the prophet, the way of the...hellfire. So, my children are children. And I am responsible, to tell them, or to learn them, or to practice them, to go the way to go to the prophet. Because, if they get, ah, the lose the, uh, the real way, and go to the hellfire, I get banishment, I get a little bit banishment.
R: Because you didn’t...
K: So that’s why I’m learning, they are too young, they don’t understand. So I have to learn and to practice them, how to live. How to go, or how to use the Islamic way, or to like it. Because when a person, he is a Muslim, he knows everything what is wrong, what’s ah, what’s wrong, because Islam is a way of life. Because you know the rights of your neighbor, you know the rights of your wife, you know the rights of your child, you know the rights of your friend, even non-Muslims, the rights they have to you. So, so, it’s the way of life, the Islamic way, religion. So, that’s why, because, it hurts a person grow up, and he understand Islamic, maybe most 100, 100 or 95, he will be, he’s dead before. But if he loses that education, he maybe lose, he maybe a drinker, he might be a killer of person, he might be a, what’s another, might be a prostitute, something like that, because the life, they lose their life. For example, ah, ah, every Muslim, ah, person, especially for me, he is responsible, his family and his children. Even if I divorce my wife, I am responsible of my children.
R: Yeah.
K: And let’s say, this woman has been bad, I don’t care for her, but, yeah, if she is bad, you are responsible for the children. You have to feed them, you have to educate them, you have to keep them, you have to always counsel. You have always the counsel. And that’s why we ah, ah, because Islam is the combination of all religions. Muslims they believe all religions. I believe the Christianity, I believe the Jewish, I believe all them.
R: But it’s...
K: But, ah, only for all religions there ah, are, in the world. If you think Buddhist, which some Indian people they use, some China people they don’t, it’s not a religion. For example the singa singa, it’s not a religion. But the Christianity it was a religion. So prophet, ah, Jesus was a prophet. And we believe that, if I not believe that Jesus, he was a prophet, and he was the sender of the, sender of the, of the Allah to the people, in that time, if I don’t believe that I am not Muslim.
R: Mm hmm.
K: If I not believe in Moses, the Jewish people they believe him, he’s their prophet, that Allah has sent at that time, and that people, that time, he’s ah, I not a believe that, I’m not Muslim. If I’m not Muslim ah, Ibrahim, he is the father of the, every generation and everywhere the people, if I not believe that he’s the most...because, all we learn from the Qur’an, is written. The Qur’an is telling you how to live, about you, that before, what is did before. What is going now. What’s the future time. The Qur’an it talks about that, fitaa. And, how to worship to Allah, the God, the Qur’an talks about it. Islam you can’t say, kill our bad. You can’t say that. Islam you can’t say, for ah, tip, ah, tipton for somebody, if he stops what he is doing. Islam it says for the cheating of the people. You know it say. But the Muslim is, maybe the religion and the Muslim are different. The religion is the law of Allah. But the people, they are human beings...they can make a mistake.
R: Right.
K: They can make all, all over there. Some Christian people, they go well, some days they bad. They’re like Muslims like that.
R: Sure. So, that’s the reason why you send your child to duqsi and to International Academy...
K: Academy, yeah.
R: So he...
K: Because, Academy, because, ah, the most of the American here, sometimes some of them they don’t have, ah, any religion. Some they are Christian, some they different, ah, religions. So the school, and the International Academy, they different ideas or different, ah, religions, they can combine. So different groups they come the inside. So, one child he use like, this ah, behavior, one child he use this behavior, different behavior, becoming, a combining.
R: Mm hmm. But when they’re, being at the International Academy, they...
K: Really because they are all the same religion, most of them.
R: Yeah, right.
K: The whole hundred and some. Most of teachers are Muslim. So, the child he get a belief, a way of life. Better than ah, ah, other, ah, the public schools that we have here.
R: OK. Is it easy and convenient for you to bring your child to duqsi or to school, I mean, is it, I guess what I am getting at is, you work, this is your store, you must be very busy, but yet you make time because religious...
K: Yeah. Because as non-Muslim people they, even they have a time, to learn their children what they want.
R: Mm hmm.
K: Ah, for example, if they want to ah, education at school, they have a time. They went to religion, time, they go to the church or somewhere. So, we are like that, so, we have a time, and we consider, ah, ah, free time, we want to teach our children our religion, our way of life, our what we like, what is good, what is bad, so we do that.
R: OK. And, do you teach Qur’an at home?
K: Yes, I have to.
R: OK. So, and you talk, you, I’m sure you talk about the meaning of the lessons, K: The meaning of the lessons, the reading, how to read it, because the Qur’an is very hard, ah, to read it because it’s Arabic.
R: Right.
K: And because we don’t have the more time in America to read, and to practice and to memorize the Qur’an.
R: Do you see your religious education, your duqsi when you were growing up, how is that different from the duqsi that your child goes to now? Or is it the same?
K: It is different, it is different, because, my child might be getting two days a week. Or, maybe two hours or less than two hours to learn the Qur’an. But me, I was going more, three evening, like I had, like ah school.
R: Right.
K: Yeah, so is that, it’s different. On that time we have too much TV and watching. Children they watch TV too much. Always we are complain, they watching TV, too much TV, so, they, maybe one year I have complete the whole Qur’an, or two years, maybe. But 10 years, they can learn only 2 or 3, ah, ah, sura or chapters.
R: So you com...
K: So it is different, yeah.
R: So you were able to complete the whole thing in two or, what did you say, one to two years, all the suras.
K: One, yeah, one to two years.
R: Yeah, wow. What do you think are the most important parts of Somali culture that your child gets from the duqsi itself that they might not get if they didn’t go there?
K: They get, at duqsi they get, they get how, they get what’s the education is, what is the education, is. And to live other people, how to share with other children, how to ah...learn pray or to practice the religion.
R: OK. How about, what are the most important parts of Somali culture that your child gets from International Academy?
K: Most of, yeah, it’s not um, Somali culture but most of the other children are Somalis, so they talk the same language, they talk the same play each other, ah, also they get for the other education for the American style of education.
English, about that.
R: OK.
K: But they don’t get the Qur’an when they are there. And just a little bit they get the Arabic language, to write the Arabic style.
R: Right. Um...
K: Like, ah, is, same as for Somalia, because when you are in Somalia, when I was in the daytime I was going to school, afternoon I was coming back to the duqsi, learning the Qur’an, so it’s similar, because when we are at school, we learn maths, English, Somali, Arabic, science, and everything that they learn in school.
R: And then you would go home and do duqsi, or religious...
K: Yeah, then you are do your homework at that time, or go back.
R: What do you think is the most important way that children develop their, the right or the correct moral, ethic, ethics and morals, for living in the world, the right values?
K: Ahhh...I might not understand the question...
R: Um...I guess what I mean is, do you think children get an understanding of the right way to live most from their parents, or their teachers, or other students, or...
K: Really ah, really the world, the culture, of ah, let’s call it, ah. the environment, they learn the person, is the good things and bad things. Because he, he get mostly the good and the house, filling the bottom. And school is the second. But the biggest value is the environment. And the children they play with other children, they talk to other children, because they are the same age, same play, same prayer, something. So most the them the environment, ah, ah...
R: So the people they spend their time with.
K: Yeah.
R: OK.
K: Because when we are in Somalia, we don’t use too much thoughts for the children. But now, because, the environment, they are Muslim, there’s ah, he,
someone, children, even though they’re not my children, I saw of some Somalian child, he’s about to mistake, I talk, I call him to me. I talk to him, hey, I’m not going to ask for that...

R: Sure.

K: This bad, this thing is very bad, it’s not our religion, it’s not our culture. So is, if you see a, a, ah, the teenager or, smoke a cigarette, everybody can stop, and say, don’t smoke, smoking is very bad.

R: So it is that every child gets something from all the people in the community. K: Yeah. Yeah. Community. All the people in the community, they are helping each other. Because, even if you, you don’t afraid, now we are afraid, for the outside children. Because, might be they stole your child, might be they harm your child, might be, hit always, kil...hit with car, but there, we don’t afraid that. Because, our environment. We don’t have an environment to take children without reason.

R: Yeah. Right.

K: We don’t, ah, ah, afraid of our children, to ah, if ah, the gays, the men, we don’t afraid that. Because we don’t have, any men, our country, we don’t afraid that. Ah, even children, boys, girls, the boy, the boy and girl they, they play each other when they are young, and we’re not afraid, even that. Because, all environment are, clean.

R: Yeah. Yeah.

K: But here you have different. It’s not the same. In America you see, what we have, because, we don’t want to. I go in there and I learn about somewhere else, someone they killed your children, wife, killed her children, man killed his wife and children. What in Somalia...we don’t have that problem. Don’t have that problem. Because, it helps if somebody has the, ah, because Islam, you have only one, path. Anytime that you get, how to go to there, how to be like...in your future. Because you go to paradise. It’s our habit, how to worship Allah. It’s our tack. But if you don’t have any religion, and you not believe anything, you get confused, and you think anything, because you think about, the brain give you some idea, and you follow.

R: Mmm hmmm.

K: And the same, like that. First, when you doing something, when you get the banishment, from Allah, when you think about when you die, where you go, we think about that, so that we are, we are, ah, think about that. So Islam has only one way. We saw some, we had some Somalian when they come here they do like that, they jump out of the skyscrapes buildings, and died, because someone would get confused in their life, maybe he gets something like that, but in Africa, or Islamic countries, we don’t have that problem.
R: And as a parent, what’s your most, I think you’ve told me this already, but what do you think is the most, if you had to choose one, the most important thing you can give to your children, your child, or your children, as their father?
K: Yes, father is the, children, to give the education, first. Education is two: Education of the religion and education of the, ah, the education we know that for school is education and for Islam education. So our most important is that, it’s not only that we give the children to food, nothing, they grow up, even if you refuse their food, maybe it’s someone else or something, or some helper, some humanity person who comes in and helps them, and give a food.
R: Yeah.
K: But food is nothing. Because, yah, the ah, the real life, is two. Ah, go his way, the education way, and the religion way. Because when he grow up, he understand what is wrong and what is right. If you help, if you don’t help him when he is young, he miss that time, he miss that, he can do nothing, that time.
R: And in your view, what you’ve seen, what do you think are some of the differences between the education your child goes to or participates in, and public education? How do you think those two things are different?
K: Ah, you mean International Academy or you mean…?
R: Sure, well, either. Yeah, let’s say International Academy…
K: The public, the International Academy is also a public school.
R: That’s true.
K: But you people call it a, charter, charter school something like that. It’s a bit different, because it’s not for ah, different culture people, just only, most of them same culture people are there.
R: Right.
K: But ah, I think this one is better than ah, public schools, public schools. Because it’s different, I told you already, different people. They coming at different places, different houses and different ideas and different beliefs. So maybe they, contradict each other. But here only most of them, ah, same religion, same, they have same focus.
R: It’s, it would be much more difficult for parents, for a child to stay going in the right direction in a public school…there are so many.
K: Yeah, yeah, this is an easy way, directing for children to Islam.
R: OK. I just have one more. Um…in the Somali community, when a child participates in duqsi, or the International Academy, does it help the family to become more involved with the community, or have…or is everyone who is Somali part of the Somali community?
K: Yes. Yes. That’s the question said. Because when you are going to duqsi, when you go to the mesjid, or meet someone…so, so, Somalian people culture, maybe, little bit, ah, keep children and families together.
R: OK.
R: So by sending your child to duqsi, you yourself have more contact with other parents...
K: Yeah the other parents...
R: ... are more involved.
K: Involved, yeah.
R: OK. OK. That’s my last question.
K: OK.
R: Thank you very much.
June 2, 2003 Alif (child)

R: OK, what’s your name?
A: A.
R: And how old are you?
A: Eleven.
R: Eleven. Where were you born?
A: Um, Kenya.
R: Kenya. And where did you grow up? Did you grow up in Kenya or did you grow up here in Columbus?
A: Um, I came here when I was four.
R: OK. You came to Columbus when you were four. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
A: Um...five.
R: Five brothers and sisters? Older or younger?
A: Younger and older.
R: How old’s your oldest...is it your older brother?
A: Yeah.
R: How old is he?
A: Uh, I think 19 or 18.
R: OK. And you live with your mom and dad or other, or, just your mom and dad or grandparents or...
A: My mom and dad.
R: OK. And what schools do you go to?
A: Schools?
R: Mmm hmm. What schools.
A: The International Academy...of Columbus.
R: And...do you go to any other schools? Do you go to just the International Academy?
A: Yes. And I also go to a duqsi.
R: And,, what subjects do you learn at those schools? Just give me some of them.
A: Qur’an.
R: Qur’an at duqsi.
A: Yes. Reading at school, writing at school...and...praying at school.
R: Praying. Reading, writing, praying...math...?
R: OK. Did you go to a different school before you went to the International Academy? You did right?
A: Yes.
R: Um, which one?
A: Um, Midori...
R: OK. Did you like it, what was it, was it good or bad?
A: Good.
R: Was it? Were there any parts that were difficult or harder?
A: Um...
R: (unintelligible). OK. How often do you go to the duqsi?
A: Two times a week.
(new tape)
R: OK, try this, say your name again.
A: My name is A.
R: OK, so I asked you what schools you went to and you told me duqsi and international academy...
A: Yes...
R: And I asked you what subjects you learned and you said Qur’an, reading, and math...
A: Qur’an, math, reading, (to another)...you get to go back to class? You in school suspension?
Other: Uh huh, for the rest of the year.
R: How many more days are there in the year?
A: Three? Three.
R: You’re done on the fifth, right.
Other: They talking about that I beat, that I pushed him in the face, they grabbed my hand, because they were trying to mess with the fourth grade boys. They grabbed my hand they let some other boy choke him.
R: Somebody...
Other: I told him if I fought him one on one, everybody talking about he’s standing, he’s standing, if I fought him one on one...
R: Maybe it would be better if you just didn’t fight.
Other: But they tryin’, they bum rush me all the time. Every time they see me they want to fight.
R: I don’t think they want to fight. They’re probably just, you know, they’re kind of testing you.
Other: They could they want to fight me.
A: You a bad boy.
R: OK, the next question was, how often do you go to the duqsi?
A: Ahhh, 2 times a week.
(noise like tape recorder falling over)
R: Ah man! Twice a week.
A: Body slam!
R: And how long have you been going to duqsi?
A: Ah, over four years.
R: Four years. OK. What do you learn at duqsi that’s different than what you learn here at the international academy?
A: Ah...Qur’an...
R: Qur’an.
A: And writing Qur’an.
R: Oh, so you learn how to write Arabic.
A: Yeah.
R: OK. Is there anything else that you think is different between duqsi and International Academy?
A: Ah...what did you say?
R: Is there anything else that you think is different between duqsi and International Academy, besides what you learn?
A: Ah, yes.
R: What else is different?
A: There is only Somali people.
R: Only Somali people at the duqsi? That’s interesting. OK. Do...does your family teach you?
A: No...
R: Your dad?
A: ...the teacher.
R: What about at home?
A: At my home?
R: Yeah.
A: Yeah, my dad.
R: Your dad teaches you? And what does he teach you?
A: Who?
R: Your dad.
A: Ah, Qur’an.
R: Qur’an, OK. Do you like duqsi or International Academy better?
A: Duqsi.
R: You like duqsi better, why?
A: Because, ah, that’s a part of my religion.
R: OK. Do you like your teachers?
A: My teachers?
R: Do you like them?
A: In this school?
R: Yeah, sure, in this school.
A: OK, yeah.
R: At the duqsi?
A: Yes.
R: OK. And, where does your favorite teacher teach, at the duqsi or the International Academy?
A: My favorite?
R: Your favorite. (Alekim salaam, to SO else)
A: At the International Academy.
R: Your favorite teacher teaches here? Do you pray during the day?
A: Yeah.
R: How many times a day?
A: Um...six.
R: OK, six. Do you think it’s important for Somalis who live in America to go to the duqsi?
A: Yeah.
R: How come? Why?
A: I don’t know.
R: Just guess.
A: What did you say again? I didn’t get it.
R: I said, do you think it’s important for Somalis who live in America to go to the duqsi?
A: Uh...important?
R: Is it important for, if you’re Somali, and you live in America, is it important for you to go to duqsi?
A: Yeah.
R: Why?
A: OK...
R: Is it important for Somalis who live here to go to duqsi, why? You said yes, but I’m trying to find out why.
A: Because if you don’t you’ll go to hell.
R: Uh huh, OK. OK, next question, what’s the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning?
A: I...brush my teeth.
R: You brush your teeth? Right when you get out of bed you brush your teeth?
A: Yes (laughs).
R: What time do you come to school during the week? What time does school start?
A: Uh, anytime. Or...
R: Anytime? You come to school anytime?
A: Yeah.
R: Isn’t it 8:30, school starts at 8:30?
A: No...7!
R: 7!
A: OK.
R: OK. What about on the weekends, at duqsi, what time does school start there?
A: Ah...2 o’clock.
R: 2.
A: Yeah, for me.
R: OK.
A: But other people 12 or 8.
R: OK. What’s the most, what’s the most important thing you learn at duqsi?
A: Qur’an.
R: Qur’an. What’s the most important thing you learn here at International Academy?
A: Ah...reading!
R: Reading. Do you think it’s important for you to go to school together with other Somali students?
A: What did you say?
R: I said, do you think it’s important for you to go to school together with other Somali students?
A: Ah, I don’t know.
R: Well, remember how you told me that you were at the other school? So there was mostly Americans there, right? Do you think it’s more important for you to be with other Somali students when you’re in school or does it matter? Maybe you can be with...
A: Both!
R: Both. What do you think would be different if you went to a public school during the week instead of the International Academy?
A: Uh...what did you say?
R: I said, what do you think would be different if you went to a public school during the week instead of the International Academy?
A: It would be...I don’t know!
A: Yeah, more.
R: What would that be like? Do you think you’d have more fights?
A: Yes.
R: Because you kind of fight a lot, so I’m wondering, you know, if there were more white kids, maybe you’d get into more fights...
A: I guess (laughs).
R: OK, here’s...this one’s important. Do you think you act differently at the duqsi than you do at International Academy? Do you think you behave differently?
A: Yes.
R: How?
A: I behave good.
R: At duqsi? Why?
A: Hmmm?
R: Why? Why do you behave better at duqsi than you do here?
A: Because if I don’t, then they tell my mom and then I not play my game...
R: But they tell your parents here too right, don’t they call your parents if you
misbehave?
A: And then my dad will hit me.
R: But...OK, but, if you misbehave at duqsi it’s going to be worse at home? Your
parents are going to be more angry with you?
A: Yeah.
R: Really?
A: They take my game, they take my TV.
R: OK. Here’s another one. Do you participate in something, in other activities, like sports, outside of International Academy or duqsi?
Other: A, you’re in trouble?
A: Huh?
R: (to other) He’s not in trouble.
A: I’m just here with my student.
R: (to other) He’s asking me questions. I said, do you participate in other
activities outside of duqsi or International Academy? Like maybe you play
football in the evenings...
A: Yes.
R: Do you? What else do you do? Besides go to duqsi and go to International
Academy?
A: Ah,...besides...
R: What, sorry?
A: Besides go to International Academy and duqsi...
R: Yeah, what else do you do?
A: I play basketball, soccer, football, baseball...and...baseball. No, wasn’t baseball.
R: You play four...you play soccer, basketball, football, and baseball?
A: Yes.
R: Wow. Where do you play?
A: Am, in the park.
R: Wow, cool.
A: We got a soccer place, a basketball place, a baseball...and what do you call it?
A football place,
R: Do you go to school with your best friend?
A: Yes.
R: OK. So your best friend goes to school here at International Academy?
A: Yes.
R: Do you have other friends who don’t go to the International Academy?
A: Yes.
R: You do?
A: Yes.
R: How often do you see them?
A: Every day.
R: But they don’t go here.
A: Yes.
R: But you still see them every day…
A: Yes…
R: At home, or in the park, or something.
A: And they live next to me.
R: Ah, OK. Do you have friends that go to a different duqsi than you go to? I suppose you probably do right, because a lot of the kids here go to a different duqsi.
A: Yeah.
R: OK. Did your parents ever tell you about what their life was like before they came to America?
A: Yes, no!
R: Did they ever talk about their education and how…
A: No!
R: They never talked about that?
A: No.
R: How do you think your life would be different if you and your parents went to Somalia?
A: Which one are you asking?
R: This one, number twelve. How do you think your life would be different if you and your parents went back to Somalia?
A: Uh, I would get eaten!
R: You’d get eaten? By what?
A: An alligator. Or birds. I’m scared of birds.
R: You’re scared of birds?
A: They’re scary.
R: OK.
A: They might peck out my eye…
R: So, so if you went back you’re afraid that you’d get eaten. I guess that makes sense. Because there’s lions and stuff too. (To other: What’s that?)
Other: How come you never have me?
R: I’m just starting. He’s only the second person I’ve talked to.
Other: Oh, I’m the third, right?
R: I don’t know.
A: No, AJ is.
Other: Is there like a list?
R: A list of people? No. No list.
Other: Boy, I can hardly wait.
R: For summer? Summer’s good. What are you going to do?
Other: I’m going to Florida, to Atlantis. Me and my brother…
R: Let me finish up with A, I’ve got two more questions.
A: What about the summer?
R: OK, let me finish up…
Other: (still talking).
A: OK, can I answer these?
R: OK. Let me finish. OK, two more questions.
A: OK.
R: OK.
A: Then I can go play basketball.
R: First, you were telling me about your life would be like if you went back to
Somalia, and you said you would get eaten, which is ok. The next question is,
what would you like to be when you grow up?
A: A basketball player.
R: A basketball player? OK. So, right now you’re 11. In ten years, what do you
think you will do?
A: Play basketball.
R: You’ll be playing basketball. How are you going to get ready to play
basketball?
A: Practice every day.
R: Do you? Do you practice every day now? Cool.
A: After school, I go all the time to the park and play basketball.
R: Good. How are your shots now, are you pretty good?
A: Yeah! I’m the second best in my class.
R: Oh! Who’s the best?
A: JQ.
R: JQ?
A: He’s taller than me.
R: Oh, that’s why…he’s taller. Well, that’s it. That’s the last question. Do you
have anything you want to ask me?
A: Yes.
R: OK.
A: What do you want to be when you grow up?
R: I’m already grown up.
A: What do you want to do?
R: Well, that’s a good question. When I grow up I think I’m going to be a
researcher, ask questions about social…
A: Why don’t you be a basketball player?
R: Well, I can’t be a basketball player because I can’t jump very high. I’ve been practicing my shots with my friend, you know, the jump shot, but you know, I just can’t hit it. I practice all the time. So you’ve been working on the jump shot?
A: You shoot it like this, you know....END
June 16, 2003, Salaam (parent)

R: OK. Let’s just try...tell me your first name.
S: S.
R: OK. Where were you born?
S: Somalia.
R: OK. And, how long have you been in the U.S.?
S: Mm, since, 1993, almost 10 years.
R: OK. And how old is your child?
S: Um, the one who goes to this school?
R: Mm hmm.
S: Nine.
R: Nine.
S: Yeah, she will turn 10 on December.
R: In December?
S: Yeah, she born like, ’93.
R: OK, oh...
S: In December. December.
R: ...at the same time you...
S: December, just after eight mo, my eight months here.
R: Oh, wow.
S: She born December, 19, 1993, 26 under.
R: Oh, wow.
S: And I came here in, August, am, June, May 13th, 1993. Long time,
R: Yeah. When you were her age, when you were 9 or 10, can you tell me what
was the most important part of your education?
S: Um, the most important part, my, like for the subjects that I had there?
R: Subjects, or what you felt was most important or taught you the most.
S: Reading.
R: Reading?
S: Yeah.
R: OK.
S: Mm hmm.
R: Next question is, can you describe education when you were growing up, what
was it like?
S: Um, back home?
R: Yeah.
S: It was perfect.
R: Really?
S: Yeah.
R: Tell me...
S: Why, at that time, um, it was longtime and we used to go and schools, every subject was English, Arabic, and Somali language.
R: Mm hmm.
S: Yeah. It was perfect.
R: Did you participate in religious education like duqsi?
S: Yeah.
R: What was duqsi like?
S: Duq, duqsi, it was like, like you, like you know you is was like, you have, you believe Bible...
R: Mm hmm.
S: …and we believe Qur’an.
R: Sure.
S: And you know when were we were young we go to duqsi Qur’an.
R: Sure.
S: And when we grow up we go to the mosque. Yeah.
R: So duqsi in Somalia is like duqsi is here, where children learn...
S: Qur’an.
R: …suras...
S: That’s right.
R: …read from...
S: Yeah, that’s right.
R: When you, when you were moving to the U.S....
S: Yes, mm hmm.
R: …can you tell me how your religious practice changed? Did it change?
S: Actually at that time, we have civil war, and you know everybody was, at that time, running, moving, city to city, you know, going everywhere then, nobody had the time to go Qur’an, but everybody, have to do, we have to pray for our 5 times a day.
R: Right.
S: And we have no time to go to to read the Qur’an and sit down, because moving everywhere, you know, in the city, and we go there, we go there. But we used to pray our times, and when we get a chance, every time we pray and, they have that, yeah.
R: What was your profession in Somalia, before you came to the U.S.?
S: Oh, back in Somalia I used to go to school, I finished high school, after that I go to college, and I graduated, and Bachelor of Accounts.
R: Oh.
S: Yeah, I go to Somali Institute, Development and Administration.
R: Mm hmm.
S: And I graduated of there. After that, then I used to go to work for the Ministry of Finance.
R: It’s difficult, mm.
S: Yeah. I have a very good chance, back home. But when we came here, we just running.
R: Right.
S: Yeah.
R: Did you go to Kenya, when you left?
S: Yeah, yeah.
R: You stayed in Kenya?
S: I left my country, I go to Kenya, and stay as a refugee, two years, then I get sponsor to come here.
R: I see. OK.
S: Yeah.
R: And, in your practice of religion here in Columbus...
S: Mm.
R: ...what does, what do you do?
S: We have, um, we go to the mosque sometimes, I go to the mosque. And at weekends, I go, I took my daughter to, the Qur’an...
R: Mm hmm.
S: ...and she stayed over there Qur’an and I go there.
R: To the duqsi.
S: Yeah.
R: Mm hmm.
S: Yeah. Sometimes I go there but most of the time, every weekend I go my daughter.
R: OK.
S: Yeah.
R: Every weekend, she goes to duqsi.
S: Yes, exactly. That’s right.
R: And so, every day, you, is prayer 5 times a day.
S: Mm hmm.
R: Every week, every, do you go to mosque every Friday?
S: Um, actually I do not go, but I go on Saturdays, when we have, ah, the Qur’an over there sometimes.
R: Oh.
S: Yeah. But mostly of Somalian, yeah, we go to the mosque, mosque, every Friday.
R: Normally.
S: Yeah, normally, on Friday, yeah.
R: And what, what are events, or things that happen every year, for you, in Columbus, like Ramadan, or eid...
S: Yeah, every year we have one year, ah, I mean one month, and we fast for on 30 days, yeah.
R: Mm hmm.
S: Yeah. After, after we finish our, fasting, we celebrate, for our eid.
R: Mm hmm.
S: Yeah. We do that.
R: And this is, just to get your opinion, what’s the most important thing that you think education can give, your child?
S: You mean what the most important thing for me, or...?
R: I mean, out of all the things that a child gets from education, they learn subjects, they learn to read, what do you think is the most important thing out of all those, that they, that education can provide or give to your children, child?
S: In this school you are talking about or back my, my country? When I...
R: Let’s, I was thinking here...
S: When I was at school...
R: Not just International Academy because, maybe between International Academy and duqsi...
S: Mm hmm.
R: What’s the most important thing that, your child gets from education?
S: Um, still I couldn’t understand that question.
R: OK.
S: You mean that, the most important things that I believe my child to, to, persevere in the world, to take...
R: Yeah. Exactly.
S: ...the world to take advantage of us, to learn that rule?
R: Right. That’s what I mean.
S: Well, Qur’an is the most important of them. But actually at the school it’s very important for me my daughter to get her graduation.
R: Mm hmm.
S: And she finish, when she finishing here, then, I don’t have to, to help her, to get her degree.
R: Right.
S: When she, when she grown up.
R: College degree.
S: Of course, yeah.
R: Yeah.
S: I hope I will, that I live, I don’t know when I’m going to die. But I hope, I want to help her, have a college degree. Enabled her to, to give a hand, everywhere she is.
R: Yeah.
S: Yeah. And she likes education, very good.
R: She likes it?
S: She is, every time are here...
R: Oh that’s good.
S: ...outstanding every time, yeah.
R: Mm. And, why have you chosen to send your child to duqsi and International Academy? Why go to both?
S: The reason I, I take my daughter to duqsi, is, um, I am Islam, that’s why I want for my kids, to be well versed in the real (FILL IN)...if you have kids, or, if you are hoping getting kids, you like to be what you are, what you believe.
R: Mm hmm.
S: That’s why I took my daughter and it’s our culture, and I mean, custom and, I don’t, it’s our culture for Muslims to take kids because we, my mother, my father, when we are young, we know that, three generations, like four generations, we are like that.
R: Yeah. So...
S: So that’s why...
R: You happy to pass on...
S: That’s right. Exactly. Yeah.
R: OK. Is it easy and convenient for you to bring your child to duqsi? Is, it fits into your schedule, ok?
S: Excuse me, is it easy for me...?
R: Is it easy for you to bring your child to duqsi, on the weekend?
S: Oh yeah. It’s very easy, yeah.
R: Yes. OK. Do you do religious education at home? You read Qur’an together, or...
S: Exactly, yeah.
R: OK.
S: Yeah.
R: And, you talk about the meaning of the lessons, or the sura?
S: Mm hmm.
R: I see.
S: Exactly.
R: In what ways do you think your child’s religious education is different from yours?
S: In what way...ah, like, my generation you are talking about?
R: Exactly, yeah. How is...
S: My genera...my generation was old. You know, every year, after year, is different.
R: Mm hmm. Do you think that the duqsi that you participated in when you were growing up...
S: Uh huh...
R: ...is very much different from duqsi here in Columbus?
S: Uh, it’s not different but it’s, you know, it’s, it’s getting progress. Yeah. It’s not
different, but, it’s not different, because Qur’an is Qur’an anytime.
R: Uh huh.
S: But everywhere you know, like my generation, and this generation, is different
not the Qur’an, but the way they are, you know, the way they live, the way they
like to study...it’s different.
R: How? How is it different?
S: Yeah now, now it’s very great, I think.
R: Really?
S: Yeah.
R: OK.
S: Yeah.
R: So there are better ways to teach Qur’an, or different ways of, for children to
learn?
S: Excuse me?
R: How, you, how is it, you said it’s better now. It’s...
S: Yeah. I think it’s better because that time I was not mom. I was a child, but
now I am mom. And I see that my kids are following me, because, they’re...
R: Yeah. OK. What are the most important parts of Somali culture, your child gets
from duqsi, that they might not get if they didn’t go to duqsi?
S: If they did not go to duqsi, they not getting that, if they go you mean the
Somalian community they get it?
R: Yeah...what are the most important parts of the culture that they get, from
duqsi?
S: They culture they get that, that for, number one is for Qur’an, number two is
the culture of the way, that we are raising...
R: Mm hmm.
S: ...and third is the language. Our Somali language.
R: OK.
S: Because every time they are allowed, you know, there, they, they are talking
for their language.
R: So, you said Qur, Qur’an, culture, like dress...
S: Yeah, and Somali language. Because all, most of them are Somali. And they
talking their language.
R: So at duqsi, even though they’re learning Qur’an in Arabic, they also are
speaking Somali...
S: Yes.
R: ...so they understand.
S: Mm hmm.
R: OK.
S: Yeah.
R: And what about here, at the International Academy? What sorts of things do they learn about, Somali culture or being Somali that they wouldn’t get from a public school?
S: Certain public school are really the same. Public school they have the, the ah, there are a lot of Somalian kids...
R: Mm hmm, yeah.
S: …and they, they can talk. The same.
R: So public...we gotta...hang on. (tape stops)
R: OK, so you said Qur’an, culture, such as dress, and language. And then we were talking about International Academy...
S: Uh huh.
R: ...you said it was the same as the public school because...
S: Yeah, because it’s, they’re taking every subject that they used to take, the other public school and here, so.
R: OK.
S: Yeah.
R: But they participate in school...
S: As a community.
R: Right.
S: That’s, that’s why, I talk about that way, yeah.
R: Because of the community.
S: That’s right. And uh...
R: Do you think, do you envision returning to Somalia sometime in the future? Would you go back?
S: With all the...you mean that totally move or...visit?
R: For good. Let’s...we can start there.
S: I hope that I get the government.
R: Right.
S: Yeah.
R: And would you...
S: And I have, we have no government right now.
R: Right.
S: But when we get a government, but I like to get my daughter’s degree here.
R: And then go back?
S: Mm.
R: Yeah.
S: Mm.
R: What about visit, is it possible to visit?
S: Visit. Exactly.
R: Mm hmm.
S: Yeah, I like to visit. And I want to take my daughter because I never see, my country.
R: Right.
S: Yeah. Um hmm.
R: And so...
S: Somedays.
R: It’s her country too.
S: Yeah, her country, that’s right.
R: Yeah, yeah. It’s hard isn’t it...
S: That’s right.
R: To think of it...
S: That’s right, yeah. Yeah. I hope somedays, I take her and she will see where we, we used to live before. Yeah.
R: Um, when, when, children are growing up, what do you think are the most important ways that the children start to understand how to be a good citizen or develop the ways they see the world? What are the most important things that can help them?
S: Hmm...?
R: OK, let me try again. Um, as children go to school, they start to, if, uh, Muslim children, from what I have talked to people and what I understand...
S: Um hmm.
R: ...as they start to, to gr, to become older, start going to school, they start developing ideas about the right, the right way to treat other people...
S: Mm hmm.
R: ...the right way to interact with their peers and their teachers, how to be a good Muslim, I think.
S: Good Muslim is, first of all, is, good Muslim is, has to respect the human people. Any kind, whatever they believe.
R: Mm hmm. And how do, ah, do parents, do children learn that from parents or, like, here, at the International Academy, because many of the teachers are American...
S: Mm hmm.
R: ...how does, if you were at home in Somalia your children would get those, things about Somali culture from their teachers, in some way.
S: Mm hmm.
R: But here, they, because teachers are American maybe they don’t get quite the same...
S: Ah, ah, excuse me, yeah, you are right, I understand. Even back home, I have, I used to have, an ah, American, and Indian sikh, teachers, in back home.
R: OK.
S: Yeah. We used to have. It’s not, you know, it’s not new for us, to have a teachers, different countries.
R: OK.
S: It’s not new. Because back home we used to have any kind of the countries, their teachers, back home.
R: So children learn about, um, how to be a good Muslim or, how to be a good person, a good citizen...
S: Exactly. How to be...
R: …from their parents...
S: …how to be, how to be, that’s right. Yeah. How to be good Muslim, and how to be a good person, because, ah, at home and outside, we need to be the kids same, because, if you treat, you know, it depends for the mother. The mother. If I treat my daughter in the home good, when she goes outside, she, you know, she’s going to be good for the, in the, mag me in her.
R: It doesn’t matter if she’s at home or at school, she’s the same person.
S: Same person. She have to respect, yeah. She is like that right now. She respects everybody.
R: Mm hmm. OK.
S: Mmm.
R: And, I guess I asked this before. Um, do you think there are any differences between education here and public education and you said they were the same.
S: Same, because they used to have subjects, here, and all of them there, so I don’t think it’s different.
R: Yeah,
S: Just all of the, the, the ah, um, I mean, Arabic, is different. But the others is same.
R: What...you mentioned community.
S: Yeah.
R: Um, what do you think having a community here, where a child is surrounded by other Somali students, how, do you think that helps them, to learn faster, or is it more difficult because they don’t get to speak as much English, maybe, or do you have any opinion or?
S: Ah, I don’t think that. Kids always they get very fast, for English.
R: Yeah. That’s true.
S: Yeah, so, it helps, to, to learn. I don’t think that it’s going to be problem because every time kids they are their number one, goal. Everywhere they go they will catch the language that there is.
R: Yeah.
S: While we were in Kenya, when we left our country, to go to, Kenya, the kids they learn Swahili language. Then here, the kids, when they talking, even they do not have, like me when I am talking English, my English is, a lot you will
understand I am not American. But if kids talk, my daughter when she’s talking English, we think that she’s American.
R: Right.
S: The kids always learn fast.
R: OK. Do you, so you, you’re a teacher here, at the International Academy, and you teach at home, of course you teach Qur’an, and, to your children...
S: I’m at school, yeah. And help their brother get it.
R: Do you teach other places also?
S: No.
R: So at home only. OK.
S: You mean other place in Columbus?
R: Yeah.
S: No.
R: OK. And, do you think that having your child, I’m going to move this a little closer to you, do you think that having your child go to duqsi and International Academy has helped you, as a parent, to be more involved in the Somali community, in Columbus?
S: Mm?
R: Having your child go to duqsi and International Academy.
S: It helps, you mean that, it helps that, my, my, kids have to be a good Muslim, you mean that?
R: I mean for you yourself, the, the Somali, they’re, all the Somalis here in Columbus, it seems like many of them, many...
S: Many they are relatives.
R: ...are very closely connected.
S: Mm hmm.
R: So, when your, if your child goes to duqsi and International Academy both, does it, did it help you to become closer to other Somalis, you yourself?
S: Yeah.
R: OK. Meet, meet people that you didn’t know before, or...
S: Yeah. And she will, she will never forget her, my language, because as long she is going with the, community, the school and the Qur’an, she is not gonna forget her language. But if she, if I go her far away from my community, she never learn because every time she goes to school and she learn English only.
R: Right.
S: So that makes me very hard. Because my kids, if they do not understand my language...
R: Right, right.
S: Yeah.
R: So, children have to understand their parents’ language, yeah.
S: Exactly. That’s my point.
R: Mm hmm. OK.
June 27, 2003, Ahmed (parent)

R: I’m Mr. Andrew.
Other: You got a haircut!
R: And I’m wearing glasses.
Other: Yeah.
R: Glasses. You want to sing a song for us? I’ll come back to you.
A: Right now we are busy.
Other: OK.
A: OK. Thanks.
R: See you. OK. One more time, just your first name.
A: My name is A.
R: OK. And where were you born?
A: Ah, Somalia.
R: How long have you been in the United States?
A: Almost ah, 9, 9 years.
R: OK.
A: Yeah.
R: How old is your child? The one we were talking about?
A: Ah, 6 years old.
R: When you were 6 years old, what do you think was the most important part of your education?
A: Actually, that time, am, we don’t have, am, much of facility. So, we just, am, thinking about normal life. Just we learn some and we don’t learn, some more other, things. We just live, our life is normal, so...
R: Sure.
A:...we don’t have much of a facility, that’s why, we, our thinking is low, at that time.
R: Right.
A: We are smart but still, not, it’s different in here than in my country.
R: Because, you need education to develop...
A: Yeah, the elementary.
R: Yeah. OK. Can you tell me about your, a little bit more about education when you were growing up, like, was it primary school and duqsi, or, just duqsi, altogether, or...
A: Together, together. Altogether. First time we, we go to the duqsi, until we come, like ah, eleven or something like that. After that we start in school, primary school, to learn our language or any other, am education. But am, that’s, we take our language.
R: OK.
A: Ah, that education.
R: Somali language.
A: Yeah, Somali language. So that’s very easy for us. There is in English but it is difficult...
R: Yeah.
A: ...to get. So. And after that, when we finish the primary and then high school, and, I, after high school we start our business.
R: OK.
A: Our own business, family business. Mm, so on, so. Yeah.
R: OK. Um, and when you came to the U.S., you said about 9 years ago.
A: Yeah.
R: When you were coming to the United States, how did your practice of religion change during that time, during the war, or in moving...
A: Yeah. It is, nothing is ah, changed, the same thing in past time and this time. So, we don’t have any different. We just do the same thing.
R: Always, it’s always been very much the same.
A: Mm hmm. Same.
R: OK. What was your profession, in Somalia, before you came here?
A: Ah, bus...business,
R: Business?
A: Business, yeah.
R: What kind of business did you have?
A: Just ah, basic business, for example, our store, we have a, food store, to sell ah, grain, groceries, we have an, what do they call, an, big pool, am, store, and we sell the small stores, yeah, so...
R: OK. And, in Columbus now, can you tell me about your practice of Islam, or religion?
A: Yeah, our religion is still the same, I don’t have any ah, to, it is the same thing for. In my country and here nothing is different. We go to the mesjid, we go to the duqsi, we go everywhere, same thing my country.
R: OK.
A: Nothing is different.
R: So, every day prayer 5 times...
A: 5 times a day...
R: Every Friday...
A: Every Friday, and including Friday, 5 times a day, that’s what I pray. The same thing, nothing is, ah different.
R: And...
A: 5 times a day.
R: OK. And every year you still of course observe Ramadan...
A: Yeah.
R: ...eid, and...
A: Eid. And hajj, if you have the money, enough money, you can go hajj.
R: Have you done the hajj?
A: Yeah. If you don’t have money and, you just, you can stay and...
R: Right. Have you done...
A: No.
R: OK.
A: I, I don’t have enough, maybe in the future, but I don’t know.
R: Of course. Yeah. Am, in education and children, what do you think is the
most important thing that education can give, or teach, children?
A: Um, the children now, they have a very very good education. Because they
have every facility. Computers, something, to make it easy for them. And still
they have fresh minds, so we don’t have fresh minds. They ha, they have the
children a lot of things, millions of things they have.
R: Yeah.
A: Yeah. So they just to get, whatever they want.
R: And, when they um, when a child goes to school, if they come to International
Academy or duqsi, you’re, as a parent, what do you hope your child will learn?
The most important thing, that, that he can learn from school,
A: Well he can learn, one day, for example, am, my son, now he was in
kindergarten, this year he become a first grade, so, he must be with ah, situation.
R: Mm hmm.
A: So I told you before, he have a lot of facility, he was learning good now, he
just, his English is ah, improve now, he was getting improvement. He, he, is
different before, and now...
R: Sure.
A: So, we are happy, and to get that. Some, sometimes he see his mom, he was
translate, for, if they, someone call his mom, and she don’t know a lot of things,
so he mu, he just translate for her.
R: OK.
A: So that’s better for us.
R: Sure.
A: Yeah, we get a lot of, am, good, things.
R: From...
A: From the school. Yeah.
R: Sure. So is his, is the most important thing you think for him to learn
English...
A: Yeah...
R: ...or to learn su, all, everything...
A: All, everything. General education.
R: Yeah.
A: When he grow up he just he have a choi, his choice. But now, we, our choice is to get good education, and become a successful, am, responsibility for him.
R: Sure, OK.
A: Because we are happy to him, that, if he get a, almost he get, ah, his education. So, it’s OK now, we don’t have any problem about our kid, children.
R: Sure. So, and, um he goes to both duqsi and International Academy.
A: Ah, still he don’t go duqsi, because I don’t have time and I am busy, Saturday and Sunday I am working here, so I didn’t get any time. In the future, we, we just ah, am, compulsory to give him a duqsi.
R: OK.
A: Because he wa, he must learn, an, his religious.
R: OK. So, it’s...you’re working 7 days a week.
A: Sometimes, mostly. Because Saturday and Sunday I just eh, getting glass, or mopping from floor, or, some ma, maintenance.
R: Sure.
A: Yeah.
R: Yeah. So when he’s a little bit older you’ll take him, he’ll start going to duqsi.
A: Yeah.
R: But for now...
A: Mm hmm. It’s still a year and now, 6 years is he and the best age.
R: Mm hmm.
A: So I, I just, eh, don’t get the time. That’s why. But he, he is still happy to go to duqsi.
R: Normally, how, how old ah, how old were you when you started duqsi?
A: Duqsi I was very young. Maybe 5 years or younger than 5 years. It is depends how in your family they take, eh, care of the children.
R: Sure.
A: When I was ah, 5 years old, I look I am, I look like 10 years old. I just think...now I become skinny, or...because too much thinking, too much problem.
R: Too many...
A: Yeah, too many problems.
R: Too much worries. Yeah.
A: Yeah.
R: So, if, if he’s not going to duqsi, is, do you do religious education at home, do you talk about the Qur'an at home, or...
A: Yeah.
R: OK.
A: When I pray, he prays sometimes, going with me. When I go to the mesjid, I just, ah, wake up him and his ah, younger brother, we go together, and we just to go around and to pray, the mesjid. But still we learn basic, for him, I just teach him basic.
R: Sure.
A: Mm hmm.
R: But, and then when, when he starts going to duqsi he’ll start learning suras and, every…the hatu...
A: Yeah.
R: Yeah. OK. But you, you, are, you teaching the other teacher Arabic, so you must be able to teach him...
A: I just...
R: …Arabic, or something...
A: I, I just know, an, only an basic Arabic, I don’t know much of it. For example I know only alphabet, Arabic alphabet and some few, eh, words. So…I just ah, help him with that...
R: Sure.
A: Yeah.
R: OK. So, if, do you think, it sounds like, to me, religious education is different between you and your child. Some, in some ways, and in some ways it’s maybe the same.
A: Mm hmm. Nothing is different. Maybe it, mostly it’s the same. Only an that’s different is, when I was young, I just go to duqsi, I didn’t go to the school, because of the, finance or something. Because the school needs some, ah, more, about duqsi.
R: Ah.
A: Duqsi doesn’t, ah, eh, care. You just go, put in your children, into the duqsi. One clothes, um, one pair of pants and one shirt, for whole year, if even. But the school needs more take care about. Must clean the your children, must ah, book, you buy a books...
R: Mm hmm.
A: …ah, pencil, or something like that, so it’s nothing but blood. But mostly it’s ok.
R: Did you grow up in a village or in a city?
A: In a city, I just born in a city and grew up city.
R: OK.
A: We have a village, our farm is in the village, but I just to go on Thursday and Friday.
R: Oh, I see.
A: And here is Saturday and Sunday, but we have Thurs, Thursday and Friday.
R: Ah hah.
A: Yeah. Yeah.
R: Oh, I see.
A: The same, two day off, and five day work...
R: Right.
A: ...five days work.
R: But it’s different days. Ah, that’s...
A: Different days. Only Saturday and Sunday here, and our ah, our country, Friday and Thursday.
R: Huh.
A: Yeah.
R: OK. So, you, when you started going to duqsi, you, you started duqsi before regular school.
A: Mm hmm. Yes.
R: And you would go to duqsi most, all day long?
A: We, along, around the 10 years, maybe, yeah.
R: Wow. That’s a long...that’s great. OK. Um, what do you think your child gets from duqsi, oh, let me put that, um, let me say that better. What are the most important parts of learning Somali culture, that your child will get from, ei...actually either being here at the International Academy...
A: Mm hmm.
R: ...or when he starts going to duqsi. His, do they teach Somali culture, also?
A: Am, actually he don’t need Somali culture, because we just teach him at home. His mom and me...
R: OK.
A: ...so, mm, he just only need, to get, a, better education.
R: So...
A: And we, we’ll just teach him his culture, that’s am, for our, am, basic, our normal life,
R: Mm hmm.
A: We just, when we are at home, we talking about, in our language, we just, he just, we...our...it is compulsory to, to, get, ah, learn about his culture. It is very important.
R: And it’s, that’s done...
A: Because he was born in the United States, he was American, but, he need to know, where we are from, am, his parents.
R: Yeah.
A: Where they come from.
R: Right.
A: Mm hmm.
R: Do you think that you will return, would you like to return to Somalia, in the future?
A: Actually, it is, ah, possible, and maybe not, maybe yes, its depend.
R: Mm hmm.
A: We can visit sometimes. Now we are, we are here a longtime so we, if we go back to that, we don’t, um, we get some, um, terrible. We don’t know much of
them now, the people are different. We, there is no, the people, ah, we are know before. So, totally are different now. It is a very difficult, ah, if we go back, or...sometimes we can visit them, but maybe not to be stay.

R: Sure.

A: We just to get there and, and, not to be stayed, to, even, the weather, cannot give us. We just to get used to the weather now, to deal with, we cannot deal that weather.

R: So you’re pretty comfortable, being here.

A: Yeah.

R: Yeah. That’s good. How do you think children develop their way of looking at the world, and interacting with other people in the community?

A: It is, ah, depends on how that kid is, to come or get education. Some kids when they grow up they just fail up, they go to the market or they get start in bad things, some, the students they become good.

R: Mm hmm.

A: From childhood to adult they still keep going to good. So, that case, they can change the world, and many things.

R: Mm hmm.

A: Mm. So, it is depend how it is, yeah.

R: And, if the child grows up to become someone who is able to change the world, is, you think that comes from, mostly from parents, or teachers, or duqsi, or all?

A: All, all together, yeah.

R: Mm.

A: And one thing, one, ah, for example, the parents cannot change their kids. If the kid is go to the school to deal with different people, and he get some different idea, that kid is, and other kids are still home, for whole years or whole mostly, is little bit different.

R: Mm hmm.

A: The good is, the good things is, if you in that case go to different people, to meet a lot of different culture, that’s good. That’s, my idea, that’s good.

R: So, mixing and...

A: Mixing and learning, yeah.

R: ...of cultures is good.

A: Yeah. Now I, my advice, my son, I need, I like my son to become a good, ah, multicultural.

R: Mm. Yeah.

A: Some, different people friends, and American, and Asian, Indian, African, that’s good for me.

R: It’s to be...

A: In the future. Em, and, not only for me, even for him.
A: He learn how to deal with the different, em, people.
R: Be a child, or the person of the world, sort of.
A: Yeah. That case, is good for the future, for world, in our world, yeah.
R: Yeah. OK. So, what are some of the differences that you see between if your child going to school here at the International Academy and if he was going to regular public school, how would it be different for him do you think?
A: Um, actually nothing is different. Um, same. It is...the only reason that, I choose him here, when, em, I get, I fill out the application for the school for my son, and that at the same time I start to fill out a job for me, myself in this school.
R: OK.
A: So, I get two chance. First of all my job in here, and then I pick up him, my son, because there is no bus, in my area.
R: OK.
A: If he want to go to another, ah, public school, maybe an, his mom leaves in half an hour, kids too young, so she doesn’t have time to prepare him, put him a bath, she don’t have a car, so it is very important in International Academy until, he become eh, an, an, intermediate or something.
R: OK.
A: Because, that is only an...but nothing is different. Public school and international academy.
R: Do you think it’s, um, do you think it helps him to be, to in, mm, do you think it helps him to get along, if he’s with other Somali children better than if he’s with a mix, or it would be better if he’s...
A: Mix. It is very important to mix some children.
R: Yeah,
A: If, he was, is still and all Somali children, it is a little bit, hard, for him, or, for us. This mix of children is very important.
R: Mm hmm.
A: We, he was get what some ideas, different ideas. So, that’s why I am, it is very hard to alone. Alone is not good.
R: If you’re by yourself it’s not good.
A: It’s not good. Alone is very bad,
R: Um, you said that you teach at home.
A: Mm hmm.
R: You teach religion at home. Are you a teacher, do you teach at other places?
A: No. Just myself and my family.
R: OK. Do you do any, um, are you going to school yourself for any other training or education, or...
A: Now, not because I don’t have time.
R: Mm hmm.
A: But in the future, I try to go in, in Columbus Community College, or whatever, any other, other college. Because I need my self to improvement. Mmm, and it is important for ah, my English is now a little bit, broke, so I need to build my English, to deal with the, United States.
R: Mm hmm.
A: Any other office, also. Any, it is very important in, even my education. To myself.
R: Something you have to keep working on, sure.
A: Yeah. Mm hmm.
R: Right. Sure. So, um, because has sending your child here to the International Academy helped you to become, to get to know more Somali parents or other children’s parents in the Somali community, or is it just the same as, have you always been very much a part of the So, the Somali people in Columbus?
A: In Columbus there is a big community, um, Somali community. And, at the same time, that community are different, they have different idea. Some, they just em, they don’t know em, what’s going on around, they have, that commun, the whole community has a big problem, to housing, to work, to anywhere. Mostly they don’t know, in, any English. That’s the biggest problem we have. They don’t know what, eh, sometimes if they want to go to the hospital, they must an, they must have an translate, so that’s whole community families have that problem. So we just ah, making our community become a good community, and, to, to be any other communities around in Columbus, for example, problem, there is now a lot of community, ah, program in Asian community, they have, eh, successful. They have business, they have em, everything. So in our community, an, we just work their houses or, it is hard job. So we have, we need to change that.
R: But there are some Somali businesses too,
A: Businesses yeah. It is there, a lot of business, but, is still, am, there is no management, management business. Just, em, crude business, that.
R: Right.
A: We need management. So...we need a lot of improvement, about any other communities, to share, with ah, opportunity. To sharing opportunity, yeah.
R: So if you, you’re saying that, um, if, the Somali community can learn from the Asian community...
A: Or any other...
R: ...or interact with any other groups of people.
A: Yeah. That’s very important.
R: Yeah.
A: Very important. If we just eh, make alone, it is very hard. We cannot em, deal with the United States. If you are alone, you are alone. That’s yeah, you are in your own, problem. But if you deal with a, any other community, you get some
idea, you, you get relaxing, so, some, now we have good, em, lot of, eh, frustration. No business, no, nobody can buy a, something, eh, sometimes when they open in the morning, they close in, at 10 o’clock, they don’t think nothing it is.
R: All day long...
A: Yeah. Right. But if you have communication with the other, em, communities, you get some, a lot of ideas, or, of, about daily life.
R: What’s the, what do you think the best way for communities to start talking to each other is?
A: Yeah, yeah.
R: How?
A: Yeah, to come each other, to, em, to make a, arrangement, to share with ideas...
R: Mm hmm.
A: That’s very important.
R: And the, how, um, you have business experience. So if you wanted to start a business, how would you meet someone from the Asian community to...how would you?
A: To...it is, eh, first of all, we invite them, for example. An, any African community, Asian community, we invite and we share ideas, we...friendly.
R: Yeah.
A: You know, friendly is very important.
R: Yeah, sure.
A: Yeah, but if you say that, hey, I am Somali, I need my community, that’s not working. That’s not working.
R: Better to, to mix.
A: Mm hmm.
R: OK. Thank you very much.
A: You’re welcome. Yeah.
June 27, 2003, Sami (child)

R: OK, what’s your name?
S: S.
R: How old are you?
S: Ah, six.
R: Where were you born?
S: Um, I forget!
R: Were you born here, in America?
S: No. I born, ah, San Diego.
R: In San Diego?
S: Yeah.
R: OK. And did you grow up here, in Columbus?
S: Yeah.
R: OK.
S: We went, we went, I don’t go Somali but we went every, we went every, ah, house, in my neighbors too.
R: How many brothers and sisters do you have?
S: I got, two brothers, and one sister.
R: Two brothers and one sister.
S: Yeah.
R: Are they older or younger?
S: I’m the older one, and my brother’s next and my sister’s next and Z is next.
R: So you’re the oldest.
S: Yeah.
R: OK.
S: He’s the littlest, Z is the littlest, he’s baby.
R: What’s his name?
S: Ah, Z.
R: Z?
S: Yeah.
R: And you live now in Columbus, right?
S: Yeah.
R: Pretty close by here?
S: Yeah,
R: OK. And you live with your mom and your dad?
S: Yeah.
R: Is there other family that lives with you, or just mom and dad and brothers and sister?
S: Mom and dad, mom and dad and brother and sister.
R: OK. And you go to the International Academy?
S: Yeah.
R: What subjects do you learn here?
S: Ah, mm, a lot.
R: A lot?
S: Yeah.
R: Like what?
S: Like reading books and having fun, and having party...
R: Uh huh.
S: and, and, and reading books...
R: Math, do you learn math, or?
S: Yeah!
R: Yeah?
S: Math is fun!
R: Math is fun? That’s good.
S: Yeah.
R: Did you ever go to another school or always to the International Academy?
S: Ah, an, always International Academy, but, but, but I, what I, an, like, an, three years, an, I go to daycare.
R: Oh, you went to daycare for three years before you went here?
S: Yeah.
R: Did you go to daycare with other Somali...
S: Yeah.
R: ...kids?
S: I, I know their names but I forget and my brother and me, know, their names, but not me.
R: OK. And um, let’s see, do you learn at home?
S: Yeah.
R: Do you learn like Qur’an or Arabic at home?
S: Yeah. I learn, ah, ah, some Arabic.
R: OK. How’s your Arabic, is it pretty good?
S: Yeah.
R: Oh, that’s good! Who teaches you at home?
S: Ah, my dad sometimes, my mom, but I teach my mom and dad.
R: You teach them too?
S: Yeah.
R: What do you teach them?
S: Ah, Arabic.
R: You teach them Arabic?
S: Yeah.
R: OK. Do you help your mom with English and...
S: I help my mom...
R: ...and your dad with English, or anything?
S: Somali, I help my mom with Somali.
R: Do they teach you Somali...
S: Ah, yeah.
R: ...language too?
S: Yeah.
R: OK. Is your favorite teacher here at the International Academy?
S: Ah, yeah.
R: OK. Do you pray, during the day?
S: I, I pray, I pray, yeah, a lot.
R: You pray a lot.
S: Yeah.
R: Do you pray with your dad, or your mom?
S: Yeah, yeah. My mom and my dad.
R: OK. Do you, do you know why, girls, and women, wear the, hijab?
S: Yeah.
R: Why?
S: Because they’re Somali.
R: Because they’re Somali? So all Somali women wear the, hijab?
S: Yeah.
R: OK. Do you think it’s important for Somalis who live in America to go to duqsi?
S: Yeah.
R: Are you going to go to duqsi pretty soon?
S: Yeah.
R: Why do you think it’s important for them to go to duqsi?
S: Because you, you, because you learn the Qur’an.
R: To learn Qur’an?
S: Yeah.
R: So you already know Arabic, right?
S: Yeah. But sometimes I forget Arabic but I, I, just know a little bit.
R: OK. But that’ll help you when you start going to duqsi.
S: Mm hmm.
R: Make it easier. OK. What’s the first thing you do when you wake up?
S: First thing I do, is, in the Saturday?
R: Any day.
S: Ah, Saturday I do the, I get up and, and brush my teeth, and, and play in home, and sometimes I go, I, I, I get some ice cream and sometimes I play outside and sometimes I ride my bike.
R: Mm hmm.
S: And swim.
R: Oh nice. OK. What time do you come to school, here, when you come here?
S: Ah, um, ah, 10, or sometimes 9 or sometimes 8. Or sometimes, ah, 1 o’clock.
R: OK. Do you think it’s important for you to go to school together with other Somali students?
S: Yeah.
R: What’s that like? Mm...
S: Because I am Somali.
R: Mm hmm. So because you’re Somali, you should go to school with other Somali students too?
S: Yeah.
R: OK. What do you think it would be like if you went to a different school instead of the International Academy? If you went to a public school, would it be different?
S: Ah, it’s different but a little bit the same.
R: What do you, how would it, you’d learn the same subjects, right?
S: Yeah.
R: But there wouldn’t be always Somali...it might be...
S: But, then, we paint, we paint in International Academy and we paint in daycare.
R: Mm hmm.
S: And we eat here and we eat there.
R: So you sort of, the same things...
S: Yeah, a little bit.
R: ...are at the school...
S: A little bit the same.
R: Do you think when you’re here, at the International Academy, you act differently than you act at home?
S: Ah...
R: Is your behavior different than at home, or at the International Academy?
S: No, my behavior is good.
R: It’s good? Always good?
S: Yeah.
R: OK. Do you participate, do you do like, sports, you said you went swimming and biking and things like that.
S: Ah, yeah, but I do sport.
R: Play basketball?
S: No, I play soccer.
R: You play soccer. Where, at home?
S: Yeah, in outside.
R: OK. Does your best friend go to school here?
S: Ah, yeah. His, and his name is M, and, I got, ah, I got, I got 10 friends, his name is M, and, mm, A, and A, and, mm, M, mm...mmm...
R: Do they all go to school here?
S: Yeah. And, and B, and, H, and, hmm, A, and, and, who else...Z...
R: Mm hmm.
S: And N. And...
R: You got a lot of friends.
S: And...and...A.
R: OK. Do you have friends who don’t go to the International Academy?
S: Yeah.
R: Are they, they’re, you know them from home, or from daycare?
S: Ah, um, they’re from just, here, and they sometimes they, and some, they don’t go in summer school. M, and, it’s only M, that doesn’t have to, and B, that’s it.
R: They don’t go to summer school.
S: Yeah.
R: I see. OK. Have you ever heard from your dad about what it was like before coming to America?
S: Ah...
R: Did he ever tell you stories about Somalia?
S: Yeah.
R: What does he say?
S: He says Somalia is good, an, and, and he says, some, we go Somalia, and in some Somalia fine...that’s it.
R: Hmm. OK. Do you think, if you went back to Somalia, how do you think your life would be different?
S: Life...would be the same.
R: Would be the same?
S: Yeah.
R: OK. What would you like to be when you grow up?
S: Ah, ah, movie.
R: A movie star?
S: Yeah.
R: What kind of movies?
S: Ah, um, Justice League.
R: What’s that?
S: It’s a cartoon.
R: Oh, Justice League! Justice League, I know that. OK. OK, you’re six now, right?
S: Yeah.
R: What do you think you’ll do in 10 years, when you’re 16?
S: Ah, hmm. Be, ah, mm...painter.
R: You’ll be a painter?
S: Yeah.
R: Of art, painting?
S: Ah of glowworth painting.
R: What’s your favorite kind of painting?
S: Ah, mm, red.
R: Red’s your favorite color?
S: Yeah. And blue, and green, and brown.
R: You have all kinds of favorites, four favorite colors, red, green, blue, and brown.
S: Yeah.
R: Mine, my favorite one is purple.
S: Oh.
R: That’s my favorite color. Ah, that’s great. OK. Well, that’s the end of my questions. Do you have any questions you want to ask me?
S: Mmm...ah...one, question.
R: OK.
S: I go to the zoo.
R: Mm hmm.
S: That’s it.
R: You went to the zoo?
S: Yeah.
R: Where, what was the zoo like?
S: Ah, fun.
R: What did you see?
S: Ah, elephant and giraffe, and zebra, and, ah, no, monkeys...and...
R: Elephant, giraffe, zebra, monkeys...
S: ...and a little giraffe.
R: A little giraffe.
S: Yeah.
R: Ah, that’s cool. Good. OK. Thank you! Shukran!
A: OK!
July 25, 2003: Hal (parent)

Additional questions from the interviewer are indicated in italics in the text.

Section I

1. What is your first name? – H.

2. Where were you born? – Somalia.

3. How long have you been in the U.S. (if they were not born here)? – 7 years.

4. How old is your child? – I have 5 children – 12, 11, 8, 5, and 1 1/2.

5. What was the most important part of your education when you were your child’s age? – The same as it is now – duqsi and primary school.

Section II

1. Please describe your education when you were growing up. Did you participate in religious education like duqsi? – Yes, it is different. Big difference. To be an American, economically difference – Americans respect money. Here is good education because of facilities. There (Somalia) are not the same facilities, so facilities make a difference. Materials...20 students is a good number in a class. The system is different – there the Italian system. Do you think the American system works better? I can say the American system works better because its simplified and makes things easier. What was it like in duqsi? In duqsi,
the difference is time – children here don’t have time to go to duqsi – they have more time there, here less time, but the way they learn is the same.

2. Can you describe how your religious practice has changed during hard times like war or in your move to the U.S.? How did you continue with your religious practice during these times? *Was it difficult to keep up with Islam during the move to the states?* I was feeling like I was in Africa – wherever you go in America you can find a mosque. Muslims…its free for worship besides what’s happening now, that’s different.

3. What was your profession in Somalia or before you came to the U.S.? – Teacher – college professor in psychology.

4. Will you describe what is involved in your practice of religion here in Columbus currently? – Same as it was before – 5 times praying. Ramadan, that’s the main thing. 5 times praying every day.

5. What are the ways you practice every day? Every week? Every year? *(SKIPPED THIS QUESTION)*

6. What is the most important thing that the education can provide for children? – That’s a very important question. I think to get a good opportunity in their future and to help their community, that’s what I teach them.
7. R: Why have you chosen to send your child to the *duksi* as well as the International Academy? *How do the IAC and the duksi combine to do that?* H: I think there is a big difference, I think that what we do here, the Somali students, are predominantly here, the difference is, what they learn from this school is from the development of education, as other public schools, so what they learn from duksi is our culture, and our religion, so that’s the big difference. Here we are not teaching culture or religion except what is on the syllabus from the department of education – so there’s no relationship. *So here they learn the syllabus, and in duksi they learn culture?* Each and every community does teaching to preserve their language and culture, but privately at private schools. *Does it help to preserve culture to be here at the IAC with other Somali students?* I think only language, only Somali language at the IAC…they may not forget their language here.

8. Is it easy/convenient for you to bring your child to the *duksi* on the weekend? – Time is a problem for weekends and the duksi. I can’t do that, because they are very tired and they need to do their homework. Saturday and Sunday they do go to duksi. In Somalia, they go to school in the morning, and we get 2-3 hours to go to duksi everyday, as well as school, but here, no.
9. Is there any religious education at home? For example, do you teach the Qur’an at home? Do you read it together or talk about the meaning of the lessons? – Did you ever read the British constitution? There are things that people know without being taught. So we don’t teach them – it’s called an unwritten constitution, that means each and every one knows his rights, and it’s not necessary to teach them. I was old enough when I got here, and all my actions are teaching, everything you do depends on your culture, background, and everything else, so children learn at home from the example and culture I exhibit.

10. In what ways do you think your child’s religious education is different from yours? How is it the same? – The big difference was time – I had much more time than they do here – that was a big difference. Do you think it makes a difference? I think no, because knowledge is everywhere – spread all over the world, everywhere you go you can find things about Islam, and maybe faster now because of technology. I think Islam goes with new technology, you can find information everywhere – they may learn faster than me.

Section III

1. What are the most important aspects of Somali culture your child gets from the duqsi that they might not get otherwise? – From me and their mom, they get language and culture. Its more important than school
and duqsi – if I don’t help them, school and duqsi are nothing. Most of the time they are with me and their mom, more than duqsi or school.

2. What are the most important aspects of Somali culture your child gets from the International Academy that they may not get elsewhere? (SKIPPED THIS ONE)

3. Do you envision returning to Somalia in the future? (You’re an American now, would you ever consider returning to Somalia?) Good question. But ask yourself, what did I come with? I came with everything. What I learned from here, anyway, its experience, but its out of the question. Everything is there, my mom, my family, would I like to take part of my life in America, would I like to go back, of course, every minute. Everyone is there. I am out of my country for a few years, but you Americans are out of your countries for a few centuries, and they are still going back, like African – Americans. They want to go back and see where they came from, England, white people, and could I forget simply like that? Oh my God, we visit often if we can, so we...if I have enough economy I would go back all the time. I remember my school, where I used to work, everything – it’s not simple to forget that. But how America developed is not like Africa – there’s a lot more technology.
4. What are the most important ways in your opinion children develop values and views about the world? – Before I answer, my principles are to be honest, to tell the truth, and have knowledge. That’s what I believe and what I tell to my children always. If they have all that, everything will be ok. So they get those values from you? I hope. And also from the knowledge, from the books, but this is universal, if you have knowledge, you...have you ever known anyone who doesn’t like the truth? No – everyone likes the truth...the person who lies still claims to be telling the truth because of the value of truth.

5. What are the most important things that parents can give to children?

(SKIPPED THIS QUESTION)

6. What are some of the differences between the education your child is participating in and public education? – Everything is the same, between the two schools – no difference. Same syllabus, no difference. Most of the children here came from other schools where they were dealing with other races... The choice is their parent’s, not the children’s. Most children don’t care, my children never had a problem in other schools, they were very happy and they were doing the same. Maybe when they were new from Africa they had that problem. You Americans you have that problem. We have a worse problem in Somalia – tribe, that’s why we have civil wars and are
killing each other. Don’t apply your problem to us. White and black
don’t trust each other here, whenever you turn on the TV you see this
discussion, you have white TV, black TV, even church, white churches,
black churches, but we have tribal problems. So our children don’t
have that mentality. As long as they have the language they can go
anywhere. This problem is being transferred to us.

7. Do you teach in other places besides at home? – I used to teach after
school programs as a tutor, before I came here, tutoring children,
helping with homework, most parents don’t speak English so many
children need help. Are you going to school? I am always trying to get
into university (shows researcher car which has stacks of application
forms for universities and programs). I have a bachelor’s degree in
psychology from India, major in psychology and a minor in political
science and philosophy. When I came here I tried to join university
many times. What jobs do you have here? I have two jobs, here at the
IAC and also at Victoria’s Secret, I am a merchandise processor. My
dignity is very important to me, I want to be clean, for me and my
family to be clean and respected.

8. Has sending your child to the duqsi and the IAC affected the way you
are involved in your community? Are you more involved or less
involved? The same? (SKIPPED THIS QUESTION).
August 1, Ayana (child)

Additional questions from the interviewer are indicated in italics after the question.

**Section I**

1. What is your name? – Ayana

2. How old are you? - 12

3. Where were you born? – Somalia, Moqadishu

4. Where did you grow up? Until you were how old did you grow up there? – I came here when I was three, so I have grown up here – we came to Tennessee (from Somalia).

5. How many brothers and sisters do you have? - 4

6. Where do you live now? - Columbus

7. Do you live with your mom, dad, grandparents? Other family or friends? – Mom, Dad, 4 brothers and sisters.

**Section II**

1. What schools do you go to? – IAC during the week and the duqsi on the weekends. I go to duqsi on Saturday and Sunday from 10 – 12 or 1 o’clock.

2. What subjects do you learn at those schools? – Math, science, English, social science, Arabic. *At the duqsi?* Qur’an, just Qur’an, not Arabic.
3. You were at other schools before the IAC, right? What was the best part of the school you went to before the International Academy? What was the hardest part? – I was at the Maderi school before the IAC. It was the same as the IAC, just elementary school. Nothing difficult or hard.


5. How long have you been going to the duqsi? (NA)

6. What do you learn at the duqsi that is different than the IAC? – Regular public stuff at IAC and the Qur’an at the duqsi.

7. What do you think are some other differences between the duqsi and the IAC? – They are 2 separate things, totally different. What’s the difference between the teachers? They teach different things – so there’s nothing different about them.

8. Do other family members teach you at home also? What do they teach you? Who specifically teaches you? – Mom and Dad teach us manners.

9. Do you like the duqsi or the IAC better? Why? – Neither, I can’t compare them.

10. Do you like your teachers? Where does you favorite teacher teach, at the duqsi or the IAC? – I have a favorite teacher at both places.
11. Do you pray during the day? How many times a day do you pray? – Yes, 5 times.

12. Why do girls and women wear the hijab here in the U.S.? – Because it’s part of our religion – the reasons why are beyond my knowledge right now.

13. Is it important for Somalis who live here to go to duqsi? Why? – Yes, so we don’t have to forget our religion. Duqsi helps you remember your religion? Yeah.

**Section III**

1. What is the first thing you do when you wake up? – Normal stuff, brush my teeth, eat breakfast.

2. What time do you come to school during the week? What about on the weekends? – At 7 am during the week, and at 10 on weekends.

3. What is the most important thing you learn at the duqsi? What is the most important thing you learn at the IAC? – Qur’an...at IAC, math and science. What do you want to be when you grow up? A doctor.

4. Do you think it’s important for you to go to school together with other Somali students? – It’s the same to me...if I’m with Americans or Somali students. Do you speak Somali? Yes.
5. What do you think would be different if you went to a different weekly school, like a public school? – Well, it would be different because I would be learning different things, the only thing that would be different would be the teachers and of course the students.

6. Do you think you act differently at the duqsi than you do at weekly school? Why or why not? – No...the same. *Is that the same for everybody?* It might change because of some of their friends, but for me it’s the same.

7. Do you participate in other activities outside of the duqsi or weekly school? – No.

8. Do you go to school with your best friend? Do you have other friends who don’t go to the IAC? If you do, how often do you see those friends? – Yes. Yes. I see them often. *They live next door to you?* Yes.

9. Do you have friends that don’t go to the same duqsi you go to? – Yes.

10. Have your parents told you about what their life was like before they lived in America? Do they talk to you about how their education was different or the same as yours? - No, they talked about it but I really don’t know about it. When I complain about school my parents might say “my school was like this or like that” yes.

12. How do you think your life would be different if you and your parents went back to Somalia? – I can’t imagine it. *Have you seen pictures?* Of Somalia, I think I’ve seen one.

13. What would you like to be when you grow up? – A doctor.

14. What do you think you’ll do in ten years? – Graduating college. *It would be undergraduate.* Yes, and then I’ll continue at school to get my doctor’s degree.
August 17, 2003, Abdi (parent)

R: Test test.
R: I’m going to put this a little closer to you...
A: OK, that’s fine. How many questions you want?
R: Um, it should only take us about half an hour. What’s your first name...that’s the first question?
A: A, (spells).
R: And where were you born?
A: I born, ah, Somalia, south of, I mean north of capitol city, far from capitol city, about 100, 200, 200 kilometers...
R: North of Mogadishu.
A: North of Mogadishu, yeah. Where they call Burabutu, ah, do you want to write that...
R: Yeah...
A: The region name is Hiran, and the city is Burabutu. You can write that way...or you can write that way...that’s the city I was born, and this is the region name, or the province name.
R: How long have you been in the U.S.?
A: Since 95. I’m a student in 95, and...
R: OK, so 8 years.
A: Yes.
R: And you have, two children?
A: Three.
R: Three. One in third grade, fifth grade, and...
A: And, and eighth grade.
R: Eighth grade. OK.
A: Thirteen years old, my girl.
R: When you were in 5th grade, what was the most important part of your education, do you think?
A: In Somalia?
R: Yeah.
A: Um, really we use a little bit different educational system. We have in most of the country the British system.
R: The British system.
A: Ah. Because, the British was colonized, ah, part of Somalia.
R: Right.
A: And where I grew up and born was under the Italian colony, in south of Somalia.
R: OK.
A: We divide our country five parts, in 1884, so, one part was under French colony, one part was under British colony, one part under Italian colony.
R: Right.
A: First of all, our education system was...the...they didn’t do primary education system until first or second World War. Then they opened Italian...they opened up to elementary school, and British opened up to elementary school. Then, after independence in 1960, north sides are, ah, north, they got independence the 26th of June, and south got independence from the Italians on the first July. The arrived the same, midnight...
R: 1960...
A: 1960. Then the government, we follow just like the colonial system, the first real government they following the colonial system, up to 1969.
R: Right.
A: In 1964 they try to combine one system for the education.
R: For the whole...
A: For the whole country.
R: OK.
A: Because in the south, um, north, they use under the British system, British and Arabic in the schools. And south they use the Italian system, Italian language and Arabic schools.
R: Oh boy,
A: So they tried to put one system, and they put the English system, other vocational schools in the south are still Italian.
R: So they still teach in Italian.
A: Some schools, like ah, polytechnica, some schools, vocational schools, are still the Italian system, some schools.
R: I didn’t know that. Wow, that’s interesting.
A: And then, um, but they put in English, from primary, when you start from grade, kindergarten to grade 4, everything is in the parent language.
R: OK.
A: And then, but English it starts in second grade as a language.
R: OK.
A: And you learn math, like a count, just for a math, in English, but everything goes under the Arabic language. After, after grade 4...exam was internalized, you graduate grade four the exam was internalized, the whole country,
R: OK.
A: You finish grade 4, and everything then goes to English, every subject. And, um, Arabic becomes language of religion.
R: Ah, OK.
A: Up to grade 12.
R: So, so all, so 4th grade...it’s taught in Arabic...
A: Every subject is in Arabic.
R: But you learn English as a subject.
A: It starts from second grade as a language just. When you, when you graduate from grade 4, everything else, from grade 5 in English, every subject.
R: Wow.
A: And Arabic is language and religion.
R: Is it difficult to...
A: It’s not difficult at that time. Of course everybody in Somalia is understanding Arabic, because of religion. Whole country is speaking Arabic. So when children go to primary school, he can read and write Arabic.
R: So, at that time...um...what do you think was...
A: By the time I was in grade 5, it was the revolutionary time...the military, in 1969. So they change it when I was in third grade, they picked up the Somali language, the system was using the Somali language, they put everything, Somali language. Arabic, and Arabic was just a language of religion, but some schools still had Arabic, totally.
R: But that was just when they had made the language.
A: Yeah, in 1974...we start in 1974.
R: OK. And so...
A: We take at that time yes, when I was grade 5, I learned Arabic as a language of religion, it was really a subject, it was Somali language at that time. Reading, history, geography, the social system, religion...all of the revolutionary stuff, it was, ah, social education, at that time it was military under the socialism, or, or, we call it the system under nationalists...so we are communist, under the communist system. We learned social studies, math, and, all science subjects, like science is one subject at that time. In 70 up to, we start grade 9, science goes under science, and math was separate, it was math, but all types, biology, they are one subject, called science...
R: Science.
A: At grade 8. So you get grade 8, is different, everything. You have to take an exam, coming from the ministry of education, not like centralized exam...and no matter what, you are treated the same, subject or math, they don’t care. It’s a responsibility for the administration of the school, guards and...of the subject. So exam comes from Ministry of education, grade 8.
R: Yeah.
A: And that exam was, even given to, control and manage the exam, they come from Ministry of Education. And the whole country was starting from the same time, same each subject to date, the same time until the same time. And the children in the school around 30 they can’t even come near the school at that time. No one can come there.
R: And so it’s just examinations.
A: The exam and he who watch the exam. They come from Ministry of Education. And police and military was lined the school.
R: Really!
A: And watch, no one can come and go,
R: None of the teachers...
A: None of the teachers, none of the school administration, they can’t come at the school.
R: Ah! Why?
A: Administration of the system. We need...that exam, an exam cannot open, if an exam was open then they cancel the whole exam, they open in concert each time. You surprised when the last one was seated to take it. Separately. One by, each student, one table it, one table, maybe 2 stands from another stool.
R: So that the exams are...
A: Very strict.
R: Very strict.
A: And each has 15 in one envelope. Each has their envelope in front of the student. And, and, and the, military briefs cut off (?), they arrive and open for you, and open in front of you each class. And the, at one time, all students, in the whole country. If one paper was lost, they cancelled the whole exam.
R: For the whole country?
A: For the whole country. And they set another exam, same day, the next day. And the people who prepared the exam, they collect from the schools near the capital city, or somewhere, and they keep, until that exam is coming back to the ministry, they keep, somewhere, they can’t go outside when they prepare the exam, no one can go outside. They keep until the exam comes back, finished exam.
R: What is...do you know what about now, what was it like when you left?
A: Is not, after I left the country, the country is destroyed, there is no educational system right now, not like this, infrastructure is there...
R: Yeah.
A: At that time the exam, there is some, and the ministry of education they collect some teachers or some people who, who passed the exam. And none of us knows, even if you sit the exam, you don’t know, this papers. They bring some people, and then they was taking up, the names. And they give the numbers.
R: Ah.
A: And they give you the group, are different. They are keep in one area until they finish the exam. Collect all the country then, no one can go outside.
R: Did you go to duqsi?
R: You start going to duqsi before you start public school?
A: Yeah. We start whole Qur’an school, like, back when I started school, the first was kindergarten, but we start then. When I started school, you have to have, the first day you come to school you have to have taken a test. That test was if you write what sheet, and there, and they dictate some words, Arabic, because it still was Arabic that time, elementary school. They dictate some words Arabic, and you have to write, dictation, dictation for that word. You write it, they dictate some verse of…(?)…you have to write out. Then they collect it and if you pass that exam you start grade one, you fail, go home, come next year.
R: And just practice your Arabic more.
A: So you have to, have to, start full time.
R: Right.
A: Then, you are six. I finished half the whole Qur’an at that time.
R: When you were 6
A: Six, yeah. You have to memorize, you see the whole Qur’an, that book, you have to memorize that in 2, or 2 years...
R: OK.
A: In duqsi Qur’an. You have to finish.
R: And you still, of course...
A: When I grew up I studies, but I forget most of them, I didn’t practice repeating, but you have to memorize.
R: So, when you were in, um, 4th or 5th grade, when you were growing up, what do you think the most important part of education was for you?
A: Really, I don’t remember, but at that time, it was most important for us to be educated. I myself, my parents they tried to send me to school and tried to help me so, we are, my main goal was to try to get education from this school. And we have different types of culture, because we can, the parents, the teachers, they have to respect the students like their kids, and you have to respect teachers like, your parents. Unless you don’t have school at all for the country. If you say some bad words for the teachers, you’ll be, send you, disciplinary committee, and there they, if you are rude you don’t have school at all, you don’t have, the whole country in school, maybe some mistakes in school. And they banish you for four or three years, out of the school...
R: Oh my.
A: You have to respect them, and they have to respect you. So our system is different.
R: (13:08) In terms of respect.
A: Respect, yeah. You can’t say one word, even my teachers, when I was in high school. In high school you can’t say something, you have to respect. Even you can’t call their names. You have to call, “teacher”, you have to respect. Not call their names.
R: Right. It’s different than here. Yeah, I taught in Tanzania, and it was much different there too. Very strict.

A: Of course. And when you go, univ, yeah, education is free over there.

R: Yeah.

A: From elementary to university. You have from PhD, whether you are, your family is rich or poor, we all got the same education. Just when we finished high school, we got the placement test, the whole country, at one time. And whether you get very sick, the government paid, food, shelter, books, we have to attend the classes.

R: But you have to do well on the examinations to get the...

A: Yeah, yeah, you have to pass the exam. And where you score depends univ, what college you get, you get, you get. What subject,

R: The examinations are competitive, very competitive.

A: Competitive. Maybe 10,000, 15,000, 20,000, in one day for the exam. The whole country, graduates from high school, comes to the capital city, you have that, you have to be competitive to get university.

R: Because there are only a few spots at the university...

A: They took most of the students and get to the university, but the focus depends your score in the subject that relate to that

R: So the higher scoring in science will go to engineering school...

A: They go in medicine, or engineering, chemical...

R: OK.

A: But the last, even the year when I was taking that exam, they judge, yeah, they judge, they look the total score. Instead of subject. Before it was subject. Related to the...if you wanted like medicine or agriculture, you have to pass high score for, math, I mean, for biology, and chemistry, and these things. Then they look at the total score, when I was grad, when I was that exam, and I was missing. Where I wanted to go was medicine at that time, become, but I missed...

R: Oh...

A: I didn’t do that, they changed the system I didn’t do that.

R: I see.

A: When I worked with the science papers, I left the room.

R: You left.

A: You graduated...yeah, because I thought they just checked for the subject I choose.

R: Oh...

A: With the course related to that. Then they look whole score, total score.

R: Oh...

A: For the whole exam. Including social, everything.

R: Even though...

A: So my score goes low, because I didn’t know, when I started the exam.

R: But you did very well on the parts that...
A: Yeah. So I, so I get college of education at that time.
R: I see. Huh...OK. What was duqiṣi like? Can you describe duqiṣi?
A: (16:16) Duqiṣi is um...they change the last, right now, but it was, at that time it was traditional. The duqiṣi Qur’ān, it goes to ah, um, we use, what do you call that, lor, if you go to Zan maybe you saw somewhere the duqiṣi Qur’āns, you write up with ink for that, ah, really big, we use really big wood,
R: Like a board...
A: Like a board, yeah, we used that. And we used the printing bale, for the whole Qur’ān, our Holy Bible, we used that. But when you first start up, you learn how to write and then, you show that board, to the teachers. You show the progress, and words, like al-fitri, words Arabic, show them what you learned, and you learned how to combine and connect each other and...
R: So your Arabic is pretty good.
A: Yeah. Although I forget most of Arabic, I didn’t use it, I can read 100% and I can write 100%.
R: OK.
A: But speaking is a little difficult right now but I understand 90%, of Arabic.
R: And um, so, did you go to duqiṣi every day when you were growing up?
A: Yeah, even when you start school, you retain the duqiṣi, you have to go afternoon you come the school, go to duqiṣi afternoon.
R: So you go to the regular school in the morning and then afternoon...
A: Yeah, regular school is finished at 1 o’clock you come at home and eat lunch and nap till 3 o’clock and then to duqiṣi Qur’ān.
R: OK.
A: Until uh, 6...
R: And then finish your homework or whatever.
A: Yeah.
R: Um, when you moved to the U.S., how did your religion, your practice of Islam change? Do you feel, did it change, was it more difficult, or...
A: Yeah, it had to change. Because when we are in Somalia, we have to have everywhere a mosque. And prayer time, even if you were, you have the right to go and pray, because most people have the same religion.
R: Um hmm.
A: And you stop work and go to pray and come back. But over here, and in Europe, it’s a different deal. They took their right pray, and it’s not even, ah, your time of praying. Some of prayers are, are, time of pressure.
R: Right.
A: Like, like, magrib, sunset, it was maybe within 10 or 20 minutes you have to go. So, it’s kind of difficult.
R: Does your work help you? Does your work accommodate that?
A: It depends on where you work. And the people you work with there. Some people they respect you, and they give you time when you talk to the manager, they grill you, some people they refuse you, and maybe you have to loss the job, but you have to have...you have to have job.
R: Right. And when, during the time that you were moving, did you keep up just in the transition, did you keep up with four or five times a day, and...
A: Yeah. Even up to now I keep up with prayer. Because of, now, you don’t have a choice.
R: Of course.
A: You understand. Some people they didn’t pray. Even when they were in Somalia. Some people like, uh, Christians, some people you see here, they say, they are Christian but they don’t know nothing about it. You say anything but you didn’t go to church. So each is, each has same thing. So they are still Muslims, but they didn’t go pray. It’s a, it’s a fight, you didn’t fight the feelings of Islam, it’s one, first is pray, you have to go and go.
R: (20:02) And um, what was your profession in Somalia before you came?
A: I was a teacher for the college of education, teaching university. And I was, they training me first, ah, high school teacher.
R: OK.
A: For christas. I was (?) and math minor. But I was in a different area at that time.
R: And here in Columbus, can you describe what is your practice of Islam.
A: In Columbus really, it depends on the people you work with mainly. As I told you some people be used, I hear some people are working with religious groups, and pray time. And it depends even sometimes if the company want us to be there. Some companies they are hiring a lot of people from Muslim countries. A lot of conflicts grow up and people they have to be, they started sue, or something like that, and most of the people feel, arrest even (?) people at prayer, at prayer time. Like the company I worked before, when I was in Minnesota, I worked with Seagate Technologies.
R: Yeah.
A: They – some supervisor one day, wrong, the guy was praying his break time, and he came and kicked. So it started...it blow up.
R: Of course.
A: Then they tried to negotiate, with ah, the Islamic leader over there, they tried to ask, to stop their, their complaining, allow them to be, open, a prayer room over there inside the job...everything’s good.
R: So once the company understood...
A: Yeah. So it depends on the administration of the company, and also, the people you work with them, like supervisor, some people, are, are very accept (?) so it depends the people you work with them.
R: And what else, you go to mosque, I’m sure, and...
A: Yeah, and we do, sometimes you don’t have time to go to mosque because of like, Friday prayer, it was one time during the week, so that prayer needs at least 40 people in the area, and, uh, the origin was reminding the people, the last week, what happened, and, ah, reminding for their faith, ah, reminding for what happened in the community, and how to recover that stuff and how the mistakes are corrected in that week, that was what the called the aim of juma prayer.
R: Is to remind the people...
A: Is to remind the people, is to remind the people of what’s wrong, what happened wrong for the community, and, like, ah, the mistakes they did the people, like, if they kicked someone or someone kicked, or remind what, or how, wrong was that action. And remind the people back to their faith and remember what God says and what the teacher says and what’s wrong and what’s right. And that’s the aim of juma prayers, to remind the people.
R: Um...
A: So, you have to go to the mosque and listen to the leader or the person who was leading the prayer at that time, has to remind the people to talk, and he must, he must be knowing the (?) very well, he must know the subjects he talks about. And he prepares the subject.
R: So there’s someone now at the mosque, is that person Somali?
A: Yeah, Somali, yeah, absolutely, it’s not one person, if you know to read very well that person can speak, and speak out and do our buse at that time, he’s praying or doing on this Friday, and it’s some custom from, some visitors persons come from some other areas, they are expected to, you know, talk about what happened in that community, or how they knew down correctly or how to the mind...
R: How many people usually go to Friday prayer, where you go?
A: Oh...most of them they go over there. Maybe even a lot of people in the area now to be in chumba in Columbus, maybe 5 or 6 different areas. And we feel like...sometimes you know mosques are rented, like at, like what do you call, the creation area, the community there, but they pray in the community, the vast majority. Some...[...]...because we don’t have prayer in schools, enough, so people are coming and praying, maybe...400-500 people are comes, one area.
R: So many, I mean, hundreds and hundreds.
A: Hundreds and hundreds.
R: And you practice Ramadan, and observe Ramadan, you fast...
A: Yes, oh, you have to fast, yeah.
R: This year it’s in October I understand? October-November or something?
A: It maybe end of November I think. The time that it is in November I didn’t see.
R: Ah, OK. What do you think is the most important thing that education can give to children when they're growing up?
A: Oh, education, it depends the life, on what you learn. Education has to handle a person's life. And we have too much crime now in the world, and is going up, and going for high tech, and we have to have an appraised minority to, to convert it for the world, so, so, we have to learn a lot. We have to go to school.
R: So the school helps children to keep up with the changes...
A: Yeah, yeah. But here, the schools, most of the day, I was going to Arabic schools but my kids are going on. The government puts a lot of money in schools, but they didn't control, where it is, where it should be. See, the money is spent on education, in Columbus, in the Columbus area, is not spent in the whole of Somalia, maybe. And, and, education is controlled over there. Not like here. You see over here, kids are go, when they eat, breakfast or lunch, they don't listen the teacher, the don't want to go to school, class even, staying outside, and smoking, even, some of them. Ah. 5 years old, 10 years old, who smokes, how do you fix?
R: I wish there was a good answer for those questions.
A: Some, even, what I wonder is, ah, I saw a part, ah, kindergarten, grade 1, who says, ah, some bad words, words I never seen some words even,
R: Even as an adult you'd never talk that way.
A: Yeah, saying the teacher bad words.
R: So, is that part of the reason why your children go to the International Academy?
A: Yeah, that is why. We are looking for a community school that was giving the kids what we taught at home. We have to look for that environment in school. Because when you are young, the environment is more teach you what you learn at home. The environment was, really was set, when you are young. Your life depends the environment where you grew up. And most of your teachers are from the environment. So you have to have, like all in school or outside, of home, so you have to have, to look for the environment, at least close to at home, what we tell kids at home.
R: And, so children have to go, children, your child goes to the duqsi and to the International Academy.
A: Yeah. We teach at home, duqsi, we teach at home, most of them. We teach some, like, ah, the neighbor, if you have, ah, 5 or 10 families from the same, from Somalia. We keep one house, in, in, and work in this, teaching the kids, starting the whole of them, teaching over there.
R: So, maybe 20 or 10 or 15 children will be together...
A: 5 or 10 or 8, whatever we get. Because we don't have place to bring the whole kids.
R: Right, right.
A: Although we have some place and movies we take the kids. Maybe 50 or 70 or 80, 100 kids. For 3 hours. Just for three hours they have the environment to us. Most drew us for the kids.
R: And that happens, you said on the weekend?
A: Weekends.
R: On the weekend the children go to duqsi?
A: Duqsi, yeah. At least we teach how to read, how to write the whole Qur’an.
R: Ah huh.
A: And you teach how to read, write Arabic. Because Arabic was written, written word in Arabic. Also we teach language, Arabic as language. They learn by themselves, the religion. To create by themselves a religion, when they grow up.
R: So that they can keep up with...
A: Yeah.
R: ...an understanding of...
A: Yeah.
R: ...what it is.
A: Yeah. That's what we want to teach.
R: Is it easy for you to bring your children to the duqsi on the weekend?
A: It's kind of difficult sometimes, because sometimes you try to survive, we are fighting for survival. And maybe we were working sometimes. So we try to put, or asking the neighbors in order to bring sometimes all the kids in the same area or from the houses within that area come back and taking over them.
R: So one person who is free would take children from many families.
A: Yeah.
R: Do you personally teach Qur’an at home yourself also?
A: Yeah. All the time.
R: OK. You read it together...
A: I read together and I teach because, the school is nothing, the parents become teachers for kids at home.
R: Mm hmm,
A: Whatever school you send, no matter what. The kids are over there for 6 or 4 or 5 hours a day, when they come home if you didn’t control them, and even control what they learn from the school, you missed that part, you missed that part, it, it depends close to 80% that kids are fail. Yeah.
R: If the parents don’t help them.
A: Don’t help them...the kids are failing.
R: Right. That’s true. And in what ways do you think your child’s religious education is different from yours, and how is it the same?
A: It’s different because mine was, I grew up in an environment where everything was, 100% was Muslim. And everybody, we don’t see a lot of what is seen over here as a culture. We don’t have over there.
R: The culture...
A: The culture helps me, yeah.
R: Right, right.
A: A lot of times, they’re outside, and really schisms they start in outside and now it’s there. Especially in the room.
R: Right.
A: And go there. But not here. It’s your country.
R: Right.
A: You never see that, a person who drinks on the streets, or you don’t have liquor stores, public and you go into...no. Maybe some people drink but you drink, ah, ah, under the bedroom, but not officially, or not liquor store is official.
R: So here, for you to make sure that your children understand religion, it’s much, you have to work...harder...
A: Yeah. You have to work a lot. You have to tell what is wrong, what is right. You have to keep the kids and tell them what is wrong, what is right. And, we notice a lot of...(tape ends – to side 2)

A: ...and the kids are leading. That’s the problem for some parents. Their, ah, their authority is problem they got over there. Because we don’t have knowledge to English, or English knowledge, a very good knowledge of primary school, from Somalia. They come maybe outside their, out, out, cities, they grew up, they are American, they come cities for the last 5 years, when the, when the whole country was going to destruction. So they get sponsors from Kenya or somewhere and come here to, you don’t have, you don’t have formal school, or education, and they don’t know the language. So the kids are becoming leaders of the family. Because of language. And the kids are going outside, and the parents they don’t know, so they lost their kids.
R: Yeah, yeah.
A: Even when they, when the school asks them to bring their parents, were sent a message, to the home, the kids are translate for their parents and they tell whatever they want.
R: Sure, yeah. Right.
A: Sure. Misunderstand. Or mistakes can happen, in community a lot of times.
R: What are the most important parts of Somali culture that your child gets from duqsi that they might not otherwise get?
A: The kids or...? Good things, to keep up, they try to, mostly, to guide away from the drugs, that they...
R: Guide away from the drugs?
A: From drugs, using drugs, alcohol, that’s what we as a major, as a normal... R: Using...?
A: Part of normal life over here, alcohol, over here...that’s where we try. Especially where I live right now, we’re in this, some other persons, are living in our area. They use alcohol outside and I wonder, if our kids, in 3 or 4 years are with them?
R: Mmm hmmm.
A: That’s, the kids they’ll be sure they look like normal.
R: They think it’s the normal way that...
A: It’s normal, yeah, because they drink outside, they drink on the, uh, walkways, and around...
R: What about at the International Academy, are there important parts of Somali culture...
A: Important parts is over there, we have these prayer time, the whole student body, they have, to go to pray the kids. Another thing that they have is wearing their scarves over their heads and no one can bother them, for their, um, religion. Accept also the, after the, Somali language. The kids are, abused in schools, there is some bad words from schoolmates, and also from, some teachers.
R: Right.
A: Because whether you are elderly or you are young, no matter, it depends your character. You are bad person, and you come back. So it depends the person. It’s not if it is the teacher or the person. So they get a lot of abuses, a lot of problems. But what we say for international is, people who are coming over there, are mostly the understood each other. Or they read a lot of different cultures, yes, and they are more cultural, so, whenever a person’s more cultured, they understood the background of the person and they welcome them.
R: Sure.
A: So they understood each other and, they don’t bother anybody.
R: But in the regular public schools sometimes girls get in trouble?
A: Exactly. Even they bar their names, with the names. My son goes, Monroe Middle School. When he finished 5th grade, they asked me to send him to a school, where’s gone students who have, ah, Arab, in school. They send that as a lottery for Monroe Middle School in downtown, here.
R: What’s it called?
A: Monroe traditional middle school.
R: Monroe Traditional American School?
A: Middle School, Traditional Middle School.
R: OK.
A: So, the students who live in, like ah, down, ah, Columbus area, especially where they select good managers, if that student is good, they sent that school. That school is still keeping, as much better, than schools in Columbus, inside Columbus. So he sent over there. When I bring, he took some classes, even 2
years in Canada my son I sent to Canada, and some, have relations in Canada, his uncle live in Canada, so I send Canada, 2 years, and I send private school, in Canada. Just to keep my son because I cannot go over here for private school.
R: You send your son to a private school in Canada.
A: At that time, yeah.
R: OK.
A: Before International school or some schools opened over here. So, when I do 2000 in Columbus, I send to, ah, what do you call it, Mendel Research Academy? it was near Cleveland and 11 avenue. He was fine, he was better, so, but, they way it is before, goes down, one he goes down, because, he was before, a competitive student. When I sent him over there, the whole school, it goes down. So he said, “why you pushing me to read and to learn? I didn’t even meet even nothing, one person, in school”. I said why?
R: Yeah.
A: Because all students are nothing to him. So he goes down. So when I send that school, Monroe Middle School, even, especially after 9/11, they bother him, for his name, and Arabic students. His name was Mohammed so they call him even Bin Laden, or they call some names, or...and he hate this school, to go to school and I pushed, tries to push. If I didn’t talk to the administration, but I talked to, some teachers, they knew it, he said I told the teacher and they hear him and they tried to do nothing about it.
R: They didn’t say anything...
A: Yeah. They called Bin Laden, they called some names, but they didn’t...the name, he don’t know, I myself am his father, I don’t know Bin Laden. I hear the news, I don’t know, I never seen in my life.
R: Right.
A: You know? And they call that, young, 12 years old, they call Bin Laden. In school. They called him this name.
R: You would send him to the International Academy if there was a grade for him.
A: Yeah. Really, I send him to the International Academy.
R: Do you ever think, well, let me...would you go back to Somalia, if there was a government and everything was better, do you think you would take your family back?
A: Yeah. I would send back, because, my most, my major life, the most important in my life was my kids. So...I don’t want to, to grow up my kids, with a problem. And if that problem was continues, he may lose, education, he may leave the whole school. He may hate to go to school. And I don’t want to happen that, my kids,
R: Do you still have family...
A: He’s, he’s in a computer...there’s a lot of technology, and classes to know, and, but. It doesn’t make sense if I lost my kids. It doesn’t make sense to me.
R: Even if there’s technology, computers...
A: Yeah. It doesn’t make sense.
R: Yeah. I understand. Do you still have any of your family in Somalia?
A: Yeah. My parents, my brothers, after the civil war, we, we are all over the world. My brothers right now are in Kenya. I try to sponsor them over here. There’s no...over there and everything was broken. Especially after the election of Bush, they stop everything, goes down. And after the 11th, everything was goes down, life goes down, and especially the media was creating, really, major problems. Destroying rights now is the media. They create, inside the United States, conflict in the media, they can use. They create regions conflict, they create ethnic conflict, that is, I tell you, I have experience with the civil war. And the people, are, are, they hate other, even the same groups inside the country. That country is not going to go well. Because we don’t have pride, and we don’t have, um, why you go on, when somebody doesn’t respect to you? And when you go over there, you get the same history, you get, a person who is right, and no one was believing what you say or do is right. It, it, creates you, to hate the whole country. And that’s what they created, the media. When the people, they hate what they do, is they make believe, make some mistakes for their life too. So...and their life.
R: So, because it seems like, like it’s hopeless.
A: Seems, it’s like it’s hopeless. You gonna cut off, you gonna cut off from the chance to go and live. Whether or you are peaceful, you don’t have right color. So it makes you, it doesn’t make sense to you, the whole country.
R: Right, that’s true.
A: Even although you, you lost your life, the good chance for the rest of your life, you don’t know, because you’re empty, the anger was overcome to you. You don’t know what to do. Maybe you lost your life and lost your family. But you don’t know what to do. The anger is...come over to you. That’s why greed, and things go on the way is right now. It goes to, the destruction of the whole country. Unless the government is trying to reorder...comparing...
R: The government has to figure out how to...
A: Yeah. The government, look out, and especially to have, we have to have control for the media. What I believe is some special group who have some, ah, interest working outside the United States, was created.
R: You believe...
A: I think there’s some people who have, who have power to control the media. Was create some group with interest for outside USA. And to keep their interest, they have to have roots in developing industry. And create the whole process. We have these rights, when I look like, when I saw the program, it’s that way by
myself, when I look at the media, the way they talk about the world, the way they create...it seems like that way for two years. And it's not good for the whole country. By myself I live over here in America's...sometimes some people want. I lost, yeah, I lost, I was, at Ohio State University, enrolled for med-tech, when 9/11 happened, I was starting that part for med-tech, in Ohio State. September 11th, I was September 10th, at financial aid, everything was OK, and I was in, at, ah, ah, the tower, financial aid at Ohio State. They send me print-outs on now much I get from the state, and how much I get from the federal government, I have the paper I keep, I didn't throw it away. Then, after September 11th happened, my name is Mohammed, they took off my name for the whole university. And they throw out me for financial aid. But I didn’t leave.

R: Oh...

A: I soon cross and I stand...even the administration gets funny. They asked me, they asked me when you pay the money? But what I believe is, they are part of the game. I was waiting for, they asked me so, they have 170 dollars remaining, because I refused insurance, and I want to pay the book for that, so I was going after Sept 8th, and books, they do, the last bill of September, I go to, the financial office and asked, why you send me 170 dollars, which provides me for I have to learn, and I go there and she says you have to pay $200 today, before 11 tonight, if you didn’t pay, you are out of university. And that’s what they're waiting for, because if they, reject me that program, you have to apply another time and they refuse you. That’s what they planned with me. So, I, they say if you have questions, go upstairs, 5th floor. I go 5th floor, I have the letters. If I don’t have that letter, they, they, throw me out of...

R: Yeah.

A: And it was three hundred and five, for late fee, for it. And so, hey, I upset. I go upstairs, I talk to, it was there were two persons, one was black, lady, one was white, gentleman. She looked and said, oh, everything’s fine. I don’t know, somebody did your name but I don’t know, he said. And the black lady, took a look and said, go inside and said, she got it, this stuff was signed, why you keep? If its filled out, and I said no, and she came back and she said, he has to go before graduate committee, blah blah, you were right. And so, they have to...

R: So did you, so what...

A: Really I was upset, yeah, I upset. And I close to being, ah, ah, action by hand. Really I upset now. Then she says, I said I want to see the head of the department. She said no you don’t have the right to see right now you have to, ah, ask, and fill out the papers, and maybe wait for three or four weeks, we call you back. And after tonight, they all talk, it was, uh, 5 o’clock, after. So they got rid of me after all. I say I never go anywhere. She said I call the school, and I said, that’s good, call is good, but I said call first, I never go anywhere.

R: Yeah.
A: I went to see the head of the department. Then the lady was come up, I believe she was, ah, um, I don’t know, she is not advisor, she is not the manager of department but maybe supervisor, somewhere. So what happened. I said, I don’t know what happened but I need to put it back, assistance, my financial aid. Then this one said, well, we talked to them, she took me back and said what happened, I said, no, just you are to talk to you, ask you a few questions, and I said, ask questions, I don’t talk to you. Whether you like it or not, my name is Mohammed, and I am a Muslim. I have right to get, what I have to get, from here. What I ask you is, after September 11th you don’t have rights if your name is Mohammed? Or if you are a Muslim, you don’t have rights, in the whole country? Because I was September 10th and I have these papers from your office and everything is right, and then after September 11th they throw out my name. So why? She said no, somebody did, this happened, but I put the system right, I call, the, the, ah, people, I talk to them, I put the system, I call you back tomorrow. She did very well, really. She solved the problem. But after one year, they put my back and made the same mistake, not from the financial but from job...right now I finished from the community college. They call me and said you have not right to stay over here, so we advise you to go Arab areas. I said I don’t go anywhere, I just left, because I don’t want to create problems, I have the, right to, get a lawyer, I was, my job was teaching, so I didn’t know, if you get conference with the same course teachers gives you, what are you going to do for me? You think you succeed? No. So I left, I finished the community college.

R: You finished the degree at the community college.

A: I get over there the bachelor’s degree but over here I get the associates degree.

R: OK.

A: Not, I go somewhere else. I said I’m here to finish this program. They said, who out you first, you have not right to come this program, you have to go, we advise you to go another...program. Kind of like, it seems to, unlucky for me.

R: Yeah.

A: So I went there.

R: What do you think are the most important ways children develop values about the world and the way they see the world?

A: You have to raise them, and tell them your kids to be, the right things. To do the right things. To do good in school, to do with the, old people, to become a leader of society, your son or daughter. That what I believe. Try to be, till, as good as you can. Human, because all people’s different. You don’t have, at all over there. We don’t use, life insurance. Our kids are, life insurance. Traditionally when you grow up, you don’t use, life insurance, for all people, Somalia. If you lost your kids, you lost your life insurance. You have, you have...you become, a good life person. To get, to succeed your life insurance,
yeah, you have to have succeed your kids. And that’s the way I believe, I want to succeed my kids, because...
R: It comes from you.
A: Yeah. It comes from me. But the real, ah...the real reason we are good were my parents. I can help them today. Today I pay their bills from here, my parents. They receive...their days. Try the best I can. Just want to work, I’m working over there, I’m driving cab, right, trying to survive. So, they did raise me in a good way, and give me education, for, when I was young. They don’t have, to go what they have.
R: You’re paying them back.
A: Yeah.
R: What do you think are the most important things parents can give to children? Sounds like, I think you’ve said it...
A: First thing is that the parents have to give their kids and to give the best knowledge they can, and to raise the best way of life you can.
R: The best knowledge and the best way of life.
A: And to teach what is wrong and what is right. Tell them, it’s not to push, or embarrass the kids, but a lot of ways to tell a good things and bad things. And if you tell even sometimes maybe the bad things, you have to, ah, speak out and say like parents, this is not good, this is not good, that way is not good, keep trying that way. We are human beings, we can make mistakes, but not to make mistakes with our kids. We have to have, have them, kids, who don’t give the chance you have, and teaching when they are young, they are, ah, supposed to be tree grown up. When the tree was coming up you really put it straight, or straighten, children they will, and that tree, that tree was grown up straight. You can’t straighten it when it becomes bigger, you try to straighten it comes broken. The tree does, the tree, and you lost the whole tree. But when you are still young and soft, you can straight up. Kids are like young trees, you can straight up when they still young, and when they become a teenager, you can’t straight up.
R: It’s too late.
A: You broke out, too late.
R: Too late by that time, yeah.
A: So you have to have, guide when he was young. Tell them, try to spend most of your life, most of your time, you can, spend with them, talk to them, tell them what’s wrong what right, hang around with them, and go outside, and show, show these trees something what’s right, tell them, that’s not right, even it seems right for that person, and other person, you have to tell them what’s wrong is wrong. So you guide that way, God helps you and goes up...
R: So parents guide...
A: Yeah.
R: Guide the children.
A: Yeah. Because they don’t know what’s around them, they can lost, easily their lives. Because when you are young, everything seems to be right to you. \\
R: So...
A: In the years when I grow up, when my parents sent me like you have, I grew up with a farmer, my family had two farms, I grew up with that. So when they sent me to work on the farm, we late, we like to play, soccer. But it’s not right for the farm and it’s not right for us. Because that part of the job was part of our life. What we take from the farm is our life.
R: Yeah, you have...it’s your food.
A: Yeah. You don’t know it, you like to play soccer you should go and farm and worker. So I realized when I grew up what they are talking about, the parents. But at that time I didn’t realize, I liked to play soccer. To go over there.
R: How do we all know? It’s true.
A: Yeah.
R: When you’re a kid it’s hard to know.
A: You don’t know, you have to know.
R: Right.
A: You ask parents to buy something, and they said, that we don’t have that money, you are, you are upset. Because you don’t know the reality. And last when I got kids, they ask me sometimes, I don’t get that money at that time, so it’s kind of hard to me, seems to me that what they need is minor, it’s not a major one. So it can be hard sometimes to tell, and, and, your kids this life right now is not the real life you need right now, it’s not important for life, it cannot be had. And my parents had the same problem when I was young. I asked to, I need that stuff, and they say, we don’t have that money, they can’t afford at that time, I upset.
R: Yeah.
A: And maybe I thrown away and broke some stuffs at home, and it’s worse.
R: But you don’t know until you’ve become a parent yourself what it’s like.
A: Yeah. Right, I don’t know.
R: Do you teach duqsi to other children yourself also?
A: No because I don’t have that chance, I try to work as much as I can.
R: You’re too busy.
A: Yeah. When I get a chance I will try.
R: That’s my last question. Do you want some coffee?
A: No, you are my guest. You are in Columbus, you are my guest...

END
Sept 11, 2003, Baliya, (child)

R: OK, say your name.
B: B H.
R: Alright, you ready?
B: Yes.
R: You can talk as much as you want.
B: OK.
R: What’s your name?
B: B.
R: And, how old are you?
B: 9, 10.
R: 10. Where were you born?
B: Um, Sunaa, Yemen.
R: OK. And, where did you grow up?
B: Where did I grow up? Here.
R: In the U.S.?
B: Mm hmm.
R: OK. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
B: Ah, one sister and one brother.
R: One sister and one brother. Where do you live now?
B: Uh, on, xx ave.
R: OK. Do you live with your mom and dad?
B: Uh huh.
R: And, is there any other family that lives with you or anything?
B: Mm mm.
R: So your mom and dad, your brother and sister.
B: Mm hmm.
R: What school do you go to?
B: What school I used to go to? Uh...
R: What schools do you go to now?
B: Ah, this one, and a duqsi.
R: Where’s your duqsi?
B: Ah, my, my...
R: Are you nervous? You’re like, you’re shaking.
B: Yeah. By my house.
R: By your house? OK. What subjects do you learn at those two schools?
B: That one I learn, Qur’an, and what I’m supposed to learn to be a Muslim, and here, I learn math, science, social studies, art, physical education, uh, I can’t remember the rest.
R: OK. And you were at a different school before you came to the International Academy, right?
B: Yeah.
R: What school was that?
B: Windsor.
R: Windsor. What was the best part of that school?
B: Mmm...the field trips and math class.
R: What was the hardest part?
B: Science and social studies.
R: Really?
B: Mm hmm.
R: OK. How often do you go to the duqsi?
B: Every Saturday and Sunday.
R: So two days a week.
B: Yeah.
R: And, how long have you been going there?
B: Uh, I can’t remember when I started this one. I can’t remember.
R: A long though? Like one year, two years?
B: Uh uh. Like, um, 2 months ago, before my other one, ah, got closed. 2 months ago I think.
R: Oh, your other duqsi closed. Oh. Which duqsi was that that closed?
B: The one on Morse road.
R: That one closed?
B: Yeah. And then they opened it back up again but something was wrong with the girls bathroom.
R: Oh, ok. So it didn’t, it just, there was, they had to fix something.
B: Yeah.
R: OK. What do you learn at the duqsi that is different from what you learn here, again?
B: Ah, da, what I’m supposed to know to be a Muslim, ah, doras, ah, mm, prayer, and, Qur’an.
R: OK. And what do you think are some other differences between duqsi and International Academy?
B: This one is speak in English, there we speak in Arabic and, and Somali.
R: You don’t speak any Somali here?
B: Mm, yeah, when I’m playing with my friends.
R: OK, but normally it’s always in English, right.
B: Mm hmm.
R: Do people in your family teach you at home?
B: Yeah.
R: What do they teach you?
B: We, uh, they teach me...my mom, my mom, teaches me a little Arabic.
R: She does?
B: Yeah.
R: Oh, that’s cool.
B: With when I’m doing my homework.
R: OK. What else?
B: Somali.
R: They teach you Arabic and Somali at home?
B: Mm hmm.
R: OK. And...
B: Not a lot of Arabic.
R: And who teaches you?
B: My mom and dad.
R: Both of them.
B: Mm hmm.
R: OK. Do you like the duqsi or the International Academy better?
B: Both of them.
R: OK. Why?
B: Mm, because I like ah, subjects and I like doing work.
R: OK. Do you like your teachers?
B: Mm hmm.
R: Where does your favorite teacher teach, here or at the duqsi?
B: They’re in both of them.
R: Both? You have a favorite teacher in both places.
B: Mm hmm.
R: Do you pray during the day?
B: Yeah.
R: How many times?
B: Five.
R: Five times a day.
B: Yeah.
R: Why do girls and women wear the hijab, here in the U.S.?
B: It’s a religion. Yeah.
R: Be, because it’s part of your religion?
B: Mm hmm.
R: Do you know, any other reason?
B: Mm mm. Mm mm.
R: Do you think it’s important for Somalis who live here to go to duqsi?
B: Mm hmm.
R: Why?
B: Because you can learn more about your religion.
R: OK. So you can learn more about Islam. OK. What’s the first thing you do when you wake up?
B: ...brush my teeth, I eat, then I, then I get ready for school.
R: OK. And what time do you come to school during the week?
B: Ah, I don’t know. The bus, sometimes the bus...
R: Is it 8:30?
B: No 8:30 the breakfast finishes.
R: Oh.
B: I don’t know when the bus brings us.
R: And ah, what about on the weekends, what time do you go to duqsi?
B: 6 o’clock.
R: 6 o’clock in the morning?
B: No.
R: Oh, in the evening.
B: Yeah.
R: OK. What do you think the most important thing that you learn at duqsi is? Out of the things you told me?
B: Ah, Qur’an.
R: And what do you think the most important thing you learn here at the International Academy is?
B: Mm, getting ready for, like, proficiency tests and stuff.
R: OK. OK. So, all of the subjects together that will help you pass, the test. That makes sense. Do you think it’s important for you to go to school with other Somali students?
B: Yeah.
R: Why?
B: Then um, then um, then they can introduce me to new friends, and I can get more friends.
R: That’s true. OK. What do you think would be different if you went to a different school during the week?
B: Uh, different school?
R: Like your, like your old school when you went to Windsor? How do you think, if you went there now, how do you think it would be different?
B: Mm like, me and some other Somalis, that’s like the only Somalis and the rest, they are my next door neighbors, and, and...
R: So at Windsor are there, there’s only a few Somali students...
B: Uh huh.
R: ...and mostly Amer, the rest are mostly Americans?
B: Mm hmm.
R: So, did you spend most of the days with those other Somali students when you were there? Or did you...
B: No, because they weren’t in my sa, same class I had to play with my, with the friends I had.
R: Oh, I see. Who were Americans or whatever.
B: Uh huh.
R: So it doesn’t really matter to you if...
B: Hmm mm.
R: OK. Do you think you act differently at the duqsi than you do at International Academy?
B: Mm mm.
R: So your behavior is just the same...
B: Yep.
R: Why? How...you...
B: I don’t like acting like something I’m not.
R: OK. Do you participate in other activities outside of duqsi? Or International Academy? Like, do you play basketball at home, or...
B: Yeah, I don’t play basketball, I play video games and I ride my bike with my friends.
R: Do you?
B: Uh huh.
R: Do you go to school with your best friend?
B: Mm hmm.
R: Your best friend is here?
B: Uh huh.
R: Do you have other friends who don’t go to the International Academy?
B: Yeah.
R: How often do you see them?
B: Every day.
R: Do they live, they must live next to you, right?
B: Yeah. They just moved.
R: Do you have friends that don’t go to the same duqsi? That go to a different duqsi than you do?
B: Yeah.
R: How often do you see them? Are they your neighbors too?
B: No...every day.
R: But you see them every day?
B: In school.
R: Oh, they go here.
B: Yeah.
R: I got it. OK. Have your parents ever told you about what their life was like before they lived in America?
B: Mm hmm.
R: Really? What did they...did they talk about going to school when they were kids, or...
B: Yeah.
R: What did they say?
B: My dad used to go school and my dad finished the Qur’an. My mom used to go to school and she’s half, and she finished a lot of the Qur’an, and then she moved to America.
R: OK. So, when I met your dad, he said that he did know the whole Qur’an...
B: Mm hmm.
R: ...and his Arabic is pretty good, he said, because of living in Yemen.
B: Mm hmm.
R: And your mom too. Because she said, you said, she teaches you Arabic?
B: Yeah.
R: So she, hers must be really good.
B: Mm hmm. The same as my dad’s.
R: Do they ever, say, that, um, how their education was maybe different than yours, or the same as yours?
B: Hmm, ah, different.
R: Di, di, they said that theirs was different?
B: Ah, because all their teachers speak in Somali and ours speak in English and Somali.
R: Oh.
B: And some Arabic.
R: So, theirs was kind of, because it was at home, or in Somalia...
B: No, it wasn’t in the, in their house, it was in a building where they would learn the Qur’an and learn math and stuff.
R: So they learned Qur’an at the same place they learned subjects.
B: Mm hmm.
R: But here you have to got two different...
B: Mm hmm.
R: Mm. That’s interesting. And you never lived in Somalia, right?
B: Mm mm.
R: What do you remember about living in Yemen when you lived there?
B: Nothing.
R: Nothing. You were pretty small.
B: Mm hmm.
R: Do you ever think about what it would be like if you went back to live in Somalia?
B: In Somalia? Yeah. I went to see my grandpa and grandmas.
R: Your grandmas, your grandparents are there now? Wow. Is there anything else that you think about what it would be like?
B: My uncles, my aunts, playing, playing outside with them...
R: Hmm. What would you like to be when you grow up?
B: Doctor.
R: A doctor? So that’s why you’re working hard in your classes so you can do well on your proficiency test. And what do you think you’ll be doing in 10 years?
B: In ten years?
R: Let’s see, you’re...
B: Graduating high school.
R: You’ll be, you’re 10 right?
B: Yeah.
R: So you’ll be 20. You will have graduated from high school already.
B: Oh.
R: So you’ll be in college.
B: Being a doctor.
R: You won’t be a doctor yet, because you’ve got to go to school for a long time, to be a doctor. But you’ll be just starting school, so...um there was another question I wanted to ask you. Do you think that going to school with other, um, with your friends, helps you to, ahm, understand what it means to be Somali, do you think? Do you think of yourself as a Somali person or an American person?
B: Somali.
R: Somali person. Do your friends, and um, or your parents, or any of your teachers, or, anybody tell you, this is what, Somali people do, this is what American people do, or, anything like that?
B: No.
R: So you just know because you speak Somali, and...
B: Yeah. And English.
R: And, of course, you speak English. And Arabic.
B: Not that much.
R: Yeah.
B: I can’t speak but I know what they’re saying.
R: Well, that’s good. Do your parents ever speak Arabic to ah, try and hide something they’re saying, so that...
B: No. Mm mm.
R: You speak Somali at home?
B: Mm hmm.
R: Any questions, you wanna ask me?
B: No...
Other: There’s a big cockroach in there!
R: You have any questions?
B: I’m not scared.
R: You’re not scared.
B: No.
R: You’re fine, just shoo it away.
B: I know. No questions.
R: No questions?
B: Mm hmm.
R: That’s the end of my questions.
B: OK.
R: Thanks for your time.
B: You’re welcome.
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Students

Section I

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where were you born?
4. Where did you grow up? Until you were how old did you grow up there?
5. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
6. Where do you live now?
7. Do you live with your mom, dad, grandparents? Other family or friends?

Section II

1. What schools do you go to?
2. What subjects do you learn at those schools?
3. You were at other schools before the IAC, right? What was the best part of the school you went to before the International Academy? What was the hardest part?
4. How often do you go to the duqsi?
5. How long have you been going to the duqsi?
6. What do you learn at the duqsi that is different than the IAC?
7. What do you think are some other differences between the *duqsi* and the IAC?

8. Do other family members teach you at home also? What do they teach you? Who specifically teaches you?

9. Do you like the *duqsi* or the IAC better? Why?

10. Do you like your teachers? Where does your favorite teacher teach, at the *duqsi* or the IAC?

11. Do you pray during the day? How many times a day do you pray?

12. Why do girls and women wear the hijab here in the U.S.?

13. Is it important for Somalis who live here to go to *duqsi*? Why?

Section III

1. What is the first thing you do when you wake up?

2. What time do you come to school during the week? What about on the weekends?

3. What is the most important thing you learn at the *duqsi*? What is the most important thing you learn at the IAC?

4. Do you think it’s important for you to go to school together with other Somali students?

5. What do you think would be different if you went to a different weekly school, like a public school?
6. Do you think you act differently at the *duqsi* than you do at weekly school? Why or why not?

7. Do you participate in other activities outside of the *duqsi* or weekly school?

8. Do you go to school with your best friend? Do you have other friends who don’t go to the IAC? If you do, how often do you see those friends?

9. Do you have friends that don’t go to the same *duqsi* you go to?

10. Have your parents told you about what their life was like before they lived in America? Do they talk to you about how their education was different or the same as yours?

11. What do you remember about living in Somalia?

12. How do you think your life would be different if you and your parents went back to Somalia?

13. What would you like to be when you grow up?

14. What do you think you’ll do in ten years?
Parents

Section I

1. What is your first name?
2. Where were you born?
3. How long have you been in the U.S. (if they were not born here)?
4. How old is your child?
5. What was the most important part of your education when you were your child’s age?

Section II

1. Please describe your education when you were growing up. Did you participate in religious education like duqsi?
2. Can you describe how your religious practice has changed during hard times like war or in your move to the U.S.? How did you continue with your religious practice during these times?
3. What was your profession in Somalia or before you came to the U.S.?
4. Will you describe what is involved in your practice of religion here in Columbus currently?
5. What are the ways you practice every day? Every week? Every year?
6. What is the most important thing that the education can provide for children?
7. Why have you chosen to send your child to the duqsi as well as the International Academy?

8. Is it easy/convenient for you to bring your child to the duqsi on the weekend?

9. Is there any religious education at home? For example, do you teach the Qur’an at home? Do you read it together or talk about the meaning of the lessons?

10. In what ways do you think your child’s religious education is different from yours? How is it the same?

Section III

1. What are the most important aspects of Somali culture your child gets from the duqsi that they might not get otherwise?

2. What are the most important aspects of Somali culture your child gets from the International Academy that they may not get elsewhere?

3. Do you envision returning to Somalia in the future?

4. What are the most important ways in your opinion children develop values and views about the world?

5. What are the most important things that parents can give to children?

6. What are some of the differences between the education your child is participating in and public education?

7. Do you teach in other places besides at home?
8. Has sending your child to the *duqsi* and the IAC affected the way you are involved in your community? Are you more involved or less involved? The same?