

RECONSTITUTING LIVES: SOMALI WOMEN'S EFFORTS TO REFORMULATE
HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY VALUES IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

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Chapter One

Introduction

Somalia's civil war is now in its eighteenth year. The disintegration of the Somali state has produced hundreds of thousands of refugees. Refugees seek asylum in countries like: Kenya, Yemen, the UK, Ethiopia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, and South Africa. The United States is home to many Somali refugees and asylum seekers as well. According to United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of Somali refugees who sought asylum in the US between the years 1996 and 2005 totaled 280,293

(<http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/4641bec20.pdf>). Somalis settle in cities across the US. Some cities like Minneapolis/St. Paul, San Diego, and Columbus, Ohio host tens of thousands. Whereas other places like Owatonna, Minnesota and Barron, Wisconsin are home to smaller populations (Schaid and Grossman 2007).

At the time of my research in 2005-2006, the Kansas City Somali population totaled 3500. Somalis settle in Kansas City for a variety of reasons: family, housing, cost of living, and employment. The problems Kansas City Somalis face are numerous ranging from adult and child literacy to child rearing struggles to relationships with non-Somalis.

My research investigates women's strategies in providing care for their families after forced migration. Somali women are the main caretakers of their

families. They keep familial ties and households functioning, while they tend to their own hardships encountered as a result of civil war. The relationship between women's caring roles and their internalization of violence and trauma serves as the basic framework for this dissertation.

Using this framework, I follow a contradiction among those in the diaspora. The dissolution of Somalia's state and its failure to support its citizens produces a perplexing situation. On the one hand, Somalis undertake the learning of cultural knowledge in a new setting. On the other hand, Somalis try to reformulate a social world that is based on past circumstances and one that articulates with current living conditions. Thus, Somalis living in the diaspora, specifically in the US, have a uniquely challenging task. They must superimpose old ideas of what they believed to be true in terms of state functioning, security, and protection onto a new society. At the same time, Somalis often feel "suspect" for being Somali, African, and Muslim in a post 9/11 world. Arthur Kleinman's (1999) notion of local moral worlds fits this situation. When people are displaced to a society where morality is perceived to be different, how do they evaluate and negotiate choices in a new framework in view of a ruined social world?

To gain insight into this contradiction, my research describes the practical considerations one takes into account in striving for a functional household, a sound community, and family abroad. Specifically my research addresses what Somali women living in Kansas City, Missouri, do to assist their households and community after undergoing forced migration. Mothers' contribution to wellbeing is found in a variety of contexts: taking care of the sick, teaching a sense of Somaliness in

children, enforcing religious precepts, sending remittances, securing citizenship, and building networks to benefit family members and friends. My research also discusses those situations that strain strategic problem resolution, like raising children in the diaspora, improving relationships with African Americans, and increasing literacy skills for adults. Thus, the research ties into what women do to promote wellbeing within their households and community, as well as kin living in Somalia and Kenya.

I am interested in how people manipulate old knowledge and adapt to new forms to build a nuanced social world that readily applies to a newly learned social setting. A goal of the dissertation is to focus on what is being done in day-to-day living, whether it is assisting one another with reading, accessing transportation, sharing resources, sending money abroad, or requesting help when hosting a party. I explore daily errands, conversations, and concerns to see how experiences of the past, i.e., war and forced migration, surface in familial relationships and non-kin networks. Thus, the research probes the healing strategies and methods utilized within the Somali community in response to war-derived traumas.

The Internalization of Violence into the Fabric of Life

Much of the anthropological and social science literature on violence treats it as a disruption to life rather than a thread in the fabric of life. There are a few exceptions, such as Veena Das's (2006) account of the riots that followed the Partition of India in 1947 and the aftermath of the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Rather than looking at violence as interruptions, she focuses on the small-scale

actions of individuals who desire to live life after such horrific episodes. These events and their effects enter into the fabric of society, and thus, the experiences related to them become part of everyday living, woven into the “recesses of the ordinary.” The situated violence brought themes of betrayal, distrust, and deceit. These events drastically undermined public faith when interpreted as “state making” violence. For example, women endured the brunt of the violent outbreaks after the partition. Women were victimized, raped, and abducted. Popular and scholarly explanations ignore male participation that constructed the state to perceive its actions as preserving order based on masculinity. These acts of violence¹ shattered the sense of a moral world. The atrocities challenge the imagination because they operate outside of a rational or normal or socially accepted spectrum. On the surface, Das’s idea seems to be simplistic. However, her multilayered approach demonstrates how these violent episodes fuse with the social world.

The social world people once knew has shifted to become a new reality.

People do not create, but rather rebuild a social world that fits into an altered

¹ Violence is difficult to define without essentializing it. Many who use the term simply take it as a matter of fact. At the same time, no single definition suffices to characterize violence. Scholars are hesitant to accept a concrete meaning for fear of leaving out possibilities or establishing a fixed concept. One set of criteria qualifying violent actions or thoughts as violent could delegitimize other experiences. Can all violence be recognized? By what standards? When does violence begin? How should indicators be classified? What are the underlying responses to violent encounters (Nordstrom 1997: 115-116)? Humans recognize and label violence, yet when violence is synonymous with the social order, clarity is lost in identifying its symbolic or structural elements. Therefore, defining violence superimposes a sense of order and control to the experience, the opposite of what violence is, chaos (ibid.: 16-17).

reality based on the old. Society takes experiential knowledge and shapes it, morphs it, manipulates it to fit an altered context. The context does not simply change, it is much more than that. With the breakdown of social norms, institutions, and kin relationships, a system is rewired so social norms are reestablished that can be worthy and sensical after the state's failure to provide a fundamental sense of being and living life as it was once known.

In Das's (2006: 6) examples, individuals needed to learn how "to pick up the pieces and to live in this very place of devastation." What happens when the state no longer exists? How do people construct new foundations for social norms when forced to live in exile? How are these unresolved feelings toward the former state incorporated in the outlook toward the host country?

My research focuses on this realm of rebuilding a social world to fit an altered context. The significance of my research, therefore, lies in how Somalis (in these new diasporic communities) come to terms with, or move beyond, the internalized image and emotions of a shattered social infrastructure. The past in some way has been taken away and replaced with something else. Healing in this context transforms social suffering by rebuilding community ties and bonds, selves and society, with women often acting as key players (Farah 2000: 4-5).

The study examines efforts in the Somali community to find healing in illness experiences. Analyzing the illness experience also enables the researcher to identify how individuals and groups relate to one another. The research thus goes beyond an exploration of reconstructions of self and society in a conventional sense. Instead, it evaluates the search for new solutions. Medical anthropologist Byron

Good (1994) advocates critical phenomenology as a theoretical orientation in conducting such research because of its ability to discern the most seemingly insignificant gestures in moving beyond a shattered sense of self and society. Phenomenology provides the theoretical orientation for my research on healing strategies and the search for wellbeing within Somali culture.

Understanding the Destruction and the Rebuilding of Moral Worlds through Phenomenology

Distrust, deceit, and lack of faith are emotions connected to the obliteration of a social contract, not just any social contract; but one that makes up a social landscape of what is perceived to be rational or possible. The intent of the research is not to write a description of emotions, rather it is to delve into the shifting ideas of a workable world outlook. How do individuals and communities restore a social order using templates from prior experiences that are applied to new situations in the US?

A growing number of researchers have used the phenomenological perspective to examine forced migration. The discourse of forced migration in scholarship has touched on issues of cultural knowledge (Malkki 1992; Mortland 1994; Knudsen 1995) epistemological and ontological orientation (Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Daniel 1996), spatial contexts (Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Tronvoll 1999; Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1993; Malkki 1992) embodiment (Rousseau, Said, Gagne, and Bibeau 1998), and the fluid properties which accompany experience (Daniel 2002; James 1997).

Phenomenology, as a platform for analyzing the discourse of forced migration, allows for flexibility in terms of individual and collective experience, by keeping in touch with the depth of the experience evidenced in feelings, as seen in the relationship between language, the body, the lifecourse, and issues of subject and object in research.

Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) develops a phenomenology of embodiment by joining structural and linguistic features and experiences in the lifeworld (*lebenswelt*). The body-subject complements his views of perception because the body becomes a thinking and acting agent, rather than an object that the mind commands (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Macann 1993). Even though perception is rooted cognitively, humans actually absorb more than they can cognitively process. Merleau-Ponty investigates words and thoughts intimately connected with “emotional exchanges” within everyday experience.

Anthropologists explore similar venues. Janis Jenkins (1991: 390) suggests approaching emotions by looking at particular contexts that reveal how time, depth, and intensity of interaction correspond to one another. It is at this site of interconnectedness that meaningful knowledge reveals itself. This does not represent a description of emotion. It is rather an account of expressed emotion distributed in space and time.

The concept of phenomenology as a platform for social life (Schutz and Luckmann 1973) is demonstrated in the volume *Mistrusting Refugees* (Daniel and Knudsen 1995). The authors examine the relationship of the abuse of power and the lack of trust. Following a similar line of inquiry, Wendy James writes of fear as

shaping memory, embodying thoughts, and monitoring interpersonal connectedness. She evaluates slight changes in language use which reveal emotions and feelings (James 1997: 115-116.)

A few anthropologists have conducted research concerning emotional responses to complex and tortured situations. Stuart Turner (1995: 69-70) contemplates the self and the emotional atmosphere in healing strategies. He examines testimonies that reconfigure experiences and renew meaning of the individual's involvement in the sociopolitical context. In addition, Rousseau, Said, Gagne, and Bibeau (1998) describe the migratory process for young Northern Somali men as a "space of imagination" or "dream space." Rousseau, Said, Gagne, and Bibeau suggest that some individuals get sucked into the dream of resettling in the West for the accumulation of knowledge and riches. As a result, many have a difficult time dissociating the dream from the reality of everyday life in the new setting.

Jenkins (1996) and Kleinman (1999) emphasize that emotional responses and experiences are rooted in specific settings of everyday life, especially those influences of political and social oppression. They say emotional processing cannot be removed from the sociopolitical context. The reconfigured meanings which oppressed women incorporate in their daily lives are a direct result of the embedded knowledge accumulated through the tactics of political violence. They conclude that strained social conditions manifest themselves through physical ailments in the body. Categories such as suffering, emotions, political expressions and physiology, are all heavily connected. These categories cannot be viewed as

independent entities, when trying to reveal experiential meanings (Kleinman 1999: 31). Thus, caregivers in the Somali setting engage in reinterpreting, reinventing, and reevaluating life trajectories in the face of their common experience of societal deterioration, forced migration, and trauma.

Significance of Research

This research examines the practical considerations that women use to strategize and negotiate within familial and sociopolitical contexts. The research seeks to understand how emotions (such as frustration or distrust) intertwined with practical concerns shape memory, embody thoughts, and monitor social connectedness after traumatic experiences. My research describes:

1. the contradiction of seeking a new local moral world in a new place based on the detritus of fractured morality;
2. the importance of phenomenology to understand traumatic memory that is embedded in the social fabric;
3. how women's social roles contribute to rebuilding values in the diaspora.

Building on the three inquiries, the research extends explorations concerning health within the context of forced migration where issues of continuity and gender are central. The forces of power, privilege, and prestige shape the underlying notions of gender, not male and female biological categories. Gender is "a key relational dimension of human activity and thought – activity and thought informed by cultural and individual notions of men and women – having consequences for their social or cultural positioning and the ways in which they experience and live their

lives” (Indra 1999: 2). Virtually all Somali families have experienced direct or indirect violence. Suffering among Somali women is widespread due to their experiences of rape, abuse, and high child mortality rates. Yet, Somali women strive to keep familial ties and households functioning to maintain a sense of "healthy" families. It is for this reason that my research concentrates heavily on the role of women.

In addition to gender, I explore the foundations that various authors have used to write about suffering, including but not limited to Das (2006), Chatterji and Mehta (2007), Malkki (1995), Kakar (1996), Kirmayer (1996), Nordstrom (1998), Janzen (1999), Janzen and Janzen (2000), Daniel (1996), Gozdzik and Tuskan (2000), and Parker (1996). These studies are instrumental in understanding how to represent and analyze memory, trauma, stress, abuse, and betrayal. My research contributes to this body of knowledge by using the case of Somalia, where a 18-year civil war has prevented the formation of a functional government.

Lastly, the research combines such fields as gender, suffering, and experience by utilizing phenomenology. The research demonstrates how critical phenomenology enables ideas of embodiment and consciousness to show the integral links of body, social context, and knowledge. When addressing issues of war trauma and memory, phenomenology is better positioned to effectively deal with embodiment and consciousness than functional and developmental approaches.

Wellbeing Defined

The concept of wellbeing is embedded in the formulation, execution, and writing of the research. Wellbeing is not solely a biological phenomenon. Wellbeing reflects sociopolitical, environmental, and economic realities. The social context governs the experience of being well. Other arenas influence the quality of life (i.e., maintaining balance through physiological, psychological, and societal expressions.) Women's roles within the household prove to be significant, because women often find themselves in the positions of caretaker and manager of the household. It also is important to evaluate wellbeing in terms of gender, given that women are the primary recipients of health knowledge for their families.

In the African context, major cultural disruptions, such as war and displacement, shift how everyday life is experienced. Continuous stress manifests itself in devastating effects on humans, because the effects of structural violence and poor infrastructure decrease capacities for individuals to be productive members of society. In turn, societies need to be productive to function at "normal" levels.

Health as a construct is framed in western traditions, where individual disease-free bodies are the ideal. Longevity and bodily fitness are emphasized in western societies; yet, this view as the underlying ideology of wellbeing is biased and incomplete. The most glaring obstacle in this conceptualization is its emphasis on the individual body in relation to disease, disconnected from its ecological, political, economic, and symbolic contexts. Health ideals that dominate in western societies thus do not translate well in cultures where this model of health is not indigenously understood (Adelson 2000: 4; Lock 2002). Where group identity

supercedes individuality, conceptions of the body differ as well. According to Janzen (2002: 62-4) there are generally five shared ideas of health in sub-Saharan Africa: the body viewed as an integrated whole; the notion of purity as having structure and order; the idea of balance or harmony mediating relationships of individuals and communities to the natural environment or spiritual world; the structural opposition of coolness (associated with cures) and heat (connected with conflict and impurities); and the concept of flow and blockage, where individuals and communities exchange knowledge.

These concepts are incorporated into the World Health Organization's definition of health. WHO (1978: 2) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, [it] is a fundamental human right and that the attainment of the highest possible level of health is a most important world-wide social goal whose realization requires the action of many other social and economic sectors in addition to the health sector." Therefore, health and wellbeing are linked, but wellbeing encompasses more than just biological health. Wellbeing is viewed as holistic, with overlapping areas that contribute to the survival and welfare of both individuals and groups. Wellbeing is reflected in the quality of daily life and is determined by social and individual factors that include, but are not limited to, economic dimensions, formal and informal social networks², management of households, marketable skills, occupations, living

² Barnes (1954) articulates social networks in analytical categories. Analytic models enable us to explain behavior by using the features associated with linkages among people, not directly evaluating actions of people but the interconnectedness of

conditions and ideologies. As an example, a case study of women in Butajira, Ethiopia, found that they consider “health” to be the absence of illness, while fulfilling expectations, satisfying social obligations, maintaining peaceful relationships, completing jobs and tasks, and obtaining an education (Berhane, Gossaye, Emmelin, and Hogberg 2001).

Culturally Specific Ideas that Contribute to Wellbeing

Cultural ideals and historical circumstances shape aspects of wellbeing for individual groups and societies (Adelson 2000; Wallman 1996). In a Somali context, ideals of wellbeing include the social meaning of strength and physical health (*xoog*) as reflected in skin tones, body shape, endurance, and resistance (*quwad*) (Thomas 1982: 9, 55; Serkkola 1994: 54). This fluid concept may shift depending on geographical area or group. For example, pastoralists in northern Somaliland conceive of wellbeing in connection to camel herding, land, grazing areas, and water holes. Pastoralism is highly revered and viewed as difficult, but the rewards outweigh the tough times because these groups build “strength” and “endurance.”

Even though the concept of wellbeing usually contains culturally specific notions, it also features cross-cultural generalizations. The authors of *World Mental Health*, Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good, and Kleinman (1995), identify six primary categories that impact wellbeing in the world’s populations: economic and political

people (Mitchell 1969: 4). Whereas, networks used in a metaphorical perspective focus on the representation of complex social relations but not being able to articulate the specific process of persons connecting with one another through status, role, connectedness, and intensity.

concerns; poverty, hunger, and malnutrition; urbanization and social change; violence; displacement and migration; and disasters (social and environmental). All of these factors influence the quality of life for individuals and families. Even though the categories describe macrolevel and structural features, the authors emphasize an approach that considers both populations and individuals that have undergone stress. This perspective reflects the basic notions underlying wellbeing, whether historical, economic, symbolic, political, or ecological.

To ameliorate wellbeing, anthropologists look at community solutions and responses rather than national policies because community programs are more effective. Communities with specific concerns deliberately plan solutions found within their own resources. A community's intimate understanding of day-to-day living increases the likelihood of developing programs that reflect community needs while maintaining awareness of cultural ideals and standards.

Research Design and Methods

There are several agencies that offer services to families residing in the northeast area, e.g., Jewish Vocational Services³ (now recognized as the main center for receiving refugees), Catholic Charities, Don Bosco Centers, and Della C. Lamb.

Two other social service agencies specifically cater to the needs of Somalis: the Somali Foundation, Inc. and the Somali Association of Greater Kansas City. Both

³Jewish Vocational Services established in 1949 to assist Holocaust survivors. Since then the center has expanded its services and it caters to a variety of people in need. In 2004, they embarked on the mission of overseeing refugee resettlement in northwest Missouri after the Don Bosco Centers changed their focus.

nonprofit organizations strive to create a stronger Somali community, although they differ in strategies. The Somali Foundation operates out of the basement of a Catholic church. It offers a variety of services, such as interpretation and translation, pre-driving and driving, a women's group, and nutrition modules. In contrast, the Somali Association of Greater Kansas City does not have space and does not have a working budget, it has more problems sponsoring events and offering consistent services. It hosts Somalia's Independence Day celebration at a local elementary school. And in the past, it sponsored activities for children during the weekends.

The executive director of the Somali Foundation, Inc. invited me to the center and suggested volunteer possibilities. I took advantage of the English as Second Language (ESL) and citizenship classes taught at the center (which was actually sponsored by the Jewish Vocational Services) as a way to become involved with the community.

In January 2005 I began volunteering a couple of afternoons a week. I also attended functions outside of the classroom and of the center. I officially began my research in June 2005 and continued through September 2006. Over the course of volunteering for five months, numerous individuals asked for assistance of various kinds. The requests ranged from reading mail to giving rides to filling out forms to writing documents to helping children with homework and much more. By the time my research began, I felt overwhelmed with tasks that people suggested. I certainly turned down propositions, but word had spread that I would help others without charge. I believed that if I took up residence in the neighborhoods, I would not have

had an opportunity to write my field notes and reflect upon a day's work.

Therefore, I chose to commute from Lawrence, Kansas to Kansas City, Missouri for the course of my research (a 50 minute drive).

I obtained data through ethnographic techniques, such as participant observation and interviewing. Participant observation means that “you are directly involved in community life, observing and talking with people as you learn from them their view of reality” (Agar 1996: 163). Much of my time spent with women took place in households and neighborhoods, along with daily activities: attending ESL classes, going to social service agencies, helping with doctor visits, preparing meals, applying for jobs, and organizing community events. I participated in the seemingly insignificant domestic happenings on a daily basis. My intent was to look at “mundane” experiences and register how memory of traumatic events is incorporated into everyday life, under the premise that this approach would illuminate how people cope in their new environment.

I interviewed 40 Somalis who came to the United States seeking asylum. I interviewed 32 women and eight men. I originally selected participants based on their affiliation with *saar* (spirit possession). The judgment sample was selected by my interpreter who was familiar with relevant characteristics. However, as my interviews progressed with women who had *saar*, I realized that *saar*, while significant, was too limiting in scope to capture the essence of women's activity in relation to wellbeing. Therefore, I widened my scope of interviews using a snowball

approach. My approach incorporated open-ended interviews.⁴ I developed a questionnaire and had it translated in Somali. Then I had it back translated by two bilingual individuals. The interviews discuss women's productivity and role within the household, community, and non-familial relationships.

Participants' backgrounds varied. Arrival to the US ranged from 16 months to 16 years. Education levels included no education to master's degree. All the participants interviewed were from southern Somalia. The women selected ranged 18 to 74 years. Since my focus is maternal strategies and women's role in the household and community, I interviewed mothers. All women participants had given birth with the exception of two (who were both expecting). I interviewed men to contrast the views of roles. The interviews provided corroborating evidence to field notes and documents.

Six participants agreed to be tape recorded. For those interviews, I transcribed them. For the other ones, I took detailed notes and typed up our conversation immediately following the interview. When analyzing the data, I coded for themes. Then I organized the interviews and field notes based on characteristics involving migration, women's roles, social relationships, wellbeing, education, and citizenship. I situated and assessed the themes in relations to others and used percentages in which theme occurred within the interviews. I supplemented the results with observational material and documents.

⁴ This approach allows the individual to stress what she thinks is a critical moment or process in her life trajectory (Bernard 1995: 209; Agar 1996: 140). Narratives of trauma or illness are not necessarily well-thought out or linear, but they provide valuable accounts of experience (Mattingly 1998).

In my original research design, I had planned to interview individuals from the six major clan families—Dir, Isaaq, Hawiye, Darod, Digil, and Rahanwayn.⁵ But as I became more engaged with community members, the majority of people did not want to discuss clans. Clan affiliation has much association with the ongoing war, particularly in the earlier years, and it is viewed as a hindrance in current negotiations, even though the dynamics of the conflict have shifted.

For the same reason I did not probe for detailed accounts of traumatic events. According to Veena Das, “Even the idea that we should recover the narratives of violence becomes problematic when we realize that such narratives cannot be told unless we see the relation between pain and language that a culture has evolved” (2006: 57). Das questions the usefulness of descriptions of violence when the words and grammar used to divulge such narratives are often void of scope, impact, and meaning. She claims that descriptions of traumatic events do not translate into understanding the effect of violence on an individual and societal level. Perhaps the mundane experiences of how traumatic events are incorporated

⁵ The clan system is the basic social unit in Somalia and the primary structure that Somalis use to classify themselves. Generally, clan members share a common patrilineal ancestry. Agnatic affiliation can be traced through the levels of clan family, clan, sub-clan, and *reer*. The clan family encapsulates all branches of agnatic affiliation within a particular grouping, while the *reer* represents the most narrow agnatic relations. The segmentary lineage system, i.e., the basis of the social structure, provides a way for people to conceptualize relationships. A large number of Somalis living in the Kansas City area are from the Banaadir region (which includes the cities of Muqdisho and Marka). Despite clan categories being fluid and clan affiliation not being determined by geography, there are a higher percentage of Hawiye and Darod members in Kansas City than Isaaq families.

into everyday life will tell more about how people cope. I did not discourage people from telling their story. If someone wanted to tell me, I would not stop her.

I began Somali language study at the beginning of January 2005. I attended several pre-ESL classes in Kansas City to meet Somalis who have limited use of English. In addition, I enrolled in a tutorial with an African language professor at KU to assist in my studies during the 2005-2006 academic year. In addition, I attended the Summer Cooperative African Language Institute at Indiana University at Bloomington for a seven week intensive language study of Somali. Even though I began learning Somali, I hired a female translator who was present during most of the interviews. She speaks Somali, Maay-Maay, and some Baraawe. The majority of participants preferred to converse in Somali. In my graduate studies, I enrolled in several Arabic courses. There are many Somali words with Arabic roots and Arabic is also known as the lingua franca of northeast Africa. Many Somalis speak Arabic as a second or third language, particularly individuals who migrated to Yemen or Egypt before settling in the US.

Introduction to Field Site

The field work took place in a portion of Kansas City, Missouri, known as the Northeast. It is comprised of eight neighborhoods and is nestled between east of downtown and the growing city of Independence.

The Northeast, considered to contain Kansas City's oldest residential neighborhoods, is not new to immigrant communities. Irish and Italian immigrants settled the Northeast in the 19th and early 20th centuries. According to the Jackson

County Historical Society (<http://www.jchs.org>), in 1907 a significant number of Italian immigrants settled in Kansas City, following Jews and eastern European immigrants. Today, the streets of the Northeast buzz with many different communities, including Somalis, Sudanese, Latinos, Pakistanis, Iraqis, Vietnamese, and Hmong. According to Northeast News, over 40 ethnicities live in the area (Northeast News 2000: 1). The diversity of the Northeast is reflected in local businesses, markets, restaurants, schools, social service agencies, and places of worship.

Immigrants often settle in the Northeast because of the relative low cost of living and the accessibility of social service organizations. The area is home to nonimmigrant working class households as well. In an effort to reestablish the Northeast, there have been proposals to revitalize the area, but the rising crime rate has curbed some of those prospects. The Northeast has its share of social and economic issues like prostitution, drugs, and crime. Neighborhoods within the Northeast vary in the degree and nature of crime. Further detail is provided in chapter three where I discuss local neighborhoods, households, and dynamics Somalis have with their most prominent neighbors, African Americans.

Background to Continued Conflict in Southern Somalia

Colonial forces influenced the future sociopolitical sphere in Somalia. Somalia's land was divided into regions by Italy (southern region known as Italian Somaliland), Ethiopia (western territory known as the Ogaden), the United Kingdom (northern lands known as British Somaliland and land now identified as

northeastern Kenya), and France (over the most northern section known as today's Djibouti). British Somaliland received independence on June 26, 1960 and Italian Somaliland gained independence on July 1, 1960. The two areas joined together to form the Somali Republic. In 1969, General Mohamed Siad Barre overtook the democratically elected government of 'Abd ar-Rahid 'Ali Shirmarke in a coup d'état.

After the coup, Barre received favorable marks from the general public in the early stages of his administration. His policies emphasized "Scientific Socialism," which utilized "historical research as the fundamental bases for policy making" and used the scientific method to confirm results of socially centered research (Laitin and Samatar 1987: 82, 89). The goal was to modernize the nation through promoting literacy, improving animal husbandry, and expanding civic knowledge. Yet Scientific Socialism also tried to settle nomads and minimize the influence of clan relations. Barre had a difficult time realizing his agenda. (Refer to I.M. Lewis (2002) for a list of ways Scientific Socialism failed.) Barre's support diminished and his governance became increasingly ineffective after Somalia lost the 1977-1978 Ogaden war to Ethiopia.

The Somali National Movement, the United Somali Congress (USC), and the Somali Patriotic Movement cooperated in ousting Barre and his administration. Despite the cooperative efforts, the civil relationship between the parties deteriorated. In 1988 bombings occurred in northern cities and war spread from north to south. A manifesto, signed by community, religious, and political leaders in 1990, directed actions of clans and factions to avoid a major conflict within Somalia's borders. However, the fighting only worsened. The USC defeated Barre in

January 1991 and declared Ali Mahdi Mohammed the interim president. After a few months, he was forced out of office and Somalia's civil war escalated, resulting in societal collapse (Makinda 1993).

Northern and northeastern Somalia, also known as Somaliland and Puntland, declared their autonomy from Somalia's central and southern regions, although the international community has not recognized the two regions' claims of independence. The reestablishment of infrastructure and social ties has promoted economic growth, unlike the southern region. The southern region has experienced many failed attempts at forming a unified government. Due to its weak authority and unsatisfactory performance, the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) gained control of the majority of southern Somalia in 2006. The Transitional National Government (TNG) felt threatened by the UICs presence, so the TNG requested Ethiopia's help to expel them from power. By January 2007, the TNG and Ethiopian troops forced the UIC out of their strongholds and relinquished their territories. Today, the UIC and government are still in conflict.

Roadmap for the Remaining Chapters

As I trace the tension of women's caring roles and women's internalization of violence, I introduce themes which contextualize these experiences in Kansas City. Chapter 2, entitled "Neighborhoods, Households, and Networks: Somalis in Northeast Kansas City," highlights the settlement of Somalis in Kansas City, Missouri. A discussion of neighborhoods provides insight into the local environment. Following the section on neighborhoods, I describe typical household arrangements.

Basic social organizational patterns emerge under the banner of life cycle concerns. These household arrangements reflect the patterns found in Somalia and elsewhere in the diaspora. In addition, the chapter includes a short analysis of the clan structure. At the same time, the examples provided explain why many of these household formations are outside of the clan structure. Lastly, neighborhoods and households intersect under the social relationships Somalis have with their neighbors, particularly African Americans.

Chapter 3, entitled “Phenomenology and the Everyday,” demonstrates how phenomenology’s explanatory power furthers our understanding of forced migration. Phenomenology provides a fluid framework for interpreting everyday events, while weaving past traumas into contemporary and future life. To orient the reader, I reference scholarship that addresses forced migrations. This portrayal is significant because it shapes the trajectory of past theoretical approaches. I argue these approaches have limited strength in transforming how forced migrations affect individuals in day-to-day circumstances.

Chapter 4, “Massaging Parent-Child Relations: A Somali Women’s Perspective,” discusses the tasks women perform. A balancing act emerges when two arenas cross: learning different cultural knowledge in a new environment while devising a moral world that is grounded in past situations. Parents try to integrate this knowledge with current surroundings. Women navigate through these structures to find a happy medium for ideals and behaviors that reinforce an outlook suitable to pass to future generations.

Using the ethnographic process, I witnessed women's roles within the home context. My access to women focused on the home and doing the things that women do. Chapter 5, "Women's Actions to Restore and Maintain 'Healthy' Families," I discuss women's actions to build, inform, rejuvenate, maneuver and energize the rhythms of daily life. These are characterized in household routines meshed with cooperation from family members outside of the household and generosity of those who possessed knowledge or materials that were not readily available to some members of the population. In addition, the chapter traces some of the social networking revealed in my research, particularly re-establishing and continuing connections that people made in their city of origin and in refugee camps.

Chapter 6, "Migrants in the Face of Continued State Destabilization" I describe the diasporic community in Kansas City as Somalia struggles to define itself in larger Horn political happenings. While many long to return, others take advantage of opportunities that might not otherwise present themselves. So as war, disputes, and shortages continue people want peaceful lives here. People live, interact, share, mourn, relate to life back home and are able to emulate what people want in a home, peace. Current and future generations have the capacity to make real change for those in Somalia and those living in the diaspora. Time will indicate how individuals and communities respond to sociopolitical and economic demands.

In chapter 7 I discuss the implications of the research for the Somali community and beyond. I continue this discussion in terms of the contribution to

anthropological knowledge and theory. Lastly, I consider future research topics.

The dissertation serves as a baseline study for future research among Somalis in

Kansas City, as well as other migrants settling in the United States and abroad.

Chapter Two

Neighborhoods, Households, and Networks:

Somalis in Northeast Kansas City

Families torn apart because of war reconstitute their living arrangements with the resources and networks they have at their disposal. This chapter discusses living arrangements based on social relationships. What forces, premises or traditions account for the ways households are composed? Who lives together and how are domestic relationships structured? Even though members from the same clan do live together, this is not the only structure that organizes individuals. The proximity of stores, mosques, jobs, and affordability influences where a household settles. At a household level (referring to nuclear and extended family living under the same roof and using their social relationship as a basis for interacting), several factors influence who lives together. One's children may stay with relatives who perform child care. Newly arrived individuals stay with family members for short periods as well as long stretches as guests wait for housing or look for employment. This practice also reveals itself as people visit Kansas City, hoping to make it their new home. To make an informed decision, individuals stay with friends or family to determine whether Kansas City is a good choice for them. Kansas City offers cheaper housing (than other cities), a sizable Somali community (but not too large), social service agencies, transportation to and from school, and competitive state benefits.

This chapter is divided into three parts. First, I analyze neighborhood settlement among Somalis in the Northeast of Kansas City. This section describes the Somali settlement patterns. Second, I examine the organization of the household, and provide examples of typical Somali households in Kansas City. I identify factors and strategies for those who live under the same roof, as well as ways that households connect to one another. Third, I discuss the dynamics between Somalis and their neighbors, primarily African Americans referred to by Somalis as “Black Americans.”

Neighborhoods

A neighborhood includes aspects of both “a physical settlement and a set of institutions,” according to anthropologist Theodore C. Bestor (1989: 79) who has studied Japanese neighborhoods, neighborhood associations, networks and activities. The rise of Japanese neighborhoods, suggests Bestor, is due to particular events in the twentieth century, including the recent developments of urban growth. In deciphering neighborhoods, it is important to look at the physical properties as well as the interactions among people. In addition, events particular to a locale influence how it is developed and maintained by its members. So, if we think of neighborhoods as self-defined communities, they may contain elements of political units and administrative bodies. Neighborhoods may also have social and cultural ties that provide a general framework for residents who view neighborhoods as part of a larger community. These social ties are the elements that sustain communities. Yet it is difficult to determine where many US urban

neighborhoods begin and end because governing bodies or activities within neighborhoods do not have as much clout or do not necessarily bind households together. This fluid nature is characteristic of many metropolitan areas.

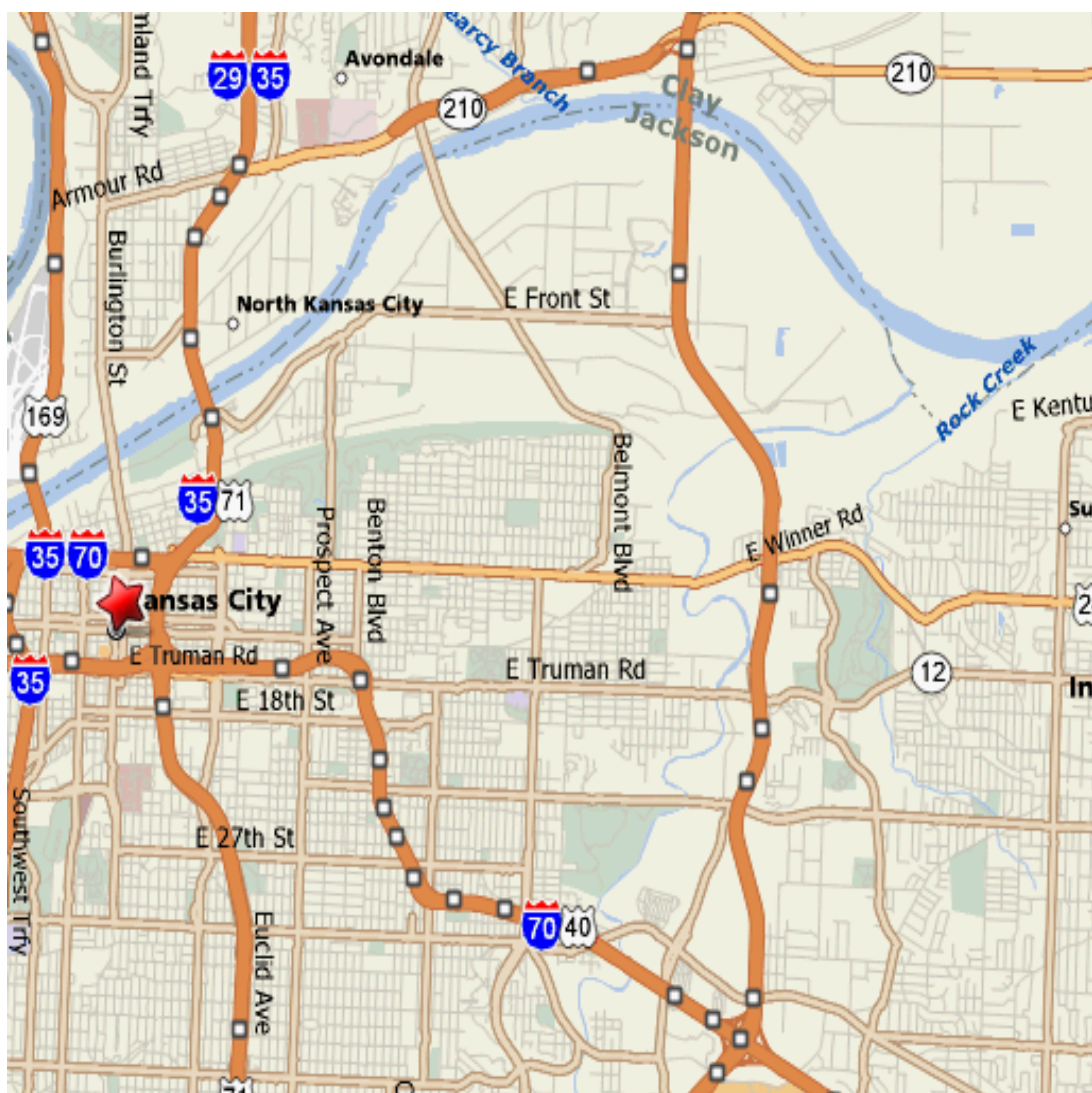
This notion of neighborhood [transcending geographic space] allows for the construction of what Wolbert refers to as virtual neighborhoods. Wolbert discusses the emergence of virtual neighborhoods through the medium of family photographs among Turks living in Germany. The photographs, not to mention email, chat rooms, and video blogs, move beyond the borders of Turkish and German worlds. “Virtual neighborhoods are then the elementary particles of contemporary social networks that are discussed as ‘transnational communities.’ Transnational networks of family, friends, work mates, customers, acquaintances, old and new neighbors provide the connections not only to keep social relations alive but also to create new ones, in Germany as well as in Turkey and in any other country” (Wolbert 2001: 31).

I primarily observed interactions within housing projects or gated communities. For those who lived in single units, I mostly evaluated how interactions occurred with next door neighbors or with those who lived across the street. Through participant observation, I was able to capture interactions among Somalis and with other ethnic groups. Further discussion is detailed in the section entitled, “Dynamics with Black Americans.”

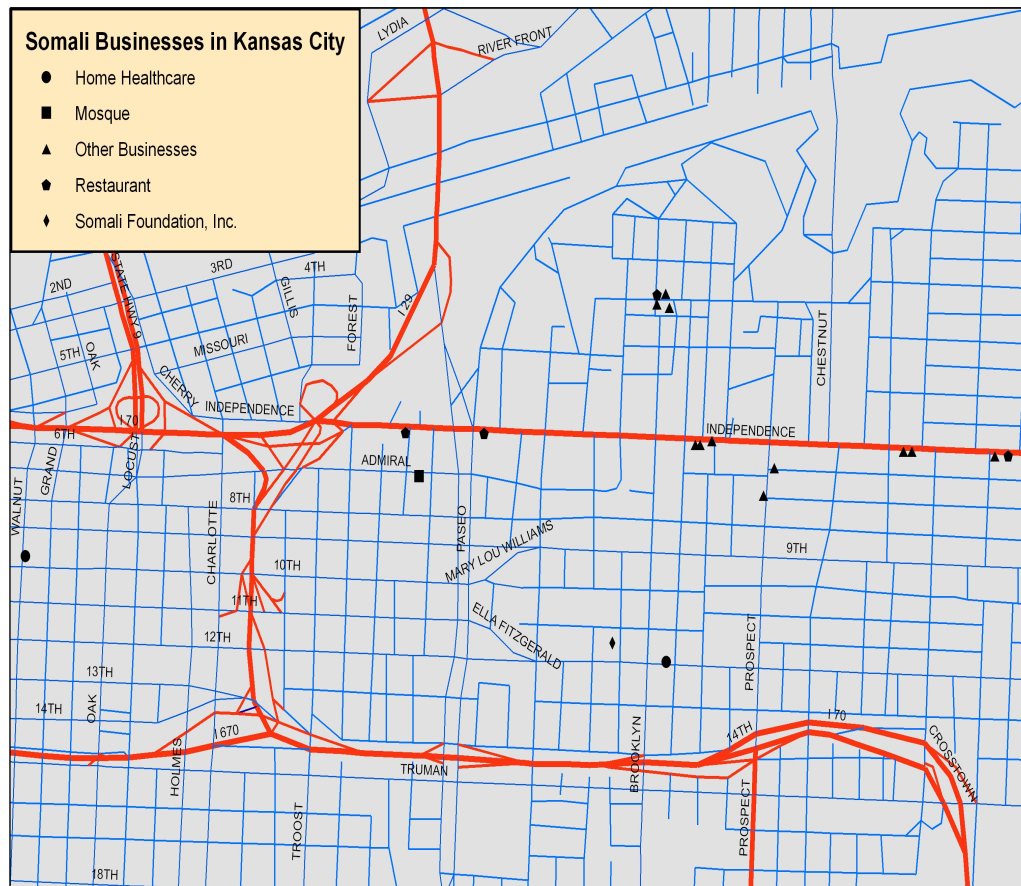
Interactions may occur at stores, schools, city government, local police stations, neighborhood associations, grassroots organizations, social service agencies, and places of worship. Not only are institutions or administrative aspects

involved in neighborhoods, they also affect the general activity of what people do. These social ties are necessary to cement relationships in forming a sense of unity. The shared places which help anchor the Somali community to the Northeast include Somali shops, discount stores, and other local businesses. In 2006, there were a total of 18 Somali shops (*dukaan*) and restaurants (*maqaayad*). The majority of people who frequent the stores are Somalis and Sudanese, even though people of other ethnicities purchase items there as well. These shops are within walking distance or a short drive for nearby households. The housing complexes come in a variety of forms, from single living dwellings to apartment buildings to housing projects. Local schools and social service agencies also bind the community together through recipient care.

Another place of primary importance is the mosque. At the time of the research, there were two mosques located in the Northeast that Somalis frequented. Others chose to attend the Islamic Center of Greater Kansas City, which caters to 7,500 Muslims. But it is approximately 15 miles from the Northeast.



MAP 1: Northeast of Kansas City, Missouri
Map of Kansas City, MO by MapQuest
<http://www.mapquest.com>
Screen clipping taken: 9/21/2008, 1:10 PM



MAP 2: Somali Businesses in Kansas City
 United States Geological Society Roads Layer in National Map Seamless Server
<http://nmviewogc.cr.usgs.gov/viewer.htm>
 Screen clipping taken: 3/21/2009

Somalis move to Kansas City from all over their country of origin. There is not one particular city or village where people originated. Individuals from Muqdisho, Baraawe, Jilib, Kismayoo, Marka, Gaalkacyo, Baydhabo, Beledweyne, Ogaden (territory in western Ethiopia), and Hargeysa among others call Kansas City,

Missouri home.⁶ Language diversity may not be detected at first glance. Even though spoken Somali (Afro-Asiatic language family, Cushitic) is by far the most popular, a substantial number of people speak Maay-Maay (Afro-Asiatic language family, Cushitic) and Baraawe (also known as *Jimini*, Niger-Congo language family, Kiswahili), and dialects like Bajun (Niger-Congo language family, Kiswahili). Others speak Arabic (Semitic language family) and/or Kiswahili (Niger-Congo language family) as a second, third, or fourth language. Languages spoken often reflect experiences abroad. Individuals who spent time in Kenya (including those in camps) are more prone to speak Kiswahili or have incorporated Kiswahili terms in their speech (this is often dependent on age and the kind of interaction one had abroad). Those who lived in Egypt, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia are more likely to know colloquial Arabic. Many Somalis are familiar with classical Arabic from the Qur'an.

⁶ The areas have various identities associated with them. For example, different colonial pasts and subsistence practices exist. Southern Somalia, containing coastal cities such as Moqdishu, Baraawe, Marka, and Kismayoo, was colonized by Italy. These cities practice maritime activities and are part of the historic Swahili coastal trade network. Baraawe is unique because of its architectural style, arts and crafts industry (particularly items made of leather and wood), and language. Jilib is known for its agriculture due to its proximity to the Jubba and Shabelle rivers. Gaalkacayo, Baydhabo, and Beledweyne are located in the interior. Hargeysa, situated in the north (known as Somaliland), served as the colonial capital for Britain. Hargeysa maintains stability and continues reconstruction efforts and financial growth. Ethiopia claimed the Ogaden region during the Scramble for Africa in the 1880s. Somalia failed to reclaim the land in the 1977-1978 Ogaden War and remains an area of contention in the minds of Somalis.



MAP 3: Somalia

<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/somalia.pdf>

Screen clipping taken: 9/21/2008, 12:58 PM

Somalis settle in Kansas City for a variety of reasons. The most popular factors are family, housing, and employment. It is important to consider the fluidity of the population. Moves are ordinary for those within and outside of the city. From my sample, the number of moves before coming to Kansas City ranged between zero to four over a span of 20 months to 13 years. Such movement may be an older characteristic associated with Somalia's nomadic population (Horst 2006).

On the surface, it may seem awkward for a "cohesive" migrant population to contain such diversity within a city, when the popular image of Somalia revolves around clan hostility. A representative from the Somali Association of Greater Kansas City states, "Somalis have a unique culture, where they, number one, they fight, or what have you, back home, but when they are overseas, for instance here in the States, they try to search for each other and live in close proximity." Generally, Somalis seek one another as neighbors. Somalis living in the diaspora prefer to live among one another. It is true that differences do exist and there may be a certain level of tension or disagreement, but the shared commonalities and the struggles people face tie them together. Cultural history, expressed language, experiential knowledge of war, forced migrations, separated families, and religion are a handful of reasons why people seek to live next to one another. Despite

differences among Somalis, they prefer to live side-by-side. This sentiment applies not only to Somalis, but it also includes the Somali Bantu⁷ population.

When the first wave of Somali Bantus moved to Kansas City, the social service agencies were told to place them away from the mainstream Somali. The inaccurate information by government authorities may be attributed to the perception of what was going on in the Horn. Stories of Somalis keeping Somali Bantus as slaves thus resulting in persecution, enabled Somali Bantus to receive priority in seeking refuge status in the United States. However, the government data did not take into account that Somali Bantus and Somalis lived side-by-side in the camps and in Kenya. Even before the camps, many lived in the same towns and interacted through business and agropastoralism. In conversations with Somalis in Kansas City, many claimed to be unaware of the plight of the Somali Bantus. Some stated that they had never interacted with Somali Bantus, so how could the relationships be “bad” when their histories had not crossed.

Bantu Somalis (on the Missouri side) originally settled about 20-25 blocks away from the rest of the Somali population. Generally, they did not like their new living arrangements. In addition, the previous housing was in an area where the crime rate was higher (many younger Somalis referred to this area as the ghetto, in part, because of the increased number of “Black Americans” in the area.) They were not in walking distance to social service agencies, they did not want to ride the bus,

⁷ Somali Bantu came to Somalia from Mozambique, Tanzania, and Malawi in the 1800s as slaves to support the agropastoral activities along the Jubba and Shebelle rivers (Horst 2006: 46).

and they were apart from other Somalis. Once the matching grant⁸ period was over, they had the opportunity to move to the areas where other Somalis lived. Once they moved, they were much happier because they were living among other Somalis and it was safer. Somali Bantu children enjoyed the move as well because they had more playmates and cultural similarities than their previous living arrangements. Their parents were more at ease with the neighborhood as well.

Somali Bantus and Somalis reported no problem living side by side. Both groups seem to prefer it. Comments by people who had little or no contact with Somali Bantus connected with them on arriving to a new city not knowing how things operate. The reputation among the Somali Bantu was often painted with one of respect, meaning they could keep their word and be trustworthy. Some people felt that since they were a minority in Somalia and did not have access to as many resources or endured more discrimination, perhaps additional accommodations should be extended to them.

Clan as an Anthropological Concept and Ethnographic Reality

Somali society consists of six patrilineal clan-families: Dir, Isaaq, Hawiye, Darod, Digil, and Rahanwayn. These group formations can be traced to mythical Arab ancestors who arrived in Somalia 25-30 generations ago. The mythic founding ancestor, Hiil, begot Sab and Samaale, and Somalis trace their origins to one of

⁸ The goal of the Matching Grant Program (MGP) is to help refugees become self-sufficient four to six months after settling in the US. The MGP receives donations by private funds to match those provided by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/match_grant_prg.htm).

these figures. At the same time, Somalis generally believe they descended from the highly revered Qurayshitic tribe, which was associated with Prophet Mohammad (Mansur 1995: 117; Lewis 2002; Besteman 1999).

Mansur (1995) examines relationships between the Somali founding father, the Qurayshitic family, and clans in relation to their descendants. He suggests that the Somali clan structure emerged through the practice of pastoralism rather than through blood relationships. Defense and migrations were two motivating factors that led to alliances and the creation of new identities.

Somalis have settled throughout the United States, some gain the reputation of hosting particular clans. Basically, there may be a higher concentration of a certain clan over the number of individuals belonging to others. Such minority clans may not have extensive numbers, but they are not excluded among the population. For example, Columbus, Ohio, has a reputation for hosting the Marehan clan. In San Diego, California the dominant clan is the Ogaden. Kansas City, on the other hand, does not have a reputation for having a dominant clan.

Clan is an important concept because it is the basis for how Somalis organize and perceive relationships. It is also foundational to the segmentary lineage system. Yet, the clan structure has also been construed as one of the reasons for the disintegration of the state. Therefore, a discussion of clan is necessary to provide an understanding of social relations.

Somali clans⁹ are not fixed categories. Clans change over time. Besteman (1999), Laitin and Samatar (1987), and Cassanelli (1982: 5) discuss the changing dynamics among various clans. Historically, some clans expanded while others broke apart. Generally, groups had to restructure themselves because membership was too large to be effective. In addition, marriage and alliance bonds did not always involve agnatic kin, particularly in southern Somalia. Besteman notes that the clan system allows people to be incorporated into lineages through marriage, economic ties, and local ties, where neighbors could be counted on it times of need.

Movement between Somali clans was not only possible, but was particularly widespread in the populous southern interriverine area . . . People switched clan affiliation for protection, for marriage, for grazing or land rights, for labor, for political reasons, or for more members who were adopted than members who were descended from the purported founding ancestor (Besteman 1999: 20)!

Cassanelli (1982: 22, 17) offers an explanation as to the shift among those southern clans who based their kinship on genealogical territorial relationships. "At one time, the clan-families may have been discrete territorial entities occupying separate grazing lands. By the twentieth century, however, pastoral migrations, uneven demographic growth, and political conflict had led to the dispersal of the components of these clan-families throughout the Peninsula."

⁹ Not everyone belonged to a clan including: individuals with an Arab-Persian heritage, those with non-Somali heritage, and slaves not incorporated into the clan system (Besteman 1999: De Waal 1997: 162).

Another feature of Somalia's segmentary lineage system is the "*diya*-paying group" which serves as the legal and political component of organizing society. Lewis (1994: 20) defines the *diya*-paying group as, "a corporate agnatic group whose members are united in joint responsibility towards outsiders" (1994: 20). The members of a *diya*-paying group are bounded together by their agnatic affiliation and a formal political contract (*heer* or *xeer*) (21). Mohamed (2007) argues that this formal contract should be included in discussions of the breakdown of the state. These official contracts are the underlying feature of kinship because they publically demonstrate its legal aspects. They give legitimacy to the process of problem solving through legal negotiations.

The following discussion of households characterizes the shared responsibilities and contributions individuals make when living together. The situations I describe are not meant to define Somali behavior, rather I try to capture the dynamics behind why individuals choose to live together in the diaspora.

Households

Household makeup in Kansas City reflects conditions of Somalia's recent past. These situations come with much variation. The different residential arrangements may account for stages of the household cycle as well as responses to the concerns of Somalia's sociopolitical crisis and diasporic living. The range of forms and the similarities across household units are reviewed following several themes. The five households reviewed include characteristics of 1) married couples with children, 2) single women, 3) "past" polygamous relationships straddling

households, 4) divorced or widowed women with children, 5) divorced or widowed grandmothers living with children and grandchildren (i.e., individuals staying from one household to another, newly arrived, “scoping out” situations, and extended visits).

This section accounts for two questions among household arrangements 1) who lives together? and 2) how are domestic relationships structured? LINC, a local social service organization, partnered with several local and government agencies to conduct a survey among the Somali population (at the time of the writing, the results were not available). Therefore, in this section I simply report on the kinds of households I saw and interacted with. I am not able to determine the composition of household arrangement for the community, nor the factors which influence that composition.

At the time of the research, the Somali population in Kansas City numbered about 3500 individuals, living in some 600 households (Northeast News 2005). I refer to household as a shelter that usually houses nuclear and extended family, and its members partake in daily domestic behaviors. In addition, this context refers to the contribution of women in that the management and maintenance of the household (cooking, cleaning, washing, paying bills, and accessing functional networks) directly affects its wellbeing (Ogden and Kyomuhendo 1996: 143).

Description of Five Households

1) **A married couple and their children living together.** Guleed, and his wife, Ubax, have five children, ranging in age from 7 to 22. Four of their children lived

with them, while their 22 year old daughter, Hodan, was married and lived nearby. Hodan lived in the same apartment complex, two buildings over, a 30-second walk away. Hodan spent the majority of her time at her parents' house. This is a common practice among daughters with or without children. It is also popular to spend time at a husband's mother's home as well. Guleed works as a taxi driver. Back in Somalia he was a tailor, but he could not find work in this profession here. Ubax no longer has a job. She previously worked in a factory as a janitor. She would prefer to work in a store, as she did in Somalia, helping her father sell clothes. Ubax enjoyed working with her family and she knew the customers, who consisted of friends and relatives. But since Ubax does not speak English and she does not know how to use a computer, she will not be hired in retail stores. Currently, Ubax stays at home to take care of her children, Hodan's child, and Guleed's widowed mother, Waris, who lives next door. Waris does not stay in the same apartment with them because she requires more peace. Ubax's house buzzes with constant activity and Waris requires a certain amount of rest due to her poor *maskax* (brain or mind). However, the close proximity of Ubax's household to Waris's (they share common walls) made it seem as if Waris was part of the same household. Waris is often present, socializing and playing with children.

This household is part of a larger network. Consanguinal (related by a common ancestor, otherwise known as a "blood" relative) and affinal (related by marriage) relatives live in the same housing complex (as this is often the case with many Somalis in Kansas City). Waris's sister-in-law and niece live in a neighboring building. A daughter of Waris's sister-in-law lives in another building. Guleed's

brother-in-law, Moxamed, and his family also resided in the same complex. Other extended family live in the area, as do clan members, and people they knew from past living places: Jilib, Hagadera (refugee camp), Garissa, and Utange Baraawe (although they are not Baraawe themselves). The individuals and relationships encountered in their migration experience are central in the process of building and knowing social networks.¹⁰

Ubax and her family first arrived nine years ago in Washington, D.C. They moved to Kansas City nine months later because her father lived in Kansas City and was ill. At the time, only 10 to 15 Somali families were in Kansas City. Ubax describes this period as a struggle, due to limited services, language difficulties, and unfamiliar surroundings. Now that they have established themselves in Kansas City, there are more opportunities for help. The families know where offices, schools, and stores are located—they know how things operate. They plan to stay in the city.

2) Single women who have moved to Kansas City without children. Zulekha

is divorced with three grown children, none of whom have lived here. Zulekha moved to Kansas City because of the low cost of living, employment opportunities,

¹⁰ Cindy Horst's (2006: 62-73) discussion of Somalia's informal social security arrangement entails three overlapping categories: social networks, mobility, and diversification of options. She writes that relationships based on kin are managed differently than those based on neighbors and friends. Kin relationships are characterized as more reliable and dependable because they are "natural" and life-lasting. Friend relationships are based on the concept of trust. More energy is exerted in the maintenance of these relationships. The significance of the above passage is that some places stick in peoples' associations and determine who moves together. Such flexibility is built into the social security arrangement and is a mechanism for coping with hardships.

and her son's relatives. Her son lives in Minneapolis and her daughters live in Muqdisho. Zulekha was the second wife of her ex-husband. (They divorced before coming to the US.) Zulekha often relies on her ex-husband's relatives for help, along with other individuals in her network. When I first met Zulekha, she lived by herself in an apartment, surrounded by other Somalis in the apartment complex. During my research, her sister, Zahra, arrived from Minnesota. Zahra, who separated from her husband, originally stayed with one of her own daughters, Casho, and her family until she was able to make other arrangements. This form of hospitality is common. Individuals who come to Kansas City often stay with people whom they know for a period of time until more permanent arrangements are made.

After several months, the two sisters decided to become roommates and moved into a different apartment complex. The apartment they rented was a few blocks away from Casho's home where they could both return to help her children. Also, the apartment was close to local social service agencies, Somali stores, and apartment buildings with other Somalis. They relied on their neighbors for their transportation needs. After a year, Zulekha married and moved.

The new couple worked different shifts to provide for themselves and relatives living abroad. Zulekha worked the night shift, and at times a second job, to provide for her daughters in Muqdisho. Zulekha likes living in Kansas City because she is able to make enough money for herself and for her children back home. She also contributes to the community in Kansas City when she is able. The arrangement works well because Zulekha sees her Minneapolis son and her grandchildren a few times a year. Even though she wishes they were closer, Zulekha

still has relatives and friends who are willing to help each other out. (For example, her son returned to Kenya for a visit and was detained by Kenyan police. Zulekha relied on relatives and friends to contribute money for the *chai*/bribe payment.) Zulekha describes her main problem as not being a US citizen. Before coming to the US, she had never attended school and does not read or write. After being in the US for six years, Zulekha would like to attend ESL and citizenship classes so she can pass her exam. She dreams of sponsoring her daughters to the US so they can be together. Yet Zulekha cannot concentrate in class because of her graveyard shift.

3) **A third household type is represented by a married couple, Sagal and Khalid, living with her mother.** The couple's three children are grown and live elsewhere. Prior to settling in Kansas City, the couple lived in San Diego, where she worked for a cleaning agency. Sagal no longer works because of high blood pressure and diabetes. Her husband, Khalid, is a taxi driver. They moved to Kansas City because of cheaper housing. Khalid takes occasional trips to San Diego to visit his second wife and children. Even though he and his second wife are not legally married, Khalid's relationship with his second wife and children has not wavered. The arrangement works because Khalid's wife in Kansas City is not alone. Sagal has her mother and other relatives, along with friends and community members, living in nearby apartments and housing complexes. Sagal's mother, Ume, lives with them because her other two children live in Yemen. Ume would like to sponsor them, but since she does not work, she cannot afford to.

Khalid and Sagal have three children, two of whom live overseas, one in England and one in Finland. They had believed that one of their daughters, Safia, had been killed during the war in Somalia. Yet nine years later, they rediscovered her. Safia married in Kenya, has three children, and lives in Finland. After Safia obtained a visitor's visa, she was able to come to the US. Khalid and Sagal purchased tickets for Safia and her family. Since Sagal was not able to give a wedding party when Safia married, Sagal threw her a wedding/welcome home party to celebrate their reunion.

4) **A divorced woman living with her daughter's family.** Dahabo has ten children and eight came to the US with her. The other two children live in Yemen and The Netherlands. Dahabo's children are grown except for two who still live with her and her daughter's family. Five other children live in Kansas City and participate in the local community. Three other children live in Atlanta, Minneapolis, and Columbus. Her daughter, Aziza, whom she lives with, is in her early twenties, married, with three children. Her husband works days and Dahabo helps with her grandchildren when she is not attending ESL and citizenship classes. Dahabo contributes to the household by assisting with child care responsibilities, household cooking, and cleaning. She feels fortunate to have strong support provided by her children, their spouses, and additional kin. Dahabo's sons live nearby and contribute by giving rides, reading documents, and filling out forms. She often comments that in America, family is not really family. In her view, two children do not constitute a family because children need many for playing and learning. In

addition, parents need to secure themselves. More children means a stronger safety net. Dahabo reflects that it takes a strong woman to do so much. When asked about the differences in raising kids in America, she claims that nothing has changed, it is the will of Allah and children are essential for family and how people interact with one another.

5) **Other household living arrangements include a widowed grandmother staying at various homes to help with grandchildren.** Habibah has eight children, four live in Kansas City and two of those children have children. She rotates stays with her children as she assists in child care. When a newborn arrives, Habibah concentrates the majority of time helping with cooking, cleaning, and caring for the baby. (The grandmother's role is more than just taking care of the children, but encouraging them to speak Somali, sing Somali songs, and to reinforce cultural norms (Koshen 2007).) Habibah's children live in the same apartment complex, so going back and forth between households is not disruptive, rather it is convenient not only for supporting one another, but also sharing household items, like cooking utensils, baking supplies, and clothing. In this case, not only does Habibah spend the night at her daughters' homes, but also her granddaughter, Luula's house. Luula's children stay at their grandmother's house because the adults involved believed that the older children could rest better since Luula has a newborn baby.

As Lewis (1999: 60) discusses the structure of grazing encampments among pastoralists, he makes a distinction between hamlets as a social unit (including people and the lineage itself) known as *reer* and hamlets as a physical structure

called *guri*. (Nonpastoral Somalis living in KC do refer to their individual living quarters as *guri*/house.) The author gives reasons for the various structures of the hamlet beyond the developmental cycle of individuals. “(T)he composition of hamlets fluctuates partly in accordance with domestic affairs, individual convenience and preference, and lineage-group politics” (ibid: 61). While these notions apply to those living in the diaspora, another explanation emerges as to whom travels and lives as a domestic group. The difficult conditions of war and forced migrations are a motivating factor in reformulating their living arrangements.

In summary, I describe household composition that I encountered during my research. The actual living arrangements are of secondary importance. Rather, it is the responsibilities shared within the household. These relationships with attached rights and duties are of central concern. Thus, activities like household upkeep (child and elderly care, cooking, and domestic chores) and economic responsibilities (paying bills) exemplify an individual’s and group’s social security network. The way household responsibility is managed shapes how social networks and resources are accessed. This reiterates the notion of fluid and flexible social formations that determine who moves with one another. Due to the shifting nature of migration, kinship, education, and employment, the “traditional” roles of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers become clouded. This issue is discussed in Chapter Five and Six.

Networks

The networks households use depend on several factors. First, what is the composition of the household? Second, what kind of material support is available to the household? Women often participate in the informal economy, and their earnings become relevant when analyzing concepts such as social and political aspects of health and gender relations. Much depends on one's creative ability in producing and marketing products and skills. Women strive to create a product or service, while keeping investment costs low to maximize profit potentials. Third, a household's access to human capital influences activities and decisions of men and particularly women, especially education and experience (Tekce, Oldham, and Shorter 1994: 62).

Women are encouraged to keep relations with their own kin and friends. Yet managing these relationships is different when distance and household responsibilities consume a woman's attention (Thomas 1982: 4). Neighbors and their closeness are particularly important in the female social network. They contribute to new social relationships. In their study of Somalis in Australia, McMichael and Manderson (2004) report that many circumstances contribute to wellbeing, particularly feelings of connectedness. Social connectedness contributes to wellbeing through shared experiences such as community events, religious functions, and other festivities.

Women may go outside their kin network when participating in activities. In Somalia, informal social networks form apart from clan affiliations—women, young people, professional colleagues, street children, and religious leaders (Serkkola 1992: 14). Women represent the primary organizers and participants in an informal,

non-kin based association, *hagbad*, which women use to pool financial resources, by going outside the reach of men. A respected committee or individual nominated by the group carries out operations concerning the fund – saving money, distributing money based on need and purpose, and incorporating opinions of women who contribute to the fund for current and future funding opportunities (i.e., rotation, frequency, amount). Women's activities balance men's authority by participating in *hagbad* and frequent religious meetings (ibid.: 23).

Informal social networks form apart from clan affiliations, where known groups of women, professionals, street children, religious leaders, and age groups meet, discuss, and participate in issues that pertain to their interests. These activities serve a variety of purposes. For example, involvement in women's activities assists in balancing men's authority, where women are socially positioned as more vulnerable (Serkkola 1994: 14, 23).

Life Cycle Change and Institution Change

Access to care for females differs due to life cycle changes. What factors contribute in determining autonomy? Pregnancies, births, and successful child rearing can increase a woman's negotiating power. Household structures (monogamous, polygamous, nuclear or extended) and settlement patterns are only a part of the story. Households are fluid entities due to changing marital status (Hampshire 2002: 1026).

I.M. Lewis (1994) addresses household, family life, and kinship¹¹ in Somaliland among pastoralists. He presents a range of familial relationships depicting marriage and divorce. Divorce is frequent among northern pastoralists, and easy to obtain. The main reasons for a divorce include: barrenness, jealousy and strife between co-wives, misconduct, and incompatibility (Lewis 1994: 61-4). Lewis contends that divorce is common among the pastoral population in Somalia because women are not absorbed into their husbands' familial group. He compares the stability of marriage with the incorporation of women into their husbands group. By using examples of societies like the Soga, the Fulani, the Tiv, Thonga, in addition to Somali pastoralists, he stresses "the divided agnatic loyalties of the spouses undermine the cohesion of marriage and of the affinal link" (Lewis 1994: 69). Therefore in societies where women and men retain strong allegiances to their

¹¹ Mohamed (2007) discusses the lack of analysis concerning the legal aspects of kinship, i.e., contracts. Social contracts have taken a second seat to studies of clanship. Acknowledging the primary role that clans play in political life, Mohamed claims that social contracts are just as important since they constitute the backbone of kin relations. Social contracts, meaning the public rules regarding kinship, have been pushed to the wayside by politicians and academics during the colonial and postcolonial eras. "The Somali elite was embarrassed by the traditional Somali contract, which they assumed to be the symbol of the backwardness of Somali politics even as they eagerly used kinship for achieving their political ambitions. They were encouraged in their selective policies by their conquest, so to speak, of the colonial administration, which gave them a power centre independent of the traditional political structures of the people. This gave them the ability to pick and choose from the old system: to use kinship relations for political purposes and to marginalize the social contract" (Mohamed 2007: 247). The gradual erosion of the social contract construct is reflected in the failure of resolving the political crises in Somalia. The heart of social contracts is the public negotiations which contribute in solving problems that arise.

individual familial or agnatic groups, marriage is more likely to be unstable (Lewis 1994: 73).

It is difficult to assess the situation in the diaspora, particularly Kansas City. Families are in conflict due to the changing status of men and women, not necessarily as a result of patrilineal descent and practice. This notion of unstable marriages based on strong allegiances to familial and agnatic groups may not operate strongly in Kansas City. Often women are on their own devices, relying on their own kin, friends and neighbors, and community organizations. Also, unstable marriages may result from changing social expectations and practices as some women earn more money than their male partners. This demonstrates a shift in responsibility and economic power. However, Judith Gardner (2004: 104) warns that this shift may not be productive for the involved parties.

For now, how the change in gender relations at family level is 'experienced' by women depends on many variables, not least their clan, economic class, whether they are urban or rural based and what kind of breadwinners they are: widows, abandoned women with children, women with a male partner who provides them emotional if not economic support, women with or without a support network of relations close by. Our research . . . indicates that becoming the breadwinner and experiencing increased economic power and decision-making at household level is more likely to be an empowering experience for urban-based, educated women who are emotionally supported by their male partner or have a close network of support from relatives than it is for uneducated women without a male partner or close support network – whether rural or urban.

Anna Simons (1996) discusses how social institutions, like marriage and kinship, and connectedness have shifted at the beginning of Somalia's civil war. She presents

several case studies of marriage and divorce that depict how relationships have changed based on the sociopolitical crisis and urbanization trends. She states that endogamous clan marriages have increased due to urbanization—where individuals meet potential mates in homes rather than waterholes (1996: 158). Lewis claims that interclan marriages have decreased because of clan stress, and individuals feel more secure marrying endogamously.

Clan loyalties epitomized in the formation of clan militias, were intensified to an unprecedented degree and, in areas formerly characterized by clan heterogeneity, with people of different clans living together harmoniously and inter-marrying, marriage *outside* one's own clan became the exception rather than, as formerly, the rule. Indeed, in the devastated capital, Mogadishu, women who had married outside their own clan found themselves at a serious disadvantage, they and their children being disowned and left unprotected by both set of kin. Insecurity required maximum clan solidarity, including now clan endogamy rather than exogamy. This new trend was further encouraged by the intensified contact with Arab society, and its preference for cousin marriage, through the experience of labour migration in the Gulf (Lewis 1994: 51-2).

Household responsibilities in pastoral life split along gender lines. Males take care of herds and travel in search of grazing lands and water. Women are in charge of the domestic realm: cooking, collecting firewood, child rearing, caring for elderly, building shelters (*aqal*), making mats and other items for the household. Women also sell goods produced from the livestock (Koshen 2007: 77).

Koshen (2007: 95) claims that unemployment and the effects of urbanization have broken the spirit of men. The author claims that this situation

has led to the erosion of men's authority. At the same time, more women work outside the home to contribute to the immediate need of the household. Koshen writes that the hope among men and women is that the current situation will change and the status men once held will be reinstated. This topic, the erosion of male authority and positioning within the home, is widely discussed in Kansas City. A few men suggested that instead of investigating the actions of women and their contribution to household wellbeing, I should instead do that for men. (In fact by focusing on women, a few commented that they felt left out of the process of the research—as if they had no say in what was happening, so therefore it reinforced the notion of a loss of power.) They hoped that I would be able to uncover what could be done to stop the erosion of men's status or how to reinstate it. The general theme has been recognized elsewhere (Farah 2000: 70-5).

Perhaps Anna Simons' (1996) research provides a piece of the puzzle. Simon discusses the shift of pastoral to city life. She claims the value of goods carry a different meaning in an urban context than in pastoral life. For example, cash becomes a necessity to obtain household materials. And it was men who needed to provide such items. To attain these items, men need jobs and cash to secure a family. In pastoral life, those goods would be made by hand from materials in the environment.

In the urban context, where the wife's mother could not make the house or furnishings herself—not even with the help of other women—but where it was cash money that attained such goods, it was men's earning power that would seem to dictate men now providing this equipment. The simple fact that houses and town furniture were more

substantial than *aqals*, mats, and containers had meaning as well. For example, although men in the pastoral setting had to have livestock, or a share in livestock, to be able to support a family, it was the *aqal* that was incidental. In Moqadishu it was a job and an income that secured the future of a family, and having a place to live is how the future was, literally, made secure. There was nothing incidental about a house (Simons 1996: 167).

A woman's capacity to promote wellbeing in the household may change during the life cycle or in response to an altered marital status. Grandmothers have a prominent role in the care-giving and socialization of daughters, daughters-in-law, and granddaughters. Lewis (1994) notes that it is common for widowed women to live with their children, the same phenomenon is seen in the diapsora reflecting a theme of continuance. Bedri (1995: 75-6) discusses the strength that older women contribute to Sudanese families by offering advice in health education, particularly when the issue in question involves grandchildren. Grandmothers offer support to daughters and daughters-in-law by advising them through pregnancies and in the day-to-day care of their children. For example, older women encourage young mothers to breastfeed their infants, even though the practice may not be in vogue among young women. Bedri points out that the health issues discussed among women vary by socioeconomic and educational status.

In Egypt, Morsy notes the importance of senior women's presence in preparing and administering care for family members. Senior women directed energy toward preventative care. They demonstrated this role by being explicit in their words and actions to younger caretakers and children themselves. Older women were persistent in their requests for a clean water supply. Women stressed

that household waste needed proper and consistent disposal. Suggestions to improve or uphold health standards within households fall under the realm of senior women, even if individual women do not actively live in the household. Advice sought often pertains to proper weaning techniques and other infant care concerns. Besides facilitating a clean and safe environment, senior women participate in the production of charms for children fallen ill. These items reflect local cosmologies and systems of belief (Morsy 1993: 152).

Social Relationships Affect Wellbeing in Somalia

Thomas reports that in Somalia during the late 1970s and early 1980s women's levels of community participation were higher than men's because their affiliations involved a wider range of connections. Somali women consider themselves to be part of their father's lineage. Depending on the clan, there may be more endogamous or exogamous marriage patterns, yet children are always part of the father's line. After a divorce or death, a woman may return to her relatives and live among them (Serkkola 1994: 16).

Elements that contribute to well-being are the culturally relevant ideas of "*xoog* (strength and endurance) and *quwad* (again, strength; and resistance to illness)." In addition, good health shows itself in an outwardly expression of "robust plumpness" and "skin colour" (Serkkola 1994: 54). For example, camel herders participate in a highly revered occupation, since the occupation of herding emulates good health. In this occupation, strength is related to the knowledge acquired on treks. At the time of Thomas's writing, herders were key figures in obtaining

information that could affect how households operated. Due to their trade, they were key points of contact and passed on news that enabled a level of intimacy among nuclear families at the *reero* (singular, *reer*) [herding units] and town developments. Men primarily serve as mediators for supply and information exchange between *reero* and towns. This arrangement of maintaining networks of information and cooperation is essential during the dry season as men are the primary caretakers of water sources. Men need networks in times of crisis management to maintain herds when water resources are not available (Thomas 1982: 13).

Communication networks among pastoral practices are also important for other aspects of a functional trade market for goods and services, e.g., the milk and *qaat* trade. These contacts are considered to be other forms of information networks as,

The milk trade which follows large nomadic concentrations as they shift about is probably the best communication network between them and the 'permanent' towns. It runs of necessity every day; unlike the *qaat* trucks which are also daily, but very speedy, it touches many bases along its way; it carries people, supplies, and current news; and of its very nature it responds sensitively to 'where the people are' (ibid: 48).

Hence, herders are not isolated. They participate in community building by sharing knowledge. The relationship between towns is instrumental to household success based on the information received concerning social and economic relationships.

Through these and other unofficial networks, neighbors and resources come together in times of need when someone becomes ill. Women assist each other by

helping with household chores, watching children, preparing food, and offering material support. Other kinds of unofficial support networks exist within professional groups, business, and other organizations. "All in all, the unofficial networks increase group interdependence and transfer personal decision-making in cases of illness and economic hardship to other members of the group" (Serkkola 1992: 23, 53).

Due to the lack of extensive fieldwork in Somalia during the past 14 years, the data and analyses invoked are quite old. However, they reveal that coordination and cooperation among households by pooling resources has long been important to balance changes in socioeconomic situations during political strife. Southern Somali women of Lamadonka play a significant role in household maintenance, with roles spanning from agricultural duties (working in the fields) to domestic responsibilities (caring for children, preparing food, and repairing items). However, these activities would not be the same if the focus is on women's work in Muqdisho or along the coast (Antoniotto 1983: 156-7). During the late 1980s, according to "A Study of Disadvantaged Areas and Groups 1988," (as reported by Serkkola 1994: 24) only one in five women work outside the home for money. Business and private individuals primarily employ women to prepare food, housekeep, and clean.

Official decision making may be part of a patriarchal character, an authoritarian structure, and negotiations (Serkkola 1994: 89) that are built in a hierarchy of decision makers: husband/father, eldest son, and uncles. If there are no sons present (or they are too young), women are consulted. According to

Serkkola (ibid: 90), women have more control in actual decisions affecting kids.

“Care of the sick is in the hands of old women” [Serkkola’s bold-type]. Women’s strategies in caring for ill people are carried in an autonomous way. They prepare and administer treatments and their authority is highly valued. Family health is located in the female domain where “old women’s wisdom” (*cilmi habreed*) represents acts of strength. The first course of action is to consult with female relatives and neighbors about the illness episode. After home-based care options are exhausted, people may turn to an outside figure to intervene. The decision to consult a non-household member is based on trust. This trust may have been established through kinship, marriage, friendship and unofficial networks that family members may participate in (Thomas 1982: 78-9).

Caring for an ill individual is the responsibility of women. Illnesses affect families and women’s roles in numerous ways. One impact is felt as an illness within a household adds to their household duties and agricultural commitments. Illness limits choices of women due to their essential role in childcare and maintenance of the household. They may receive relief in preparing food, but other responsibilities are still carried out unless illness is severe. In addition, women often take care of themselves because they do not feel comfortable consulting male doctors (feelings of guilt and shame accompany decision making, especially for more in-depth procedures) (Serkkola 1994).

Much of the literature concerning healing among Somalis is focused on the country of origin versus what is occurring in the host country. Is it appropriate to superimpose theories and practices of the past to new and changing contexts?

Research is needed to discover what people are actually doing rather than to assume the practices of people (Hoffer 1992: 40). Much of the information written in reference to Somalia is out of date. The disintegration of the Somali nation in 1991 and the ensuing civil war has prevented research opportunities. Second, in viewing Somali health, the context has changed from the past. Scholars do not know what women are currently doing to promote wellbeing in these new communities. There is agreement as to what the problems are (war trauma, isolation, limited social support, etc.), but there is little consensus as to how families negotiate wellbeing in their new environments.

In conclusion, I have focused more on gender relationships than maternal strategies alone. The reality is that women do not operate alone when it comes to the wellbeing of their families. Women's control and distribution of resources is dependent upon marital ties and social contacts outside of familial relationships. Women do have significant roles in preparing and administering treatments to children and these roles change as women age and become grandmothers. However, in newly defined social environments, status change among generations and its meaning in communities outside of Somalia remains to be determined.

In the following, the vignette shows the struggle of a divorced woman with children living in the inner city. She wants to protect them from outside influences but she is unsure how to effectively accomplish this goal. While she consults her relatives for help, she finds herself in a power struggle with them as she untangles modes of conduct with her own children and her "Black American" neighbors.

Vignette #1: Living in the Neighborhood

The low-income housing project where Ruqiya¹² and her family reside has a reputation for being “rough.” The single, stay-at-home mother has six children ranging in age from 5 to 17. The children enjoy the neighborhood because many other children live in the complex and it offers an array of activity. Yet, the children sometimes feel unsafe. This particular complex is known for drugs flowing in and out of the parking lot and playground area. The SWAT team came to Ruqiya’s house in the middle of the night searching for people related to drug and criminal activity. Ruqiya maintained that the people causing problems do not live in the area. They come at night and stay on the grounds of the complex. Some of the neighborhood residents started hanging out with them. The police have become a fixture, making daily visits to the complex. Yet, the police cannot be relied on all the time. For instance, the police came and took pictures of the “Black Americans” hanging out and causing problems. Ruqiya knows the neighborhood is not safe, but there are safe places in the area.

Ruqiya’s son had been arrested. He was cited as an accomplice in an auto theft. Ruqiya maintains that her son did not know that the other boy, a Black American neighbor, was going to steal it. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Because of the possible legal ramifications, Ruqiya tried to enforce strict disciplinary action for her children. She forbade them from going outside and were prohibited from playing with the neighbors (except Somali ones). As the

¹² All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants. Other detail, such as the number of children, past places of residence, and dates are also subject to change.

neighborhood situation deteriorated, Ruqiya desperately tried to move her family to another place. She applied for Section 8 and hoped to move to another neighborhood in the Northeast, North Kansas City, or Raytown.

The individuals who were causing problems began recruiting some of the children and adults in the neighborhood. One of the neighbors, a single woman with children, began harassing Ruqiya and her family for money. The neighbor constantly called the house and tried to take Ruqiya's food stamps. It got to the point that her children's uncle, who also lived with them, wanted to take action. He was convinced that the situation had reached a critical stage. Apparently, the neighbor "used to be a nice girl. She went to church and everything. But then something happened, I don't know what it was, but something definitely changed." He went on to describe how the crack smokers in their housing project have been hanging out in her apartment. The neighbor approached him and demanded money. He claimed that he and his family had no money. He does not work and his next of kin has six children and no job. The neighbor inquired about their food stamps. He wants to move out of the housing project, stating that there have to be better places than this. He described the situation as unbearable. The word outside is that the people across the street are trying to kill Ruqiya for her money. Ruqiya thought that he was being too dramatic and his story was a ploy for him to tell her what to do and control her decision making. They got in a fight because they could not agree on the best way to take care of the children. Ruqiya tried to kick him out, but one of her aunts convinced her that he helps so much, why get rid of him? Her aunt felt bad that she could not be there to help with the situation. But due to her

busy schedule she was unable to assist on a daily basis: working from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., preparing dinner thereafter, then attending night school from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Dynamics with Black Americans

Despite the Northeast being diverse in terms of its inhabitants, the most talked about neighbors are Black Americans. Generally, these stories do not paint a positive picture. Some recognize that commonalities do exist. After all, social space is shared.

Every time [at night], there are shots. There's a lot of shooting. I want to find Section 8 housing. I want a house away from this housing area. I'm looking for a place that's safe. My neighborhood is not safe but there are safe places to live. We are looking for a safe place. Last night, there was a lot of shouting. We didn't want to get hurt, so we bent down. We weren't in front of the windows . . . Black Americans are no good. In Somalia people used to do things like that. We moved here to come to safety and we can't believe what we see and hear. The experience is not positive.

Some neighborhoods may feel a sense of unity or community, others do not. Sally Engle Merry's (2002: 117-8) research involving social connections among neighbors reveals that proximity, geographic space, and stable migration patterns, do not equate to cohesive social relationships. She discovered that the ethnic groups inhabiting the housing developments she conducted her research in did have strong relationships within each group. The social relationships across ethnic lines are described as scant. Generally individuals chose to have intimate networks with those in one's ethnic group. Therefore, neighbors of different ethnicities remained

strangers even though many resided side-by-side for years sharing the same living space.

The social boundaries between ethnic groups persist because each group is encapsulated within a network of social relationships and a set of institutions which stretches to nearby black, white, Chinese, and Hispanic communities. The majority of families in the project regularly visit relatives, friends, religious groups, and social organizations in their nearby ethnic communities. Chinatown lies on one side of the project, an established Syrian-Lebanese community on another, the black community is close by on another side, and a substantial Hispanic settlement is in the middle of the slowly gentrifying neighborhood nearby. Jobs, friends, marriage partners, churches, social services, and recreational opportunities are all primarily available within these communities. Consequently, relations with members of the same ethnic group carry an expectation of continuity that is not characteristic of relations with neighbors in Dover Square. Neighbors are only temporary associates, here today but gone whenever they move away, while people in the same ethnic group are connected by enduring ties. The denser mesh of personal ties and group affiliations within ethnic groups means that Dover Square residents are far more accountable to their fellow ethnics than they are to their neighbors of different ethnicity (Merry 2002: 118-9).

People who live in such neighborhoods find it difficult because of the increasing violence. I heard many comments that the police did not want to come or they were too hesitant to come because of deteriorating conditions in the area. In some of the housing complexes, the police came often. I was never present when the police responded to an issue involving a Somali (except when I called myself). People who spoke about this topic responded that it was their Black American neighbors. Others complained that the response of the police was so slow, why bother? Once it was revealed who needed the help and where they were located,

some people preferred not to call, even when the call would have been appropriate. On the other hand, few people want to engage with the police, so why should the police come if people are not willing to talk and explain what is going on. In addition, others did not want to deal with possible “neighbor” consequences by calling the police.

Sally Engle Merry (2002) contends that a lack of socialization among neighbors from varying ethnic groups leads to an increase of crime. Those who commit crimes against their neighbors feel little or no social cohesion or allegiance toward their neighborhoods.

Because of the boundaries between ethnic groups, neighbors are often anonymous. This anonymity provides opportunities for crime, since criminals can rob their neighbors with little fear of apprehension. Many project residents observed that, in general, criminals prefer not to work close to home where they can too easily be identified by their neighbors, but here, where neighbors are often strangers, a resident can rob or burglarize people close to home without fear of identification. This means that a project resident can commit crimes on his home territory, which is relatively safe, predictable, and familiar, while appearing to victims as a stranger from a distant area. The same people can be robbed whose daily habits and material possessions are easily visible (Merry 2002: 119).

Some Somalis blame negative influences, attributed to Black Americans, on the social ills present in their community. As one woman states,

Divorce okay but women often cause this situation, like, they call the police and say things such as my husband hit me, even when it didn't happen. And they do this because they are living in public housing and they want to move out of here. They are copying the Black Americans that live here.

However, public housing isn't all bad; people can stay here for free.

While this view is common among a portion of the population, others move beyond the stated problems and desire amicable relations with Black Americans. This aspiration stems from the fact that a large portion of the Somali community interacts with Black Americans on a daily basis. The most prominent barrier is language. Other barriers include lifestyle, food, and acceptance. The issue goes beyond basic communication. How does one go about "schooling" others in terms of culture, religion, art, music, or food, when a basic orientation is lacking.

Yeah, actually, people don't know what's going on back in Africa. They don't know how Somalia was, I'm trying to explain them we had, we had, we were civilized people. You know some people think when you come as a refugee that you came from bush, they believe that. But I'm trying to explain them, yeah, we had a law, we had a civilization, we had a government, but we lost all that because of the civil war. And I tried to explain that.

This passage represents the difficulty children of the diaspora have in accepting the richness of the homeland. If Somali children, who have a sense of cultural heritage, have a difficult time digesting the notion that a good life existed before the war and that Somalia was a dignified, historically significant country, then how can these themes be communicated to others who have no background and may need additional coaxing? These attempts often result in frustration among those who have made concerted efforts to create a dialogue and combat stereotypes (often reflected in the Hollywood portrayal of Blackhawk Down). The mentality of "why

bother” creeps into interactions. Yet if socioeconomic issues and social relations are to be addressed, then there needs to be involvement from members of both sides.

For some Somalis, Black Americans are perceived to be lazy. Individuals cite the perceived connection Black Americans have with unemployment, crime, drug and alcohol use, and other problems. Concerned parents and adults see some of their teenagers and children mimic certain images that they associate with Black culture. Parents do not want their children projecting a look that is associated with Black behavior and attitudes. Several parents claimed that they do not know what to do or how to stop the influence of Black culture. At the same time, children mix with not only Black Americans but several ethnic enclaves at school. They are trying to find their way at school and in the neighborhoods.

The boys are hard because [they “sag” their pants]. They need to stop doing their pants low. They should wear them like normal people, not down here. Lord. They see black people and want to be like them. White people are working and are nice. Black people don’t have work so they end up doing drugs and bad stuff. Somalis look around and do what the Black people are doing.

Most individuals live in the area because it is affordable. Even though some complain of their living situation—people are grateful and strategize for public housing. Even though there is a concentration of Somalis who live in the Northeast, some people are branching out to other areas like north Kansas City, Raytown, Liberty, and Overland Park. Despite attempts to revitalize the Northeast, some sections of the area did not improve. At the time of the research, Independence

Avenue retained its reputation for being a strip where prostitutes and dealers frequent.

We have to watch what they do—their homework, all these things, what they eat, especially where we, this is the Somali kind of different from back home, you know, it's very tough for them, they cannot afford to live like Jackson [sic, Johnson] County, affordable housing, they have to stay here because of the economy. They don't like it 100%, but they, there's nothing they can do about it, because that's how they can afford, you know. So they have to watch very closely the kids. What they're doing, the cultural, what they dress, what they eating, drinking, or they have to, it's very tough, they have to fight.

Figuring out how to navigate through troubled waters is difficult and continues to challenge the decision making within the community. I discuss at length the hurdles families and women encounter in the chapter of “Massaging Parent-Child Relations: A Somali Women’s Perspective.”

Conclusion

The number of people living in a household is difficult to ascertain because of varying circumstances. For instance, some people knew my affiliation with citizenship classes and did not want to delve into issues of food stamps, Section 8, and welfare benefits. Another situation occurred where children stayed with relatives due to child care duties. Yet another situation presented itself where newly arrived individuals stayed with other family members for a short period of time. An additional circumstance left individuals and families trying to figure out whether they should migrate to Kansas City from another city. People living in

Kansas City wanted to take advantage of cheaper housing, a sizable community, transportation to and from school, social service agencies, jobs, etc. Based on these concerns, it is more important to consider the fluid nature of households and the implications of the variations. The variations reflect families and/or individuals coming together to share resources, expenses, responsibilities, and to provide care for others. The smaller household number generally indicate younger couples who have one or two children, single males living with a roommate(s), a separated or divorced individual living with a friend or relative, or an elderly person living with a child.

There is an association between household size and the number of cities people visited before settling down in KC. A correlation exists among larger family size and settlement stability. In terms of larger family size, KC was the first place of arrival or traveling to KC soon after arriving to a first destination. (They may have gotten off of a plane in a different city then made arrangements to either have someone meet and bring them to KC or travel to KC to join family who were already present.) Among smaller households, there is a tendency to be more transient. The shortcoming with the above analysis is that sometimes one or two persons in the family seek out opportunities in other cities. So the entire household may not be transient, but individual representatives in a familial unit may be.

There also seems to be a correlation between family size and Black Americans described as negative. With increasing family size, there is a steady association of relationships with Black Americans as negative. A possible explanation is with larger family size, there are individuals, particularly children,

who engage with Black Americans at school and in the housing complex grounds.

Actually, the involvement of Somalis with Black Americans is quite extensive including work environments, living quarters, outdoor spaces, some shopping areas, social services agencies, hospitals and health clinics.

To make sense out of the fluidity of actual residential, network, and kin arrangements, I use a phenomenological framework. Phenomenology suits this investigation because of its concern for everyday experience. It accommodates the flexible nature of social formations. The following chapter “Phenomenology and the Everyday” provides a background to situate the Somali experience in Kansas City. I evaluate the migratory and settlement process within a historical context. I frame this body of knowledge within phenomenology, an approach that some anthropologists utilize for recognizing the importance of experience, not only for the individuals and communities involved, but also on discourse and policy. The theoretical orientation can be used for both conceptual and practical concerns.

Chapter Three

Phenomenology and the Everyday

The previous chapter described various living arrangements. These living arrangements consist of extended kin, nuclear families, temporary stays, polygynous relationships, and separated or divorced women. Many household and neighborhood arrangements are based on transnational networks established before migration to the US. Day-to-day living shapes Kansas City's Somali experience. The dynamic variation of residences, neighborhoods, and networks reflects how people live, interact, and negotiate. Phenomenology strives to reveal the essence of social life. Janice Boddy (1994: 427) lists the "touchstones of social existence" as "morality, kinship, ethnicity, history, and social memory." This chapter follows those areas which intertwine in our social existence.

Adrien Ngudiankama (2001: 2) suggests that researchers should stay close to the experience of refugees. It is the experience of refugees that will enlighten discourse, policy, and needs of refugees. "It [scholarship in refugee studies] lacks engagement with the real experiences of the refugee social space or existence." Bascom (1998: 4-5) urges humanizing the research. By avoiding the objectification of refugees, researchers are better able to analyze historical and structural contexts that shape their experiences. Shandy and Gozdzia (2000) agree that closeness to people's experiences will better serve practical issues of policy and programming. With this in mind, studies of a population should refer to related diasporas. For example, the related diasporas of Somalis in Minnesota, Finland, and Australia should all be utilized in understanding Somali resettlement. Also, the loose

association of groups promotes better understanding “between individuals and institutional structures.”

Phenomenology as a Theoretical Orientation

Phenomenology as a platform for analyzing the discourse of forced migration allows for flexibility in interpretation and representation of individual and collective experience. According to Michael Jackson (1996), “Phenomenology is the scientific study of experience. It is an attempt to describe human consciousness in its lived immediacy, before it is subject to theoretical elaboration or conceptual systematizing” (Jackson 1996: 2). Phenomenology preserves the depth of forced migration experiences through unconscious and expressed feelings. Phenomenology mediates this wide variety of embodiment, which reverberates throughout the lifecourse.

A central concept in phenomenological thought is the “lifeworld.” The lifeworld (*lebenswelten*) accounts for

that domain of everyday, immediate social existence and practical activity, with all its habituality, its crises, its vernacular and idiomatic character, its biographical particularities, its decisive events and indecisive strategies, which theoretical knowledge addresses but does not determine, from which conceptual understanding arises but on which it does not primarily depend (Jackson 1996: 7-8).

The lifeworld is a concept based on change. Social relations and structural roles undergo transformations over time and space. The lifeworld is a site of resistance, vagueness, and disarray. Relying on the assumption “that subjectivity and

experience are socially constructed” is insufficient because it does not take into account the fluidity of the everyday life (ibid.: 27). To explore networks of interdependence (in terms of people, experiences, and the structures of those experiences) and to connect the self and others to an experience, requires an intimate level of knowing how an experience is placed. This strategy avoids objectifying while claiming intersubjectivity among the components involved. Structures in the lifeworld are not static entities. Structures are constantly being rebuilt and reformulated. They shift to accommodate certain situations with directedness. By addressing particular conditions, this act reaps outcomes for human involvement (ibid.: 25-6).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) as a response to two schools of thought: empiricism and intellectualism. He viewed both as inadequate and restrictive in thought.

In the first case [empiricism] consciousness is too poor, in the second [intellectualism] too rich for any phenomenon to appeal compellingly to it. Empiricism cannot see that we need to know what we are looking for, otherwise we would not be looking for it, and intellectualism fails to see that we need to be ignorant of what we are looking for, or equally again we should not be searching (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 28).

Merleau-Ponty examines the relation of mind and body. To overcome the dualistic nature between the two entities, Merleau-Ponty introduces the “body-subject.” This notion seeks to avoid the body as an object that the mind commands, or directs to behave and operate in a certain way. The body-subject complements his views of perception because the body allows for perception, thinking, and action to take

place. For Merleau-Ponty, perception is the primary function of human beings and the body is the only suitable site for a theory of perception. Perception guides action, and the world presents itself as having multidimensional planes. Human perception absorbs signs from the world and human consciousness gives meaning to the outer world (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Macann 1993). Even though perception is rooted cognitively, humans absorb more than they can cognitively process. The exchange of embodied knowledge with the world and the self enhances our understanding of the world through other means. Using influences of Husserl and Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty tries to reorient philosophy. He suggests that innate characteristics of the mind do exist, but the emphasis should shift to an embodied framework where knowledge lies within or, rather, bands together mind and body, inside and outside, self and world (Macann 1993). Through habituality and intentionality, the body-subject strives to maintain a stable and balanced state.

Margaret Lock (1993) refers to past notions of the body as an isolated, individual unit where culture has an everlasting effect. Anthropology no longer considers the body to be so tame. Ideas about the body have evolved into a more cursive, amorphous, and unruly entity (Lock 1993: 134). Lock reflects on the body as a medium to interpret action for knowledge and practice. According to Lock (1993: 136), "The question of the body requires more than reconciling theory with practice. It brings with it the difficulty of people both having and being bodies; subjectivity and its relation to biology and society cannot be ignored" (1993: 136). She contends that anthropologists should represent both aspects of having and being. By focusing on these two realms, the focal points become embodiment and consciousness.

Janis Jenkins (1991: 390) suggests how to approach emotions in terms of experience. “Rather than speaking in general about emotion as an abstract cultural system, one must consider the subject’s position within a field of social relations in order to grasp the meaning of emotional experience.” So particular contexts reveal how time, depth, and intensity of interacting correspond to one another. It is at this site of interconnectedness where meaningful knowledge reveals itself. This does not represent a description of emotion, but expressed emotion accompanied through space and time. These emotional expressions expose themselves through actions where space and time aid in shaping the specific context.

Few anthropologists conduct cross-cultural research on emotional responses to situations, particularly where emotion is embedded in the context, not the psyche. In the following example, Stuart Turner contemplates the self and the emotional atmosphere in healing strategies. Emotional processing is where cognitive manufacturing allows one to react with daily occurrences and allows for adjustments. These internal processes permit acclimation to various situations and may trigger emotional outcomes. By attending to our emotional reactions, we are emotionally processing information. Yet when traumatic experiences occur, often our

only viable response is to attempt to shut them out by internal “numbing” or avoidance of external triggers. The emotional disturbance cannot be tolerated and therefore cannot be processed. Intrusive and avoidance states alternate, but in neither is there the opportunity for change. Emotional processing leading to relief requires more than a brief reexposure to manageable rather

than overwhelming amounts of fear and distress
(Turner 1995: 64).

Turner states that testimony allows the potential for emotional processing. However, by examining the sociopolitical context, a sense of renewed meaning is found through reconfiguring experiences. Reinterpreting and resituating the narrative contributes to reshaping a memory or structure where different angles uncover embodied knowledge (Turner 1995: 69-70).

Scholarly Research and Phenomenology

Several scholars incorporate phenomenology in their research on forced migration, even though they may not label it as such. Janice Jenkins' (1996) work concerning the traumatic experiences of Salvadoran refugee women captures their buoyancy and strength under difficult circumstances. While some considered their experiences to be "extreme" or "extraordinary," others described their encounters with direct or indirect violence as rather "mundane" or "routine." She explores five categories of political violence (general war/terror tactics, poverty, atrocities directed towards women, death of relatives in relation to political violence, and torture) through narratives given by women who sought asylum in Boston, Massachusetts. Jenkins incorporates both ends of the spectrum as traumatic, even though the expression among the groups diverges.

That such experience is sometimes represented as mundane can be accounted for by a combination of political constraints on expression and the psychological suppression of response—more precisely, by the overdetermination of repression as both a political process and a psychological defense.

This dual sense of repression goes hand in hand with terror and violence on the one hand, and dissociation and denial on the other (Jenkins 1996: 286).

Jenkins goes on to state that emotional responses to these experiences are rooted in political and social oppression,

the extreme and mundane are not necessarily alternatives, but simultaneous states of affairs that are lived with as a persistent existential contradiction. When this contradiction cannot be sustained, either with respect to living within the political ethos or living with psychological trauma, the survival strategy is a dampening of awareness and expression. Such a strategy is the direct consequence of repression in both the political and psychological senses of the word (Jenkins 1996: 288).

This example of emotional processing cannot be removed from the sociopolitical context. The reconfigured meanings women incorporate into their daily lives are a direct result of the embedded knowledge accumulated through the tactics of political violence.

John Chr. Knudsen examines coping mechanism among uprooted Vietnamese. Refugees incorporate strategic, calculated movements to deal with everyday realities that do not necessarily equate with past experiences. In a new environment Vietnamese have knowledge that orients them, while remembering a past which is no longer attainable. According to Knudsen, the older generation feels it must rely on or recreate the past, while the younger generation seeks to move forward in adjusting to new ways of being in the world. For them, it is difficult to access the past because they did not experience it as the older people had, but they

do reserve a sense of how things were. The younger generation tries to negotiate how to live life: should they rely on the experience of the older generation (while not fully aware of how to access that knowledge because they are relying on a past which can not presently be fulfilled) or should they move on to other avenues exploring new relationships of trust and culture making? Assuming that all refugees have the same histories and desires, misdirects social service efforts. Given that routines do have value, the emphasis should target a time continuum instead of solely “the here and now.” A phenomenological approach to viewing past, present, and future certainly impacts the context and how individuals and groups deal with collective trauma. Knudsen specifically refers to this aspect in terms of breaching trust. The issue of trust in relationship to time is certainly pertinent. Further investigation concerning this topic is warranted.

As in the camps, the relief measures are based on a model that ascribes to all refugees a common identity, without reference to their backgrounds or needs. The new professionals perform ambiguous roles similar to the refugee workers in the camps: they offer help (material, social, and emotional) and, simultaneously, represent authority. Their mandate strengthens the professionals’ tendency to focus on the more immediate problems: each day has to be organized, whether within the reception centers or the private apartments. However, this focus on the present hardly matches the refugees’ focus on the future and, at the same time, the past (Knudsen 1995: 23).

To bring forth everyday activity within social life and consciousness, Alfred Schutz investigates how interactions with objects and others affect social outcomes. Schutz and Luckmann (1973) develop a phenomenology of social life by emphasizing

agency and intentionality in relationship to the habitual application of knowledge within the lifeworld. Schutz uses elements of both Husserl and Weber to develop his notion of intersubjectivity (interactions or exchanges with the subject) and its relation to the lifeworld. The relevancy of Schutz's and Merleau-Ponty's work can be seen in a variety of contexts, such as Abu-Lughod's (1993) living life or life as lived and not necessarily according to "cultural" rules or determined social roles; Rene Devisch's (1993) use of metaphors in Yaka society, while avoiding dualistic thinking by grounding experience through intimate connections of the existence and activity; and Arthur Kleinman's (1999) notion of "local moral worlds" where socio-political and economic aspects unfold in specific settings in everyday life, and illness is represented as a moral reality situated intersubjectively. Everyday activity and knowledge emerge in the setting where the exchange of knowledge takes place (whether a store, playground, or gas station). Interpersonal exchanges are laden with ideas related to our social world. These exchanges deemphasize objective and subjective views while striving to focus on human exchange.

The relevancy of a phenomenology rooted in social life is also present in the edited volume, *Mistrusting Refugees*, in which E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen discuss how the abuse of power transcends the lack of trust among affected people. This symbolizes a culturally understood collapse of trust, "not only does mistrust push itself onto the surface of a quickened consciousness but the agitated state of awareness that it creates bars it from settling back into a state of comfortable and largely unconscious comportment with the surroundings of its world" (Daniel and Knudsen 1995: 2). Trust is a major factor for refugees; yet,

refugees have little control over the information given to government officials, case workers, and psychologists (ibid: 4). The information provided should not harm individuals caught as pawns in political maneuvering. The knowledge attained should be meaningful, particularly reconstructing self-identity. Both social workers and refugees strip self-identity from forced migration experiences. According to Daniel and Knudsen (1995: 5),

Several anthropologists working with refugees have found that one of the important components in the recovery of meaning, the making of culture, and the reestablishment of trust is the need and the freedom to construct a normative picture of one's past within which "who one was" can be securely established to the satisfaction of the refugee. The refugee's self-identity is anchored more to who she or he was than what she or he has become. In the context of rehabilitation in Western countries, as an extension of the valorization of an egalitarian ideology, agents of the host country seek to level down each refugee to a common denominator, an ideal-typical refugee, and neutralize differences so as to provide each refugee not only with a fresh start but also with an equal one.

Wendy James (1997) writes of fear rather than trust as shaping memory, embodying thoughts, and monitoring connectedness. James focuses on how events and experiences contribute to forming memory and expressing fear within the body. She also investigates how fear manifests through the interactions with other members in society and other groups. James describes an incident where the Uduk of Sudan escaped persecution and settled in a refugee camp at Karmi inside Ethiopia. Soon thereafter a group of Nuer also settled the site. The Uduk saw the Nuer as enemies who persecuted them in the past. This history surfaced in the

refugee camps, and a violent incident occurred between the two groups. The Uduk were resettled into a camp at Bongo thereafter. Later, a confrontation occurred between an Uduk and Nuer, then other individuals became involved and a few violent exchanges transpired. The Nuer felt afraid because of the attack on the Uduk the previous year. The situational atmosphere prescribed the immediacy of their feelings. Some Uduk were frightened but their alarm was expressed in a different way. After years of suffering and frustration, this episode enabled the Uduk to react to the situational oppression (James 1997: 117-120).

James uses the context of a specific group and the experience encountered over time to describe fear. The situational state tracked over time reveals that war accompanies other struggles for survival (e.g., hunger, drought, and shelter). Even though Uduk may speak in similar categories to express the embedded situatedness, the fear resulting from such encounters varies. James suggests that we disregard objective accounts in explanations of emotion to avoid breaking up the experience into disparate categories.

In later accounts people may articulate fear, hunger and so forth as contrasting conceptual phenomena; they may describe and make a diagnosis of their experience. But at the time, they are hit by them all together in a way which would not be transparent to an 'objective' science of the emotions. The fears of the time are most easily catalogued when later turned by language into stories, told variously for plain information, serious reflection or just entertainment. Through the sharing of these stories memory is shaped and expectations are built (James 1997: 121).

Language captures the process of embodiment through memory and imagination as combining indicators (senses) expressed via language. James draws inspiration from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of emotions. Merleau-Ponty utilizes language to investigate issues concerned with emotional experience. He claims that words and thoughts are intimately connected with emotional responses, or rather, "emotional exchanges" in the lived-experience. Fear relates to images that have worked into the minds of experience and practice. "Even the most embodied sense of 'fear' is more than just a behavioural response; it is something anticipated, and thus pre-figured in the cultural imagination as it draws on collective memory" (James 1997: 123). As time passes, one may not have the same physical or bodily fear as an event that occurred recently. Time allows a more pronounced separation from the event itself, in addition to a changed or changing context, so the fear may not seem as imminent. However it is more difficult to gauge the affects of long- and short-term embodied fear. The more pronounced signs may not be present as the immediacy dissipates (e.g., a shortness of breath, a stimulated pulse rate, and a lack of sweat). James highlights concerns with representing emotions. She uses film to capture the emotion, tone of voice, breathing patterns, facial expressions, bodily language, all of which contribute to the embedded experience (recalling an event) via signs and symbols (James 1997: 123-4).

Michael Jackson discusses peripheral domains which demonstrate a rich abundance of life's experience. Explanations and interpretations come about through experience, rather than remaining marginal to an objective reality. "However, none of these distinctions implies that the domains of darkness,

wilderness, or Dreaming are other-worldly, super-natural, non-empirical. On the contrary, they are worlds that enter experience and of which direct experience is had. They are, so to speak, dimensions of the lifeworld not ordinarily brought into consciousness, *but they are integrally part of empirical reality*" (Jackson 1996: 15).

To demonstrate Jackson's argument, that an empirical reality exists for realms not always detected by conscious modes of thought, I incorporate the work of Rousseau, Said, Gagne, and Bibeau (1998), who describe the migratory process for young Northern Somali men as creating a space of imagination, or dream space, for the migratory process. The transition phase for many Somalis may occur while in Somalia, the first settlement in a primary country, or perhaps, resettlement in a second or third place, most likely in the West. The talk of migrating creates a space for these young men (imaging space for dreams). Rousseau, Said, Gagne, and Bibeau discuss Somali refugees waiting to leave their current situation; and, while this transition phase occurs, men get together in the mornings to hear up-to-date news of departures. In the afternoons, many of these men congregate and chew *khat* together and create a space for discussing their own journeys or those who have traveled and acquired certain knowledge. Rousseau, Said, Gagne, and Bibeau suggest that some individuals get sucked into the dream and have a difficult time dissociating the dream from everyday life occurrences. This dream state is not actually induced by *khat*. Rather, the dream represents the anticipation of leaving and what this journey entails. The authors report that:

among young refugees from Northern Somalia,
shared dream-telling among age group peers, with
its associated rituals, is a way of coping with the

frequently long, painful waits they endure. Dreams of the successes of others and their own anticipated departures turn the difficult transition period into a highly meaningful time and place in which the youths learn to make connections between the private and the public spheres and make their personal plans mesh with those of others. The partial substitution of “dream travel” for real travel enables them to survive the wait and escape despair, but also puts them at risk of losing contact with reality and sliding into madness. Madness, the ultimate form of travel without going anywhere, can be perceived as the last chance to mobilize support networks with regard to departure, the final quest (Rousseau, Said, Gagne, and Bibeau 1998: 388).

The authors discuss the role of migration in Somali society. First, travel in a pastoral society is seen as a type of experience that is cherished and respected; it also marks maturity. Second, the overall objective of the age group (*qeyr*-Arabic and *fil*-Somali) influences how individuals conduct themselves within a wider context of collective desires. Individual objectives are dictated by the group’s plan. An individual needs to operate under the direction of the group’s intentions. Third, the role of the *niyaad*, “refers to both the spirit and the heart, to the totality of the person who identifies himself body and soul with the plan,” influences behavior. The knowledge incorporated into the *niyaad* becomes very difficult to remove or alter, since by definition it has become one with the self and collective identity (Rousseau, Said, Gagne, and Bibeau 1998: 390-1).

To its credit, the article focuses on the journey-in-process. These young men may be in a state of limbo for a handful of days or years, depending on their social network. The responsibility of departing actually falls onto their kin and

peers. These individuals are the ones who make migration possible. If migration does not take place, the young men rely even more on their network because they will need continued assistance. As the authors eloquently state, the delicate balance of well-being as played out among individual and group responsibilities remains tenuous.

Madness therefore causes a double reversal: instead of the journey transforming the youth into a mature, experienced man, it turns him into the opposite: an irresponsible person who has to be taken care of. The double bind the young man finds himself in, trapped between the obligation of fulfilling the plan of his *qeyr* and the obstacles he runs up against when dealing with international immigration authorities, takes its toll on the family and society, which become responsible for carrying out his plan to prevent his mental health from deteriorating (Rousseau, Said, Gagne, and Bibeau 1998: 402).

The most striking aspect in this article is the pronounced expression of uncertainty. As Wendy James uses fear as articulated in Uduk society in historically particular moments, I suggest using uncertainty to shape a phenomenological investigation concerning the processes of forced migration. Feelings of uncertainty include doubt, wonder, suspicion, ambiguity, vagueness, mistrust, indefiniteness among others. The notion of *not knowing* penetrates each “stage” of experience. From root causes to resettlement and repatriation, uncertainty expresses itself as: 1) prefigured by previous situations; 2) the everyday or mundane living where uncertainty may not be obvious; and 3) levels oscillate depending upon the situation. Issues of directedness, immediacy, and intentions loosely indicate how to

calibrate or read uncertainty where continuously transforming expectations affect ways of knowing and being.

Space

Space is challenging to theorize. As Gupta and Ferguson (1992) suggest, one should theorize space in terms of location, displacement, community, and identity. Space comes across as a platform to organize society, emphasizing historical memory and varying cultural expressions. Yet theorizing space turns tricky in terms of national borders in the marginal contexts of people who inhabit contested borders. Generally, borders are crossed by a few categories of people: business professionals, immigrants, forced migrants, and expatriates.

Another issue confronting the image of space and identity is to explain variation within localities. This aspect is significant because it attempts to naturalize the association with people to a specific place. How do we discuss cultural variation while dropping the aspect of localized truths, i.e., being tied to “a land?” The authors suggest, “challenging the ruptured landscape of independent nations and autonomous cultures raises the question of understanding social change and cultural transformation as situated within interconnected spaces” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 35).

What and who determines homeland boundaries? Tronvoll analyzes issues of identity, land, and governance. He claims that anthropologists have generally viewed borders in terms of symbolism; however, we should examine actual borders, not just symbolic ones (Tronvoll 1999: 1040). Many of Africa’s borders have been

contested since the Berlin Conference of 1884, which created arbitrary borders to serve European interests. As Westin claims, “The large number of refugees in Africa as well as in Eastern Europe and the Balkans may be seen as symptoms of unfinished nation-building and state formation processes” (Westin 1999).

Tronvoll grounds his argument in Wilson and Donnan’s article “Nation, State and Identity at International Borders” in *Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers* (1998). They claim that borders have three main components: a legal borderline, physical structures, and frontiers. So, these borders “demarcate and negotiate the territory, the state, and the identity related to an existing, or nascent, nation-state. What we need to keep in mind, however, is that borders are always domains of disputed and contested power, in which local, national, and international groups and factions negotiate relations of subordination and control” (Tronvoll 1999: 1040-1).

The essential point is that transmigrants acquire the ability to go beyond arbitrary borders. Transnational borders are political boundaries that are not as meaningful when compared to ideas of ethnic identity and home. When referring to Africa, the subjective nation-state boundaries do not correspond with ethnic or tribal entities, which often carry more clout than artificially constructed boundaries (Koser and Black 1999: 9). Basically, political and ethnic boundaries do not correlate, e.g., Ogaden and Eritrea.

The notion of space as conceptualized by Gupta and Ferguson, Basch, Schiller, and Blanc, and Koser and Black, would be more applicable if a phenomenological orientation of space would replace definable boundaries.

Phenomenologically speaking, space does not imply a physical setting where objects are placed in proximity to one another. Instead, space should be considered as a type of external experience where connections among objects can be seen through structuring (Jackson 1996). Viewing space in this light, it avoids questions of national borders because the emphasis is not placed on borders in reference to one another or borders in reference to refugees, but rather on the interconnections among borders and people as relationships of power among varying actors—whether it be individual, community, state, nation, or international status.

Michel de Certeau (1984) uses a phenomenological orientation as he deconstructs movement and meaning. He describes an individual walking through a city. An individual's footstep can be traced or mapped, but not the meaning of his activity. Thus, the engagement of everyday life and activity, e.g., walking, is an act of resistance. Institutions may try to find ways to control lives, yet they do not account how individuals view and participate in daily activity.

Doreen Massey's (1994) questions the usefulness of time-space compression in the midst of globalization. "Time-space compression refers to movement and communication across space, to the geographical stretching-out of social relations, and to our experience of all this" (Massey 1994: 147). She characterizes it as a western construct rooted in capitalism. She argues for a more progressive sense of place which includes: fluidity, lack of boundaries, many "identities," and uniqueness. The complex strands of social relations (race, gender, political, social, economic, historical, and moral) contribute to a sense of what is local understanding in a complicated system of international exchange.

Liisa Malkki (1992) discusses two important connections among people and place. First Malkki challenges the notion that space equates to a natural state of being where people exist with an inherent link to the land. Second, Malkki challenges that the natural setting for people is the boundaries that currently exist for nation-states. This land marked by national boundaries is given as uncontested truth, which feeds into the myth of being connected to land (false reality). What is so natural about a culture, a people, and a place (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 12)? What does home imply? Does home imply homeland or an actual house? Country of origin? Or land? New homes? "This place called 'home' may have both cultural or spiritual meaning for the returnee, as well as being the returnees own property, imbuing it with an economic significance" (Koser and Black 1999: 7). Koser and Black warn that we should not assume that home is the best solution, nor may it be desirable. Idealized or romanticized images of home or homeland, imply that home is the inherent or correct place that one should be placed. Malkki contests the idea that home is where one belongs, especially when safety and security are at stake. She questions why the new place of settlement becomes home (Malkki 1995: 509).

As Malkki struggles with the meaning of home and its relationship to an identity, Daniel finds meanings of home as an embodied awakening.

A refugee is a displaced person, displaced by violence directed against her, violence for which she is not responsible. If a refugee is a displaced person, she is also decentered. Both displacement and decentering are spatial orientations relative to a place called "home." Home in the case of displacement connotes something physical whereas in the case of decentering it connotes something psychological, moral, and even spiritual. When

refugees are repatriated, they may find “home,” in both senses of the term, unavailable or missing. But even if a change of party, policy, or heart on the part of a government or the intervention of an international organization can remedy displacement, it is much harder for a refugee to recover her center, her home, in the moral sense. Once again, when the presence of both these senses in *refugee* is realized, the juridico-political definition is left wanting (Daniel 2002: 283).

Linda Camino and Ruth M. Krulfeld (1994) discuss the methods and application for research while emphasizing the shifting identity of roles and adapting to new environments. For example, Carol A. Mortland writes that Cambodian refugees want to recreate their Cambodian ideals, although their actions change to fit life in the United States. Cambodians search for a balance in their changing identities. Many want to maintain Khmer culture, while adapting to US society—a Cambodian who has “adjusted” to American culture or one who presents herself as a “real” Cambodian. A contradiction exists among Cambodians who want to maintain Cambodian culture among mainstream Americans. The contradiction plays itself out in the following scenario of resistance and conformity. Cambodians in the United States alternately resist American ways and are drawn to them. They break from their constructed identities, families, village, and work in Cambodia to come up against a wider perspective: Americans and the American way. Their resistance is twofold as they resist the stereotyped image Americans have of Cambodians and conformity to American ways. Resistance to Americanization, however, depends on adherence to things Cambodian, and Cambodians find themselves comparing and contrasting themselves to other

Cambodians (Mortland 1994: 22). No doubt Cambodians are negotiating how they define themselves in American society. By renegotiating identity, different meanings are associated with what it means to be Cambodian. “Cambodian” has taken on new meanings including “survivorhood, suffering, pain, and loss,” while retaining aspects of Cambodianness such as continuing Buddhist traditions. The bottom line is that identity is a fluid concept, revealing what it means to be Cambodian and who that population includes. How much Cambodianness they maintain will affect their relations among themselves and the larger population.

Memory and Trauma

Remembering home conjures up questions of personal and public space with feelings of “affirmations, struggle, and longing” (Gomez 1999: 215). Trauma alters these emotions, not only in terms of the home, but other realms too.

Melissa Parker (1996) claims that problems exist using the category of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) with non-Western peoples. The DSM-111-R defines PTSD “outside the range of usual human experience.” It excludes things that North Americans would consider to be as normal grieving or being in a depressed state under such conditions as bereavement and illness. However, these may not be appropriately placed within the normal range of human experience. How should we gauge communities that have witnessed widespread torture and death? Also, PTSD is understood by North American psychologists that the events which caused the distress are in the past. This may not be the situation for someone who experiences chronic social, political, or economic upheaval spurring traumatic

events. The issue is not a categorical one in the sense of, is it PTSD or not, but whether the label and definition is appropriate at all. Arthur Kleinman (1987: 450) warns against using biomedical models in such cases because a, “biology is presumed to ‘determine’ the cause and structure of the disorder, while cultural and social factors, at most, ‘shape’ or ‘influence’ the content of disorder.” Another pertinent question remains, how to identify a “disorder.” The process may not reveal crystal clear distinctions that are put forth in questionnaires. This entails a complex process whereby dealing with issues associated with decontextualizing signs and symptoms. Parker raises a question that penetrates the core problem of using PTSD as a meaningful category, should research focus on a person who has experienced a vast array of violence and displays symptoms or one who does not (Parker 1996: 268)?

Gozdziak and Tuskan warn to avoid the medicalization of suffering because such actions ignore social and political contexts. For example,

Most of the DMAT [Disaster Medical Assistance Team] mental health professionals, trained in the trauma and disaster model, unfamiliar with survivors of wartime violence, and fed by media reports of the suffering in Kosova, arrived at Fort Dix anticipating widespread need for psychological counseling of the Kosovar Albanians. Frequently DMAT personnel also arrived with many preconceived notions about the effects of war on the Kosovars, about Muslim men and women, and were quick to make generalizations based solely on observation and rumors (Gozdziak and Tuskan 2000: 200).

Medicalizing suffering becomes a disservice for those who perceive suffering in terms of a spiritual connection, “an inherent moral category, is

transformed into a psychiatric condition. An existential experience of tragedy and loss is converted into technical problems that transmogrify its existential roots” (Kleinman 1995: 34). In addition, medicalization diminishes the healing process, not being able to effectively look at anxiety, suffering, and death. Biology implicitly conjures up sites of naturalness, creating a risk of losing the political and social context (Gozdziak and Tuskan 2000: 205).

To place a medical perspective on suffering or to address suffering in terms of effects and disorders, misses the point. The suffering is caused by actual events and processes. Suffering is part of the human experience, and for the Kosovars suffering is viewed from a religious standpoint. As Gozdzia and Tuskan (2000) explain, they had to approach suffering from a Kosovar worldview whereby,

suffering from a spiritual and religious perspective and understood the value of suffering not as a problem of how to avoid and end suffering, but how to suffer, how to make physical pain, personal loss, and worldly defeat something bearable, something sufferable. We also understood the importance and power of prayer and religious services in helping sufferers endure their pain (210).

Mental health professionals needed to stray from conventional models of Western psychiatric and psychological training. These individuals risked changing a perfectly adaptable framework based on a religious and spiritual outlook (ibid.: 215). Gozdzia and Tuskan propose that, perhaps, mental health professionals and service providers may not recognize the role or the importance of religion when discussing the healing process.

Kosovars do not connect identity with a victim status, instead they view their situation as parallel with the greater *jihad*.

Rather, they framed their suffering in a historical and political context, and sought solace for their plight in Islam. We had no desire to change this context to one of victimhood. Adopting a victim or patient framework—generally involving an emphasis on the need for individual counseling—could have led the Kosovars to undervalue their own capacity for survival and endurance (Gozdziak and Tuskan 2000: 202).

For further inquiries into medicalizing trauma refer to Scheper-Hughes (1992), Eisenbruch (1998), Nordstrom (1997), Green (1998), Taussig (1992), and Zarowsky (2004).

When discussing health, issues of vulnerability and gender underline the context in forced migration. Boelaert (1999: 166) looks at how health care is delivered among forced migrants and the positive and negative aspects to gendered care. The results may be viewed on a spectrum from beneficial to detrimental. Social standing and access to resources certainly influenced how services were distributed. Other authors who explore trauma and violence in relation to narratives include Malkki (1995), Kakar (1996), Kirmayer (1996), Nordstrom (1998), Janzen (1999), and Janzen and Janzen (2000).

The following vignette illustrates an elderly woman's struggle to attain US citizenship. She believes US citizenship will benefit her and her family in several ways: she will have better access to government-sponsored benefits; she will have the opportunity to sponsor her children that live in Somalia; and she can be a role model for others who would like to become citizens. To be granted citizenship, she

needs to demonstrate that she can speak, write, and read English intelligibly. She also needs to know basic facts about the US government and its history. Lastly, she needs the economic resources to pay for the application and other fees. Her quest for citizenship highlights situations that require further examination: educational concerns for adults; health issues that extend beyond biomedical assessment (e.g., past war trauma, current instability in Somalia, and access to care); and movement through unfamiliar cultural knowledge.

Vignette #2: Obtaining a Medical Waiver for US Citizenship

Khadra, an elderly Somali woman, prepared for her citizenship exam for seven years. She took it and failed. Fortunately, a person has two opportunities to pass the exam. Khadra took a few weeks to recover from the devastating blow before preparing for round two. At the time, Khadra attended ESL and citizenship classes at two different centers, one met every morning and the other met in the afternoon two days a week. When Khadra returned to class after her brief hiatus, she complained of pain in her neck, shoulders, and head. She described the pain as pulsing as she gripped her temples and forehead. She motioned the flow of pain down her neck and shoulders. Khadra attributed her aches in part to her past and upcoming exams. Khadra desperately wanted to become a citizen and was willing to embark on additional tasks. She would do whatever it took to get a passport. She received notification that her second appointment date was scheduled in two months. Khadra diligently attended both schools and aggressively studied the exam questions, reading and writing materials. The week before her exam, she had three

additional people help her prepare for the big day. When her second exam date came, I called to see how it went and nobody answered the phone. I did not see her for another three days. When I saw her, I knew things had not gone well. Khadra explained that several of her children still live in Somalia and one of her sons was shot the morning of her exam. She was unable to concentrate and, in turn, failed. Khadra did not explain this situation to anyone at United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). She could have gotten an extension due to the urgent situation. Her son survived with a leg wound and she described all this as too much. She wanted to apply for a medical exemption. At the time of the research, there was not a standardized process in applying for a medical waiver in Kansas City. An employee who worked for one of the main social service organizations that provides assistance to refugees, decided to take on the challenge of enlisting an appropriate protocol to serve the needs of people who would qualify under this rubric.

Six weeks later Khadra handed me a letter from USCIS stating that if she wanted to contest the results of her last two citizenship exams, she could. She needed to return the form within 30 days (by the time I read it she only had eight days left, two of which were the weekend) along with an additional \$250. Although the payment did not guarantee a passport, she might not be granted another chance to prove herself. So I made a couple of phone calls and told her that the advocate she previously paid to be present in the exam would call her tomorrow in addition to a case worker who was familiar with her situation. After Khadra decided that she would apply for a medical waiver instead, she became frustrated once again. She felt that the process was going too slowly so she solicited the help of the

director of the Somali Foundation to escort her to a psychiatrist at a local health clinic. The director interpreted Khadra's concerns and intentions, yet the psychiatrist explained that this situation is something for a psychologist or education specialist. The director pleaded with the psychiatrist and suggested that perhaps he could still help. They chatted for a bit, but in the end he was not able to do anything. Once again, it took time, money, and resources and still nothing was resolved. A different medical doctor had written a very strong case for her in the overall description but he concluded that she is capable of learning the material, therefore she would need to take the exam.

Because it was during the month of Ramadan, Khadra did not attend classes. Not many women attended class because they were fasting and wanted to take it easy in the mornings. And many others needed to cook in the afternoons. After Ramadan, she wanted to start practicing again because in her words, "I need to study before I forget too much." Khadra claimed she did not remember a significant portion of the material and wanted help in and outside of class. Over the next few months, she made little headway. Amidst doctor visits and other appointments, she felt that many of these attempts were fruitless. For example, she would arrange for someone to take her to the doctor and arrange for an interpreter, but nothing was accomplished because her teacher had her paper work. The teacher explained that she needed to be reminded of people's appointments and she may not be able to go to the appointments because she had a job with many responsibilities. The teacher apologized profusely to the woman but reiterated that she needs lots of warning for upcoming appointments. The woman

claimed to have called her the night before, which demonstrated the teacher's point in that she already had something scheduled, so finding out the night before does not qualify as "in advance."

Over the next few months I noticed how bad Khadra's eyes looked. They had become red and watery. It was apparent that she experienced difficulty seeing. She wanted some different eye drops and perhaps other medications to help her see, reduce pain, and aid her headaches. I took her to an optometrist. She had an agenda of getting relief, seeing better, and getting her N-648 form (medical waiver for citizenship) completed. I told her not to expect too much from this visit, the doctor might not have time to attend to everything because we were simply walking in for an urgent need—her impaired and painful vision. She insisted that I give the optometrist the packet of forms which included an old N-648 form that was incompletely filled out by her eye doctor, a letter from a case worker that detailed why the form was inadequate for USCIS, and a new N-648 form. I told her that we may not be able to get the forms signed because she did not have an appointment. I reminded them that she has an appointment with a mental health specialist next week.

As we discussed the expectations of our visit to the eye doctor, Khadra's daughter emerged from upstairs and explained that her mother's health has gotten worse. Sometimes Khadra complains about her eyes and head; and, other times it is the whole body. There are days when she does not get up out of bed. Khadra has missed days at school because she felt terrible and wanted to rest.

While we waited for her appointment, Khadra spoke to the interpreter who would assist us. She explained why we were there and she talked about her symptoms. The interpreter asked if we had an appointment. If not, the doctor would probably not fill it out any additional paperwork. Khadra acknowledged this and insisted that we would still try and present the N-648 form. The interpreter did not know the form and took great interest in it. (She said that her mother is not a citizen and does not read or write. She asked if this approach really works and who has passed. I knew of one other person who had received a waiver for a documented disability. She shook her head and added that her *maskax* (brain or mind) was not right. I commented that a case worker was helping others, but the case worker had just started this process and was trying to figure out what protocol needs to take place.) The woman mentioned that she has an appointment next week with a doctor to evaluate her *maskax*. The interpreter inquired why USCIS needed an excuse from the eye doctor if she was trying to get a waiver from the head doctor. This process has taken several months and she may not receive a waiver from both. The woman was doing everything possible now because it may take several more months.

The doctor entered and he took a minute to review Khadra's file. She complained of the medications she had and wanted different ones for the redness in both eyes, the pain in her left eye, and the irritation in her right eye. They went over each medication and the doctor concluded that if they switched the medications her eyesight could worsen or she may get an infection. She did not need a prescription for any of the medications; they were all over-the-counter. She

reiterated that her eyesight had gotten worse and so had her headaches. He examined her eyes and began with letters. The interpreter stressed to the doctor that he needed to use symbols instead of letters. He countered by suggesting the numbers. The interpreter said it would be less confusing to use the symbols. (First, Khadra does not always name the letters correctly. Second, some individuals respond in Somali, e.g., the letter A pronounced in English is similar to the Somali E, so a doctor may think that the response was wrong when in actuality she is correct, she just said the letter in Somali.) After examining both eyes, the doctor concluded that her tear ducts were clogged. She needed to keep using the lubricant drop and increase the usage to four times a day and she needed to use a warm compress. The interpreter demonstrated what this meant. The woman made several comments that were extraneous to the subject, i.e., the N-648 form and the interpreter kept cutting her off and directed to the topics at hand.

After the optometrist finished the examination, the interpreter handed him the N-648 form. Since he was not Khadra's regular physician, he did not feel comfortable making any kind of evaluation. So the form and additional documentation were placed in her file. After a couple of weeks, a doctor who was familiar with Khadra's case spoke to her case worker. The optometrist said that her vision could not be used as the basis for a medical waiver—even though she had problems seeing (even after the print had been enlarged). Thus, in his professional opinion, he would not sign the N-648 because she just needed to wear glasses. Yes, her vision is slowly deteriorating; she has had cataracts and has glaucoma. Yet if she used the over-the-counter drops and wore glasses, then she would have the vision

capable to read and write. I asked Khadra why she did not wear glasses. She responded, "*Lacag mahaysto*/No money."

In the meantime, Khadra had an appointment with a doctor to examine her *maskax*/brain. She had a CAT scan done to see if the trauma she endured in Somalia changed aspects of her brain. There would be certain changes in the image projected if there was some damage. Nothing showed up on the images but she still complained of having a bad *maskax*. She attributes her bad *maskax* to witnessing brutal killing of family members, separating from her children and not knowing their status, and watching one of her children starve to death. However, the possibility exists for other conditions that did not show up on the scan, so the doctors decided to run more tests. If this approach failed, to medically verify the trauma that changed her *maskax*, then Khadra would need to take the citizenship test again (along with paying additional fees). (However, Khadra now has the additional challenge of stating her case for a medical waiver after failing the exam. Once someone takes the exam and fails, it is not advisable to apply for a waiver. The reasoning follows the thinking that since she did not originally pass, USCIS officials may view the waiver as an "easy" way out.)

As the next few months went by, Khadra saw more doctors to assess her condition. She went to a mental health clinic and her case worker did not show up to the evaluation. Khadra was frustrated because as she understood this meeting it was her case worker that would represent her and ask the appropriate questions and emphasize the information needed on the form. She acknowledged that the experience was futile.

She continued to attend ESL and citizenship classes, but her attendance became sporadic due to her eyes, headaches, and overall health. After a year of trying to obtain a waiver, her pursuit for US citizenship continued.

Diaspora and Living in Exile

Anne Alitolppa-Niitamo (2000) refers specifically to the Somali diaspora, yet gives an overview of general themes of diasporas. She speaks of diasporas in terms of “transnational social organization in which the homeland has a special centrality in the consciousness and actions of migrants” (56). The relationship between homeland and collective memory highlights themes of unity to the homeland. This situation contains elements of a romanticized image where dreams of life being intimately connected with symbolic visions of the earth, soil, roots, ancestry, and myths (Malkki 1995) as a coping mechanism to avoid intolerance and bigotry or peripheral status.

Loss of control is the general response as to why people join a diaspora. A diaspora acts as an outlet to renegotiate a sense of control over one’s life.

Alitolppa-Niitamo describes an example of this phenomenon with Somali refugees residing in Finland.

In a situation of full anarchy in Somalia, the people with weapons had power and control over the lives of others. Somalis lost their homes, property, and means of livelihood, as well as their sense of safety and, tragically, many lost their lives. Although people lost a sense of control over their lives in Somalia, life in the diaspora, although demanding and challenging, offered new possibilities and

opportunities to re-establish this control (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2000: 47).

Social links via transnational communication, better wellbeing because this action provides a sense of control over one's own life. As Alitolppa-Niitamo proposes "diasporic consciousness and the desire to return do not necessarily jeopardize the process of integration with the resettlement country" (ibid.: 58).

According to Gomez (1999: 207), longing to recapture a sense of nostalgia through narratives, "may generate a critical sociosymbolic terrain that allows self-relevant modes of representation and cultural practices to be validated in the everyday life of people in the diaspora." Nostalgia may connect the present with the past by amending strains, teasing out differences and piecing together experiences over time and space. The past becomes a comfort zone for those who experience current instability. This is often accomplished by "reworking the past" to make sense of the present. Narrative reveals more than just trauma, but desires, alienation, and resistance (ibid.: 207-8). A delicate balance exists in maintaining an emotional register to define and gauge signs, where violence disrupts "glorifying the past."

Emotions also help define the signs, codes, and strategies designated to accommodate and capture women's encounters with their exile landscape. Yet the search for an appropriate language to adequately capture refugee women's imaginations is also an encounter with problematic and contradictory sites of disruptions and violence" (ibid.: 209).

Remembering and glorifying the past in combination of violence, often omits negative associations and experiences, leaving pleasant and positive memories. The

past is celebrated through nostalgic thoughts, neglecting adverse experiences demonstrated via power relations and differences expressed within communities (Gomez 1999: 209).

Phenomenology's Relevance for Somali Women Reconstituting Their Lives in Kansas City

A phenomenological perspective humanizes research due to its attention to historical and structural contexts. It has the potential to provide insights by evaluating social memory, morality, ethnicity, history, and kinship. Phenomenology helps researchers understand the life of Somali women. Somali women learn new cultural knowledge while attempting to reshape a social world that is based on the detritus of fractured morality. Women strategize how to confront new knowledge and they calculate how to integrate this information into their day-to-day living. For example, women maintain household and child care responsibilities in Kansas City. Yet they also recognize the importance of providing for their kin who live abroad. Therefore, women need to figure out how to provide for their household and send remittances abroad. The intimate knowledge accumulated through their own experiences of war and sociopolitical unrest, compounded by ongoing strife that their kin experience, requires an amount of creativity to keep things going. For some, that may mean working one or more jobs outside the home to generate enough income to cover costs for themselves and others. It may mean going to school and earning their citizenship. It could also have implications for how women demonstrate a sense of being Somali to their children.

Everyday interactions create social knowledge. This activity enhances our humanness via expressing and sharing thoughts to inform us about social life. Our essence as humans is expressed in terms of our kinship and history. Yet, the idea of meaningful exchange does not negate situations where power is uneven, trust is questioned, or fear is present. For example, a point of contention centers on child rearing in the diaspora: How much freedom is appropriate? How to keep them on the straight path? How to cultivate an environment of respect for parents and elders? How to best communicate with teachers and administrators at local schools? Despite successes, many challenges remain, and the parents, households, and the community search for harmony and coherency for these and other issues. The following chapters elaborate on the theme of recreating local moral worlds. Phenomenology provides a framework to understand women's practical actions to reshape values as they learn cultural knowledge in a new setting, while they reformulate a social world that is based on past circumstances and one that articulates with current living conditions.

In conclusion, this chapter serves as an orientation to historical processes that inform the study of forced migrations. I discuss anthropology's involvement in refugee issues from a practical and theoretical viewpoint. As the discipline changes emphasis from functional and developmental approaches to more topical inquiries, I propose that phenomenology aids in the discussion of reshaping and restoring local moral worlds. For women reconstituting their lives in Kansas City, values that encompass basic day-to-day decision making include employment, religious practice, and child care. Figuring out how to conduct lives is cased within larger

migration concerns (practical and legal), global social networks, educational opportunities, and socioeconomic standing. A phenomenological framework allows discussion of characteristics common to refugee groups and individuals without universalizing the experiential process. This dissertation focuses on some particularities of the Somali experience in Kansas City while research results are open for comparison with others in the Somali diaspora and other refugee groups.

In the following chapter, I describe the changing perceptions of parent-child roles within the home and the community. The background of a broken local moral world and the process of constructing a new one, fits into the discussion of parents, particularly mothers, who have endured war, forced migrations, camp life, and the continuance of these memories through relatives abroad and their persistence to establish a newly devised system of care while maintaining values that they want to instill in their children. The phenomenological framework is a constructive and practical approach in viewing the chapter because it allows for past 'normal' living and traumas as influencing current circumstances. Having the capacity to situate activity and thoughts in the everyday elucidates how these realms affect one another.

Chapter Four

Massaging Parent-Child Relations:

A Somali Women's Perspective

The central issue facing Somalis is how to rebuild a local moral world despite Somalia's inability to resolve fundamental questions of existence. These issues affect diasporic perspectives for settling into new homes and planning possible future migrations. Constructing a sense of being-in-the-world is challenged by unfamiliar knowledge and frameworks. Redefining a local moral world for some displaced to Kansas City is in contrast to how morality was defined before the disintegration of Somalia's state. A balancing act emerges: simultaneously learning new cultural knowledge in a new environment while devising a moral world grounded in past situations. Parents try to integrate this knowledge with current surroundings. At the very heart of this matter is how women navigate these structures to find ideals and behaviors that reinforce an outlook suitable for future generations. Yet a third component manages to become entangled with the previous two—children. While parents, specifically women, remain at the cornerstone of reformulating and transmitting new knowledge to children, children are not passive agents. They play roles in this pliable process that shape how parents, caregivers, and community networks respond to new knowledge. They assert agency in this process, particularly those children who serve as cultural brokers and mediators: acting as translators, reading mail, learning to drive, and

taking care of siblings. The contribution of children cannot be underestimated in redefining appropriate social norms.

Shaping Values and Women's Efficacy

Much of what women do revolves around taking care of children and cooking. The expected roles surrounding women's lives have changed since moving to Kansas City, Missouri. Some women work outside the home and are "official" wage earners and contribute money to their own households and to relatives abroad. Women balance the challenge of taking on new responsibilities of working and going to school along with continuing the legacy of a strong social welfare system within the home and familial network. Despite the acceptance of government assistance, women invest in relationships that build on and allow for taking care of their own.

The added responsibilities of new roles along with expectations still held toward women's behavior, pressure women to perform certain functions even though those functions may not be as valued as before settling in the US. Some of the new responsibilities include working outside the home, contributing financially to the household and community, managing bills, and shopping. Women who strive to provide a proper home life for families are honored. Food preparation allows women to produce and reinforce ideals held in high esteem. Food remains a common denominator and meals are a communal activity. Women's cooking showcases a standard of quality to visitors and affects the perception of hospitality, which in turn signals a husband's position within the home.

Women pride themselves on knowing how to cook fresh meals. Store-bought or restaurant ready-food may not follow proper food prohibitions, nor does it taste good. Marja Tiilikainen (2007) discusses food preparation and the use of food in religious and social settings among Somali women living in Finland. She proposes that the continuity of familiar, everyday chores in the diaspora, like enforcing Islamic food requirements in preparing homemade food, allow women to maintain their agency within the home. While I witnessed a similar phenomenon in Kansas City, another layer crept into the scene. Even though the preparation of *halal* food is revered, women's cooking came under scrutiny because of the increased rate of obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes in the Somali community. Some families had not adjusted to the diet that is provided in their new homes. Pasta or rice accompanied with *halal* meat (preferably goat) is healthy, but some complain it is prepared with "too much oil." Weight gain and resulting health problems are on the rise. Some younger Somalis have acquired a taste for American fast food. People do not walk long distances or exercise for significant lengths of as they did in Somalia.¹³ But, women continue preparing meals the way they were taught.

Critiquing food that women had been preparing for years struck a nerve. Social service agencies offer women the chance to enroll in "cooking classes." The classes did not try to attempt to change the kind of foods prepared but how it is prepared. The opinions about these classes varied. Some women took offense as it

¹³ For additional information concerning nutrition and exercise among Somalis in the diaspora refer to Burns (2004) and Guerin, Diiriye, Corrigan, and Guerin (2003).

reflected on their cooking. How could good, fresh food be bad for the body? Other women noted that these agencies had obtained grant money that needed to be used, so why not use it for health promotion. Others did not mind participating in the classes, but they said they probably would not change how they prepared food.

Regardless, women continued their commitment to producing food for their families. They felt it was necessary to adhere to religious precepts and positive health.

Mothering Concerns: Keeping the Community on Track

Somalis left their homeland because it was too dangerous. Keeping children safe in this new environment causes concerns of a different order. For example, mothers often forbid their children to play outside because of perceived danger. “Outside” is not seen as safe or an appropriate space where children, particularly girls, should wander. “My kids used to play outside, but now I don’t take kids outside because it’s not safe. People do crazy things. Someone will rape or steal them. I don’t let my kids play outside.” Another mother comments about her children and their interaction with the outside.

It is good to raise kids here in the US, but also it is bad because they can’t go outside. The kids can get into trouble with neighbors, strangers, or the police. So we have to watch them very closely. Back home it wasn’t like this. Back home if the kids were being bad, it was acceptable for the neighbors to whoop them. Here the neighbors will call the police on you.

These attitudes are reinforced by past experiences (like corrupt Kenyan police), media fears, and interactions with local influences. Conceptions of danger are culturally constructed representations of what and who is deemed dangerous (Merry 2002: 121). These “strange” objects and individuals do not belong to one’s social group. Rather they are categorized as such due to appearances that cognitively seem unfamiliar.

Adjusting to a new environment takes time; it requires understanding how social landscapes operate. Parenting in Somalia is “traditionally” done, from a Western viewpoint, at more of a distance, giving the majority or primary attention to infants while smaller children are often looked after by older children. Now parents adjust this prior focus and give more immediate attention to older children as well.

The concept of “outside” (*bannaanka*) is mentioned by parents because of the shifting perspectives revolving around appropriate socio-spatial behavior in relation to children. Anu Isotalo (2007) studied Somali girls in Turku, Finland. She deconstructs the difficult terrain faced by girls growing up in the diaspora. Isotalo writes that girls “attending Finnish schools and getting to know the Finnish youth culture, encounter situations in which they are—constantly and repeatedly—faced with differing views on gendered valuations of behavior.” The bombardment of conflicting social messages may lead to decisions that would not otherwise be favorable. Deciding not to wear clothing that is religiously or culturally appropriate indicates to other Somalis that one is straying from a straight path to one that may be “too Finnish.” Not dressing modestly may lead to other undesirable choices,

such as hanging out in pubs, interacting with boys, drinking alcohol, and having premarital sex. This signal is interpreted as losing a sense of Somaliness, yet gossip acts as a social control for those who fear damaging familial reputations. At the same time, girls fear that individual and family honor could be compromised.

Many of the mothers I spoke to emphasized concerns for not just family reputation and community standing, but the “real” threat of something bad happening to their children. These concerns extend beyond a child’s individual safety. Safety for the community’s children is a matter shared by parents and elders. As one mother stated,

Since in the US, parents do not understand what is going on. Some kids cheat at school and the parents don’t get it. Parents are trying to figure out how they are going to raise the kids. Some parents just don’t understand. They get headaches and they’re not sure what to do.

As parents figure out how to manage households, challenges for keeping the community on track is of paramount importance. When children have problems at school, these issues too often elude parents. Many are unsure how to monitor or regulate the environment for learning.

How do mothers enforce limits to encourage appropriate behavior in the US while at the same time reinforcing the values that Somali culture deems important? Tension arises as children exert their “freedom” by threatening to leave or contact local or state authorities. At the same time, parents are adjusting to their own expectation as to how children will respond to parental requests and demands.

If the kids misbehave we have to talk to them. Here we can’t hit, yell, or whoop them or the kids will call

911. The kids who are no good will call 911 and turn the parents in. In Africa when kids work in a store or where ever, they'll give the money to the parents so they can buy things like clothes and milk. The kids don't do that here. The boys keep the money or spend it on other things. Here, even if the mom or the kids don't work they receive everything like WIC and food stamps. [While in Somalia] All the men work, ladies stay at home, and the kids stay with Dad at the store. Family is so important. It's really a community process to make working and earning money work. So before, the man and woman may work, but after they married, the wife stayed at home. This doesn't happen as much as before.

Both women and men are adapting to the shifting roles that war, forced migrations, camp life, and reestablished homes abroad bring about. According to UNICEF (2002) women have required a deeper engagement with extended family and nonkin networks through nourishing and caring, while keeping a sense of constancy and strength in the wake of insecurity. The report states that because of increased socioeconomic pressures and stressful living situations, women may assume more power. This power or assertiveness may go against how men and women relate within the household. Women find themselves providing for family members through domestic chores and as income earners. Some men question their roles as breadwinners. Redefining familial roles for parents, children, extended family, nonkin, and the community overall continues to be a source of great discussion.

Many people worry how to manage their children in this environment.¹⁴

Generally, people like where they live because they are near other Somalis, mosques, and Somali stores and restaurants. But the prevalence of crime and drugs make this difficult to manage in their neighborhoods. Also both parents and children witness non-Somali children's behavior, which is interpreted as an attitude of "do as you please." Environmental cues make it difficult to know what is acceptable, and parents wonder how to regain their parental authority. From a parent's perspective, there is a lack of respect from children and some are not doing their part to help make the adjustment smoother. In an environment where children do not have the same kind of responsibilities they did in Somalia or Kenya, mothers have a difficult time understanding why some children appear ungrateful. For instance, children grow up quickly in Somalia due to the workload assigned to them, whereas, children in the US do not carry such heavy household tasks.

People in the community bemoan the lack of programs and activities for children. Inner city concerns act as a motivating force for some, who know that parents now have to participate in a different way of life. Even though Kansas City is liked, people may not enjoy their current location due to local influences. Therefore, parents try to intercept less-than-desired traits children may adopt from their surroundings—taking drugs, drinking alcohol, eating prohibited foods, and dressing inappropriately. These concerns tie into cultural and religious issues, therefore parents watch their children even more closely. Others do not mind some

¹⁴ McGown (1999) discusses similar concerns of transferring Somali values to future generations in the London and Toronto communities.

of the changes like dress, hair, etc. It is expected that people will change and absorb what is happening in a new environment. If young people want to change their hairstyles, “that’s okay,” as long as people are not getting involved with the police.

“The teenagers are not, the young ones have better future [sic] compared to the, you know, the teenagers, the teenagers, I call them the lost generation, because, you know, unfortunately they think that they are hip and the street life is better, you know, and all that.” A community leader dubs the teens as the lost generation. Community members grapple to understand why teens prefer a “street” image. One of the major issues concerning the younger generation relates to the loss of knowing Somali history, culture, and language. The executive director of one of the Somali social service organizations claims that cities that have a more established population, have programs that teach their children aspects of Somali culture. Parents and elders worry that young children born outside of Somalia do not embody a sense of Somaliness. The loss of identity for those children is viewed with concern, but they recognize it is not the fault of the children. These circumstances are not easily remedied.

Sada Mire (2007) discusses the transmission of Somali cultural heritage. She grounds her research in archaeological and historical developments within colonial and postcolonial contexts. She contends that possessing the knowledge that produces material goods is the key rather than the material items themselves. The knowledge itself is what preserves Somali heritage and cultural values along gender lines. Extracting from learned knowledge, material items can be reproduced through time.

Generally, it seems that women are engaged with the preservation of what can be termed as ‘female culture’ and life-way and cycle, from youth to adulthood, starting with learning about social relationships, social aspects relevant to their domestic engagements, the family and female society. In this there is also a domain for creativity and excelling in things that are learnt from other women and society. Cultural practices such as ritual performance, songs and dances are also a part of the heritage that is passed on in this way. This learning process is a part of the passage to womanhood, starting at a very young age, whether in the city or the countryside (Mire 2007: 61).

The same is true for male roles which pertain to patrilineal histories, clans, social climates, and poetry. Mire claims that the preservation of knowledge can be enacted into skills. The skills to produce the items seem to have more importance and cultural relevance, considering a historical past rooted in nomadism and orality and a recent past of movement beyond Somalia’s borders.

The behavior of children as individuals and a generational whole—those who grew up in Somalia and the camps versus those who were born in the US—changed along with shifts in parental attitude and environmental and socioeconomic realities. General ideals that Somali women wish to instill in their children include: respect for elders, remembering and knowing previous generations, and accepting fate. These three points of contention intersect the behavior known as “exerting independence.” These features intertwine in the name of “freedom” (*xor*), which allows one to do whatever the *individual* sees fit. Therefore, if one chooses to do something, it is perceived as permissible because he has the option to decide. Individuality is a concept being learned and integrated

into psyches which some parents grapple to understand. Koshen (2007: 80) discusses the generation gap which has created much social upheaval. She believes that this phenomenon has contributed to a lack of agreement in terms of how households should be run. It provides parents with reasons to send their children back to Somalia to become reacquainted with how households should operate, not to mention the values and morals which are shared on a communal level.

Disrespecting parents comes in a variety of forms. The top three are refusing to do something when asked, deciding to do something on one's own judgment, and talking back. The following parent's remarks reflect these concerns.

Parents used to yell and the kids would get scared. They respected their parents then. Now they just talk back. If you gave two words, they give four. If you gave six, they'd give more. Just double it and that's how they talk back. Coming here, the kids see freedom in a different way.

These concerns emerge in another form as children respond to parents' attempt to shape behavior. The contrast of past behaviors as compared to present ones seems overwhelming due to fractured cultural knowledge and language differences.

Discerning what freedom means to children and adults is bumpy terrain. Children think freedom means free to do as one wishes (*xor baan ahay* means I can do what I like), whereas adults perceive freedom with limits attached. As one woman with children explains,

Especially the kids, they change. They don't understand, they don't listen, they just stand there and look. In Somalia, they don't go outside and they sit down when you ask. They always do that. They never listen here. . . Sometimes when the kids want to do something and the parents disagree, the

kids will just say in the US we have freedom and they go do whatever they want. That's the problem. The kids have freedom or they think they have freedom, but they aren't free. They may get hurt or into trouble. So it's not free, especially when someone ends up in jail because they think they know best when they don't understand larger issues.

The concept of freedom comes under scrutiny as parents and children grapple with its meaning and implications. As children navigate through different socio-spatial norms, parents wrestle with additional challenges. Some parents struggle to come to terms with the fear factor—911.

What to Do in Terms of Discipline; Fear as Leverage 911

A community leader focuses on the challenge for parents in raising children in the US. One of the major points of contention is the lack of understanding when it comes to discipline and abuse. Often the result is no discipline at all as they ensure they do not overstep the lawful boundaries. Some parents are concerned with having their children removed from their homes or having a stranger cause trouble. Individuals made claims in instances where difficult circumstances confronted family members, neighbors, or others within the community.

And a lot of families get in trouble because they don't know the difference between the two [discipline and abuse]. You know, you can spank your child but you can't really beat them and leave the marks and all that. And also, you know, teaching the kids you know, just watching TV and believing what's on TV it's not true, and telling them, give them the other side of life in America, and explain to them hey, if you want to be that character on TV you have everything you have to

work for it, you have to be educated. You have to get educated as a kindergartener and go upward and that's how you, you know. And also my kids they know that they are not allowed to go around the neighborhood and all that unless I am comfortable with the neighborhood or the neighbor is a really good place, I'm not gonna allow them to go. But in Somalia the drug was not an issue, kidnapping the kids was not an issue and all that, and those concerns really put some restrain on how we raise the kids.

As one mother explains, she is not sure what the best steps are for disciplining her children. She knows she cannot hit her children because of the law. While spanking is permissible, she does not want to do that either because of how it may be construed. She finds it difficult to discipline because she is unsure what to do. Since she does not use any physical contact, in her eyes, there is no repercussion for bad behavior. How does she handle the situation when her children misbehave? She places her three small boys in the bedroom and closes the door. Even though this woman claims she does not know what to do with her children, the disciplinary actions she took are appropriate and fall within the law. She questions the practicality of this approach and inquires about ways to instill appropriate behavior since she finds her children to be *dhaga adag* (hard headed).

Other women comment that if children make trouble, there is nothing for a parent to do. The perception is that parents are afraid to discipline their children because they fear the police will come and take their children away. Before, if children did not follow instructions or talked back, parents would use physical force. Now they cannot engage in that practice, therefore, they "let things go." Confusion

abounds over what action parents should take in curbing poor behavior while encouraging positive.

In our country we whip our children, if we whip our children here, they'll dial the number [911]... They don't listen. If you say sit here or stay inside, they just get up and leave. They forget about you. There's always an excuse. Something is going on, my youngest is 18 and he sees a lot of friends. Coming to the US changed everything, it changed their behavior. I don't know why.

Women perceive that if children do not like or approve of their treatment, they can call 911. They fear that children rely on 911 as an ultimatum when a reasonable request is made or when children do not get their way. The threat of getting local authorities involved reaffirms a child's defiance, even though it is not a legitimate action to take. Parents recognize that 911 provides a needed service for emergencies as long as it is used correctly. According to the participants, parents feel as if they have lost power. They no longer use the disciplinary tactics they exercised in Somalia. Yet the flip-side is parents no longer discipline their children, children make more trouble and nothing is done to reprimand poor behavior. The other fear is that if disciplinary action is not taken, some children may end up in real trouble. Parents are unsure what to do.

Changing disciplinary styles is difficult. According to community members, parents tend to hold back and not do much of anything because of the threats and repercussions of children calling the police. Parents believe that children have more authority than themselves because the laws favor children. A child's statement in

their eyes has more clout than an adult. Adults are timid because they do not want to get law enforcement involved.

When the kids go to school, say school gets out at 2:30, they leave and go to a friend's house. If there is no supervision, they may drink and do bad stuff. Then they come home and the parents ask, "Why are you late?" They may or may not give you a response. If you yell, the kids threaten to call 911. Then the police come. Why should the police get involved? The parent didn't do anything. So the kids may drink and the parents will get arrested. Parents need to watch their kids so this stuff won't happen. If you tell them don't do that, they won't listen. If you get the stick, they'll call 911. What should people do? How do you get the kids to stop [misbehaving]? The kids will do whatever they want.

Children may assert their independence or freedom in the form of going to another place without permission. Some parents wonder why this is the case with their children. Ongoing fighting and the complex political situation in Somalia make survival a struggle. Accessing basic necessities like food and drink is difficult for many. In the US, there is governmental assistance such as food stamps, Medicaid, housing, free education, and WIC. An interviewee describes the life in the US as "easy" even though she and others may face hurdles. Her main point is parents need to take advantage of the opportunities here. The problem is that some are unaware of the opportunities. Therefore, if parents do not know how to access resources it becomes extremely difficult to become self-sufficient. Perhaps it is this lack of power that children sense as they strive to become "free" individuals.

The following demonstrates the shift of power from parents to children.

While the legal issues do not concern a relationship between a parent and child, it still shows a change in perception as to who is heard.

Here, if the kids have a problem, I don't want them to see the police. My sons are in jail because the police in this country don't listen. They only listen to little kids. The police need to listen to the adults. At least in Kenya, the police listen to the adults. Also, they will investigate or look at what's going on. Here the police are different. People lie and the police will accept it if you don't speak English. They don't listen.

Some adult perceptions are filtered through laws that provide rights to children.

Children's rights are viewed as limiting the power of adults. They face not simply a change in discipline, but rather a change in cultural norms according to which the children support parental judgment and decision making. Parents face learning the social environment because they are unsure what is deemed acceptable behavior.

Koshen (2007) addresses the change in household interactions due to environmental factors. She describes the household in Somalia as a place where "(I)nformation flows freely" where multiple generations foster relationships based on sharing the same space. She contrasts life in western countries where day-to-day interactions are more divided among generations and privacy highlights individualism, fostering isolation of one person from another. "The younger generation do not share the same perspectives and often have difficulty understanding the open house attitude, leading to the perception that the Western environment is not conducive to this way of life" (Koshen 2007:92).

A young expectant mother who spent her teen years in the US articulates parents' struggle to reconcile with changed environments. "The parents don't know how to control or take care of their kids in this environment. They are learning so many new things here and it's difficult to teach your kids about new things when they need to learn them too." In some ways, living in Somalia represented an easier time because parents could instigate action for the issues or problems they encountered. People knew what to do or how to handle the situation. Here, child rearing practices are difficult to predict.

Child Preference

In Somalia, the birth of a boy or a girl is a blessed event, but boys are preferred. The "congratulatory message at marriage ceremonies is '*Wiil iyo cano*,' which literally means 'Sons and milk,' representing fertility and prosperity and reflecting the importance of males in the partilineal society" (Koshen 2007: 77). Since coming to the US, many parents now prefer girls, particularly for the first born. Why has this shift occurred? The general consensus is that girls are more obedient, cause fewer problems, stay inside, help with younger children, cook, and clean. Some parents claim girls are more dutiful in helping the family monetarily. So, if a girl has a job, she is more willing to share the money and contribute to her family and extended network versus "wasting" earnings on luxury items such as eating at restaurants, going to movies, and buying expensive coffees. "In the US, parents can't talk to boys... When boys are 18 years and they're working I don't ever see the money. When girls go to work, they give me money, but the men they don't share

or let anyone see it but themselves.” Perhaps girls know that once they get married and have children, they have the insight that they may be in a similar situation of providing for their families and children. As a mother with seven children explains, she perceives that men do not carry the same load as women. She believes that women have a more difficult time because they have the responsibility to take care of children, while men do not have that same obligation. None of her sons is married, so by default they do not have the same concerns. One of her daughters is 21, married, and has three children. So the two of them discuss arrangements by which her daughter works and she cares for her grandchildren. Her daughter recently gave birth and plans to apply for jobs after a few months. Her mother will babysit for no charge, but there is an expectation that her daughter will financially contribute to her parents and siblings.

The following depicts of a typical day for a Somali preteen girl. Muna, who is in junior high, asked help with her homework. It was 9 p.m. and she claimed she had no time to do her homework earlier in the day. She needed to read a few pages on American history and the slave trade, then answer questions over the reading. After a while, Muna could no longer concentrate. She said her eyes were crossing because she was tired. She woke up at 5:30 a.m. to eat and help prepare the breakfast for everyone in the family. Then she went to school, came home, and helped cook for dinner. She continued making *roti*/bread (for a late night snack for her siblings, uncles, and grandparents) and then started her homework.

In Somalia it's good to have the first born be a boy.
With a boy being first it's good because he'll work
and give all the money to his parents. In the US

when the boy goes to work, he'll just buy beer or waste it on whatever, like going to a movie. But girls don't drink or they won't drink that much and they don't do bad stuff. In the US, the girls work and they'll give the money to the mom. And they spend their time inside the house or at a friend's house. They don't skip school.

Koshen states that women and their daughters have had to continue their domestic roles regardless of where they are chores need to be taken care of like cooking, raising children, and running the household. Those responsibilities have not waned through time or space. However, men's arenas of responsibility have eroded because of a reduction of obligations and tasks regarding herds. She claims, "[A]s a consequence of urbanization and the high unemployment rate, young men and boys are left to their own devices with nothing to fill the vacuum of their traditional pastoral chores" (Koshen 2007: 78). Koshen (2007: 78, 95) goes on to explain that unemployment and the effects of urbanization has broken the spirit of men who find themselves in a position where their authority has been undermined and women work outside the home to bridge the gap or become household earners.

The case that parents make is not always black and white. Grey areas emerge in the dynamics of children, particularly boys, and their parents. A woman in my sample complained that her sons do not make financial contributions to her household. One of her sons works and has steady employment while two others struggle to find permanent jobs. She complained that her fully employed son always had an excuse for not being able to visit or run errands on his days off. She threatened him by saying that she would not watch his future children when he

needed her. At the same time, he counters her complaints as he works full time and overtime (when it is available) to save money for his upcoming wedding. In his view, there are limits to his obligations.

Women's Roles in Wellbeing: Opportunities and Constraints

Men and women both contribute to decisions that concern health outcomes (Wallman 1996: 11). Yet certain care and knowledge are classified as women's roles. In fact, women's health-seeking activities to treat illnesses at home are a first line of defense against initial symptoms. Consulting with female relatives and neighbors about an illness episode requires no financial commitments (Thomas 1982: 78). Illness increases work for women because they need to complete daily tasks as well as look after sick individuals (Serkkola 1994: 19). People are aware of their options and invest resources where they most likely will see results (Ogden and Kyomuhendo 1996: 144; Thomas 1982: 78). According to Hampshire (2002), women's treatments usually relate to the domestic sphere, i.e., home remedies generated from information, materials, and recommendations exchanged among women in the domestic network. Also, women deal with childbirth and female issues (Hampshire 2002: 1029-30). For example, strategies for female circumcision among Somalis are located within the female domain. Mothers have a prominent voice in the course of planning and decision making (Muhammed 1986: 160).

Somali women have a considerable amount of autonomy in the day-to-day administration and enforcement of positive health-producing behaviors. Women direct care giving by providing and sustaining livelihoods as seen through the care

and upkeep that typify daily household operations. This kind of immediate interaction results in a specialized knowledge base in caring for their families (Serkkola 1994: 124). Thus, maintaining household production alleviates the pressure on maternal and collective reactions.

Women constantly make health decisions based on choices that are shaped by material and mental constraints. Their actions are drawn from experience in orchestrating household economics, networks, and behaviors. The practical knowledge obtained involve women's agency in satisfying household demands by innovative and creative means. Women utilize personal networks of family and friends for advice, information, and remedies. In addition, women often rely on informal connections established through various organizations and activities to meet the needs and demands of the household.

Women make sacrifices to improve and maintain family health. The health of children relies largely on the capacity of the mother to care for her young. Mothers who provide a sense of security and stability are better equipped to provide adequate care and support for their dependents (Flinn 1999: 129). Children suffer, to some extent, if the mother's capacity to care for her young is hampered by ill health. "A woman's capacity to care depends in great part on her own wellbeing, so the tendency to sacrifice her own needs for treatment, adequate nutrition or rest may ultimately prevent her looking after her family as she intends" (Wallman 1996: 12).

Women may fail to attend to their own health needs (Bantebya-Kyomuhendo and Ogden 1996: 205). Mothers often see resources spent on

themselves as depriving money, energy, and time that could be utilized (or rather reserved) for the family. The perception of women's roles in social and biological reproduction bears more weight on a woman's decision not to spend resources on herself. The perceived risk to her own compromised health is viewed as low, compared with other family members' ill health or the potential disruptive changes in household maintenance. Women's responses to their own ill health depend on a few factors: their symptoms, their socioeconomic status, and the duration of their illness (Ogden and Kyomuhendo 1996: 150). Women opt not to spend money and resources on their own health because of the perception that those resources detract from the family's wellbeing. The realities of everyday living remain the same, even if a mother's health is compromised. The work needs to get done and somebody must do it. Household responsibilities continue to accrue while illness settles in. Women do not want to invest resources in their health because their own responsibilities will suffer in the short term. As demonstrated by Antoniotto (1983: 156-7), in Lamadonka, Somalia, women's work straddles agricultural and domestic realms. Work, chores, and family upkeep remain the same despite illness. Illness limits choices of women due to their essential role in childcare and maintenance of the household (Serkkola 1994: 142). The bottom line is that women may not "prioritize" their own health, which can result in serious illness due to a lack of attentiveness. By "ignoring" their own health issues, symptoms may progress until hospitalization is required. In addition, a longer recovery time may be required if women do not receive the appropriate rest and care. In turn, their health could be seriously compromised.

Parental (Non)Action Toward Religious Knowledge

Some children may not learn the Qur'an the way parents and community members would like is a cause for concern. The main reason given relates to the lack of money. Money is a recurring theme because so much of the migration experience to the US is based on economic opportunity. Parents (and children) realize that much is tied to socioeconomic standing. The value of religious learning may compete with economic standing. As a result, several parents cannot afford the expense of Islamic school (*dugsi*). Generally, the community worries for younger generations because they may not be as versed in the Qur'an or *hadiths* as previous generations. The gradual whittling away of moral values that parents and elders hold in high esteem distresses many.

It [Somalia before the war] was good because children could go to *dugsi* and learn the Qur'an. It was five days a week. The children were busy with learning, but here they don't go to *dugsi*. Here they charge \$100/child every month, whereas back in Somalia people pay \$10. We can't afford to send our children to *dugsi*. If you don't have work, you cannot pay the cost. Plus, we have other bills too.

Learning the Qur'an is very important, but sending them to a *dugsi* may cost money.

People generally don't earn much money, therefore, it is difficult to send their children to school to learn the Qur'an. Why can't learning occur in the home?

Many parents reinforce practice within homes—praying regularly, wearing the *hijab* or dressing modestly, observing food and drink prohibitions—although teaching the Qur'an (and learning Arabic) is a matter within itself.

Teachers charge fees based on the need to make a living and for cost of operations. Therefore, they charge more to adjust to US living costs and operational expenses. Generally, parents agreed to pay a small fee for a *mucallin* to teach their children. The median price parents were willing (or could afford to pay) amounted to \$10/month for each child.

A group of individual parents could not afford to send their children to *dugsi*, therefore, the parents in a housing complex along with a handful of others from a nearby development, decided to pool resources together and offer a home-based *dugsi*, five days a week for three hours in the evening. It was free (for those who could not afford the service) and donations were accepted to compensate for the *mucallin's* time, workbooks, and materials. I heard of other grassroots efforts in creating home-based learning, but obstacles arose: a lack of space (due to the overwhelming response), noise complaints from neighbors, and violation of fire codes.

Conclusion

Parents came here with their cultural knowledge intact, but frustration mounts and some end up struggling in unexpected ways. Children recognize that parents shift their parenting style and have different limits concerning parenting practices. It was explained to me that the negativity and mistreatment toward parents stems from the fact that parents are still trying to wade through murky waters of how best to raise children in the face of new concerns, structures, and information. In this process of sorting out varying codes of behavior, children

become frustrated because their parents do not accomplish things they expect. At times, the authority of parents is undermined when children are solicited to interpret or read documents that parents would otherwise be in charge of.

Some recognize that the parents' generation, is having much difficulty because they are the "pioneers here and came into contact with things for the first time." Now that the parents and children have established themselves here, future generations will not struggle and experience hardships the way first comers did.

The next chapter depicts four scenarios in which women are involved in restoring and maintaining households. Phenomenological theory frames each section. Overall, the research demonstrates how ideas of embodiment and consciousness display essential links of the body (pressure and stress to accommodate those who are dependent on others for assistance), social context (living in the diaspora with new expectations versus those who live a broken society), and knowledge (all groups building on old knowledge and tweaking it to fit new situations).

Chapter Five

Women's Actions to Restore and Maintain "Healthy" Families

My access to women occurred in the home and doing the things that women do. Within this context I was able to witness women's efforts to build, inform, rejuvenate, maneuver, and energize the rhythms of daily life. These characteristics in household routines were supported by family members beyond the household. The circle of assistance also involved the generosity of those who possessed knowledge or materials that were not readily available to all.

Networking for Care: Families and Neighbors Tending to Those with a Bad *Maskax*

During a conversation, the executive director of the Somali Foundation, Inc. suggested that I should focus on the life as people know and are experiencing it in Kansas City rather than on how past experiences affect their lives today. Not that the impacts of traumatic and stressful events of the past should be forgotten or minimized, but he suggested I direct my energy toward what is going on now. People are here and should make the most of the opportunities presented to them and it may be difficult to do so when looking at the past. What about Kansas City? According to him, some people have no idea what is happening around them—in terms of local news. How does this affect their ability to live in Kansas City? I took this comment into consideration. I broadened my approach to include day-to-day living in Kansas City. As I continued the research, I realized that daily experiences

could not be separated from the constant continuity of transnational networks of the past, the present, and future. Yet a theory of the everyday provides an approach that integrates time, space, continuity, and morality. Approaching past traumas as a part of living and not as interference to living provides a more fluid outlook and keeps intact the various milieu embedded in the fabric of life.

A theory of everyday life lends itself to illuminating the moral decisions that affect individual and communal wellbeing (Das 2006; Jackson 1996). For example, Deeqa and Fowsiya were neighbors in Jilib before the war. Their relationship continued in the camps. Deeqa explains that Fowsiya, who is a generation older, had four children who all were killed in front of her. She survived, but her *maskax* (brain or mind) is not good and the guns damaged her hearing too. Sometimes she gets confused. She has neither children nor a husband. Perhaps a grandson survived but she does not know. That is why Deeqa and others in the complex help her even though they are not related to her. Fowsiya enjoys the environment in which she lives. She incorporates daily prayers into her routine. By waking up at 5 a.m. to pray, she mentally prepares for her day. Deeqa describes Fowsiya's need to keep busy, so after prayer she gets ready for school. She would prefer to leave right away, but knows that she has to wait. Going to school is her way of keeping her mind active. She likes attending school, being with others, and learning information. Fowsiya states that she has learned five things for the citizenship exam. She is proud of her progress, considering she has never gone to school before and she has only lived in the US for 18 months.

As Deeqa described Fowsiya's situation, I thought about her own. She was recently widowed with children. Fowsiya's husband died unexpectedly and she has not left her house since his death (a practice that some women observe for 100 days). While she has embraced Fowsiya, the same has happened to her. She leaned on Fowsiya for support through her period of bereavement. In reality, they help each other.

Fowsiya explained to me that she likes living with Deeqa. She does not have anyone else. In fact, she had lived in Memphis before coming to Kansas City. Conversations with other Somalis living there revealed that she indeed knew people in Kansas City and decided to move to be near the neighbors she once had. Fowsiya expounded that she likes Kansas City and living with Deeqa and her children. She enjoys watching the children, attending school, and going to organizations that offer help. The only thing she has a problem with is cash. She receives food stamps, but not cash. She would like to monetarily contribute to her new household and to community events. She cannot work because she has lost some of her *maskax* and does not feel okay. She feels better than she did before, now that she lives in Kansas City among friends.

The relationships established back in the homeland or in countries such as Kenya continue over many years. Neighbors from Somalia, or those who established relationships in the camps or those who settled in cities as secondary or tertiary migrants, strive to reconstruct living networks here. In this case, the active search for a familiar network occurred via word of mouth and the phone. Recently arrived refugees have difficulty coming to terms with being on their own.

Therefore, a concerted effort is made to restore familiar surroundings to ease the social transitions when entering new settings. Fowsiya's *maskax* improved after being in the US, because she surrounded herself with people she knew and trusted. She claims everyone she knows lives in this area. Moving to a city with a social network provides the stability and support that she longed for in Tennessee. Individuals were willing to help her there, but she could not rely on those relationships.

Familial networks signal access to a variety of resources. In the following example a single woman from a minority clan tells of being on her own when she initially arrived. She did not find solace until she was able to connect to a group of friends from the camps. She wanted to reestablish the relationships she once had. Reconnecting with those neighbors in the camps enabled her to feel comfortable in an alien land.

I came in August of 1995. I lived in Houston for six months. The services were bad, they were no good. I only received food stamps for four months. I did not know where to go. I didn't know people in Houston. I left and went to Ohio. I stayed there for five months. I got sick and nobody could take me to the hospital. It was a better life than Houston. I had no family, but I knew some people. Then I moved to Kansas City. I have a good life here. I go to school. I didn't do that in the other cities. And I have food stamps. The only problem is that I have no cash. Some of us used to live in one camp. We were neighbors. The friends in Ohio told me that I had friends here in Kansas City. I found out their numbers and called them.

The previous entries highlight the case of a person seeking a network to better adjust to new circumstances. These networks for both single adult women

were those individuals and families they met in the camps. The relationships previously established are sought even if there is no familial relation. For those individuals who do have family, a certain amount of coordination is needed to actually reunite.

We came to the US. We arrived in Atlanta, Georgia on July 12, 1998. We stayed there for one year. This was difficult. My mother-in-law has no *maskax* and she had to apply separately from us because she is an adult. Even though she is old and does not know anything she had to be separate from us. She left five days before us and she arrived in Atlanta. She cried for five days. She did not know anybody. She did have Somali neighbors who tried to help. But after three days her grandson met her... Then eight months later my husband came from Kakuma. When my husband arrived he wanted to go to Ohio because he heard Ohio was a nice place to live and there were a lot of Somalis there. He had never been there but he wanted everyone to go there. So we moved there and it was cold and a lot of snow. We could not find housing and after three months my husband's brother called on Feb. 12, 2000 and said that we should move to Missouri. So everyone came to Missouri.

With the family separating, the old woman made the trip to the US by herself. At the time, her grandson lived in a neighboring state. He traveled to Atlanta to find his grandmother. Her daughter-in-law and some of her children arrived a couple of days later, yet the family was not reunited for another eight months. An underlying tension in the narrative outlines the case of the sense of family. Somalis define family in quite a different way than the Western nuclear family.

Petri Hautaniemi (2007) addresses this issue in his discussion of Somali family reunification. Finnish authorities and Somali immigrants have differing

perceptions of family. He compares the broad network of Somali relations, including multigenerational relationships, and the wide reaching implications for reciprocal relations among parents and those of dependent children, polygamous families, and clan dynamics in relation to familial responsibility and trust. The notion of family and home providing a proven welfare system connotes complex kin arrangements. These images contrast with Western nuclear family households and state run welfare systems. While Hautaniemi focuses on Finnish law and its need to cement familial ties through blood (specifically DNA testing), his main point underlines the hardening of perceptions concerning public and private law in relation to blood and social relations.

Perhaps these varying levels of familial interests in the Somali diaspora should be examined under the lens of globalization. Due to war and forced migrations, who and what relationships constitute a familial unit may create a further distance of family definitions compared to US norms. The following two scenarios describe struggles with identity and how families co-opt others into their applications before departing the camps.

My grandfather is listed as my father and that's how we came. I was 11 when I came here. We are now trying to figure out how to list him, to bring him over since a grandfather is considered to be once removed. My husband cannot list him as his father-in-law, but my husband will go there soon and hopefully bring him here.

By the time I came to Kenya, the paperwork (application) was not right. They put it in the trash, so my sister's family had to apply again. . . . This time, my sister put my name on the application too and it was rejected because at that time I was 22

years old. The workers said that I had to apply on my own because I'm too old to be considered as a part of my sister's family. The workers emphasized that only my sister's daughters and sons would be accepted. I didn't fall into that category so I would have to reapply for myself. Everyone knew that this may take a long time and I would not have my main family around. So my sister's friend put mine on his application. He is such a nice man. He only had him and his wife and they had a daughter but she had died, so they put my name on the application as if I was his daughter. So I changed my name to match what was written on the application. (The woman stressed that this man was not even family but he was willing to help the family out.) So that man helped us a lot and we are thankful for that.

Extended families include both paternal and maternal relatives, as well as individuals who are distantly related or belong to other clans (Koshen 2007: 77).

The example below demonstrates the collapsing and broadening of familial relationships in terms of horizontal and vertical kin relations. The "new" household unit that is formed demonstrates the flexible role of caring, trust, and reciprocity that serves as a basis for social relations.

After the war broke out, a group of 12 people left Kismayoo and traveled to Kakuma where they stayed for three years. Then they fled to Nairobi because they had been attacked in the camp. Sixteen months later they were selected to come to the US. The family, consisting of the interviewee, her husband and son, and her brother-in-law and his family, arrived to Dallas in 2002.

We had no friends and we didn't speak English. We split up because we are a big family and we could not stay in one apartment. Dallas was too expensive. I worked and my job did not pay enough money for the rent. I went to Minnesota a few months later. My friends told me to come. By the

time I went to Minnesota, I got a job in a chicken store. I was working for \$9.50/hour. My husband was not getting any (or not giving me any) money. That's why my brother keeps after my son now. My husband and I got a divorce. He would not give me money, what he had was his and he didn't give me anything. In 2003, my friend [a relative] had a sick son and she could not help him. His father said he could not take care of the son either. I said that I'd care for him. He was 18 years old and had a brain problem. I took her son and brought him to Minnesota. However, there were a lot of people living together. Nine people lived together. The 18 year old and I needed a different house.

Essentially, she found that Minnesota was too expensive and life was challenging, because she neither spoke English nor drove a car. She moved to Kansas City after talking to other people. The decision was based on two main criteria: employment and the cost of living. She describes the move as a positive one, but not without difficulty.

The boy came with me and he went to high school and finished. I rented my own place and the 18 year old found a job too, part-time. Really, when I came to Missouri I felt like crying because the boy was sick, I didn't know anybody, no English, no car, it was difficult to get around. A friend from Cuba helped me out with rides. The boy was sick and he needed to go to the doctor. The Cuban drove us to St. Luke's for appointments. Sometimes I go to work and other times the boy is sick. Who's gonna pay the house bill? That's why I go to second shift because I need to be available in the morning to take him to the hospital or to pick up medications. . . . It was hard for me when I came here because I didn't know anyone and I didn't speak English. The US is good. It helps me. In the US the problems are no big deal but when I first came and then helping and raising the boy, I could not ask the US government or anybody in English as to how to help

him. When I'd go to the hospital, the doctor had to call Virginia for an interpreter. When I feel this problem it's okay because it's my family. I could deal with it. It's a good place to live.

This woman has been employed ever since her first job in Minnesota. While she has stayed in Kansas City, her employment has fluctuated between working part-time and full-time or two part-time jobs. She wants more work because she has to take care of her nephew, send money to relatives in Kenya, pay back the US government for her travel expenses (from Kenya to the US), and save money for her citizenship application. She attends school when she is able. She would like to speak English fluently and pass her citizenship exam. She admits that concentrating is difficult for her because while in Somalia she suffered a head injury (she was beaten with the butt of a gun). She claims that her *maskax* is not as good as it used to be, but she does what she can to help herself and others.

Koshen (2007: 93) acknowledges that "alternative support systems," (i.e., fictive kin), arise among Somalis who may not have blood or clan relations. Those individuals who may not have an extensive network of family often cultivate relationships with those who also possess few relatives. They establish a different network of support for those who do not share common familial members. This process continues as Somalis incorporate others into a new 'family' or household.

I documented several stories of women helping others who live with a bad *maskax*. Taking care of elderly members or supporting those who have difficulty adjusting to life after war and forced migrations include such accounts. The amount of care varies on an individual basis, but some of the methods for treatment

generally include going to the mosque, having the Qur'an read (or readers may visit a home), praying, seeing a medical doctor, and home remedies (like putting *macsaro* (oil) and *biyo cad* (water) on the head). For example, an elderly person reported that her overall health has improved since coming here (she has had surgeries and has access to medical care), but her mind is a problem. She attributes her current mental state to her experiences abroad and her age. Her daughter states that she constantly loses things and has difficulty remembering. She has been to the doctor but has not seen direct results from her visits. Her treatment relies upon a few Qur'anic readers.

The individuals I interviewed who claim to have bad *maskaxo* (plural of *maskax*) generally live in large households. Other individuals who have bad *maskaxo* may live alone or with one other person, but they live near family members and constantly visit one another. The larger households that care for people with bad *maskaxo* are more likely to provide a support system than smaller ones. There are more people who are single and have bad *maskaxo* than married individuals with bad *maskaxo*. Basically, the data indicate that people with bad *maskaxo* should not live in isolation. Interaction and help by families for those with bad *maskaxo* contributes to overall individual and household wellbeing.

In terms of individuals who care for those with bad *maskaxo*, one person who has a job and one person who is in a transitional state care for someone who has a bad *maskax* and six people who do not have jobs have this responsibility as well. Clearly people who work are not as able to care for those with bad *maskaxo*. This raises the question of what kind of care is required for those individuals with

bad *maskaxo*? Each individual with bad a *maskax* requires a different kind of care. For example, one individual with a bad *maskax* is able to do things by himself, however, he may have episodes where his mind is not right while another individual requires supervision at a closer level.

***Saar* in the Home and Beyond**

An aspect of day-to-day wellbeing of a small minority of women living in Kansas City is the realm of spirits. Much of the scholarly material written in relation to spirits and Somali women refers to *saar* (also spelled *zar* and *zaar*). Scholars have addressed the origins of *zar* since the beginning of the 20th century. It exists in the Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia, Arabia, and southern Iran and similar phenomenon is found in Northern Africa (Boddy 1989: 131-2). *Zar* has adapted to different situations overtime and a revival of the practice can be seen throughout the Gulf (Doumato 2000: 177-8). The practice takes on a distinct form from region to region. The word *zar* is thought to have derived from Persian or it could be an adulterated form of an Arabic word, *zahar*, the meaning of which is “he visited” and is often enunciated as *zahr*, implying “he became visible, perceptible, or manifest” (Boddy 1989: 132). Some researchers propose that *zar* rituals originated in Persia or the Sudan. Others maintain that Ethiopia is the place of origin due to the reports of early travelers and classifies the word *zar* as Amharic (Constantinides 1991: 84-5). The most common belief is that *zar* began in Ethiopia and spread to Arabia, northern Sudan, and Egypt illustrating different manifestations (Lewis 1998: 122). It has also been suggested that the word was originally Arabic and incorporated into

Amharic, then back into Arabic by Ethiopian slaves who reportedly practiced *zar* ceremonies in the Gulf region (Doumato 2000: 171). Practices vary among local cults, in addition to the social experiences expressed throughout the diagnosis, illness, and healing rituals. Possession falls within a particular village's expectation of symptoms and in relation to their understanding of spirits (Boddy 1989: 135). A *zar* gathering promotes healing that affected a person's physical or psychological well-being. *Zar* possession is not the same as being possessed by a bad spirit and it does not have an Islamic origin. The point was to appease, not to exorcize the spirit.

In Kansas City only a few women knew the term *saar*, they spoke of *barkiin*. Admittingly, I was unfamiliar with the term. I had read about other types of *saar* spirits in Somalia such as *mingis*, *boorane* (also spelled *borane*), *sharax*, *wadaaddo*, and *xayaat*. These spirits, from pre-Islamic beliefs, are linked to psychosomatic disorders in Somalia. Generally speaking, these spirit-based illnesses are associated with the ever-changing categories of geography, occupation, and status. After stressing that I wanted to learn more about "*ruuxaan*" (spirit) (plural, *dadkaan*), a few women directed me to others who had a *ruuxaan*, specifically *barkiin*. Therefore my sample was not random. Of the 32 women I interviewed 11 had *barkiin* and one individual once had *mingis*. A few knew the term *boorane*, but I did not interview anyone who had it. *Barkiin* is a type of *saar* spirit, even though a few women insisted that *saar* was something different. *Saar* involves the spirits that afflict individuals, the illnesses they create, and the rituals that are necessary to placate invading spirits. The different *saar* spirits often require particular healing techniques that differ from place to place.

The shifting balance of women living with *barkiin* and everyday life captures the adaptive nature of relationships with spirits, others who live with *barkiin*, and networks of those who have *barkiin* in other cities. Spirits exemplify a facet of wellbeing in that women who have *barkiin* hold gatherings where healing takes place. A gathering such as this requires much coordination and planning because there is no specialist in Kansas City to conduct the session. Therefore, women (and at times with the help of male counterparts) pull together resources to bring in a specialist to administer a healing session. When a specialist cannot be brought in from out of town, people treat themselves. These adaptive techniques draw upon home remedies.

A woman differentiates *barkiin* from other spirits, specifically *boorane*.

Barkiin is when you get mad, it comes out of you.
The *ruuxaan* or *dadkaan* speak and they said what they need, like a cow, a goat, or blood, and you may need to wash the face with something special.
Boorane is something else. With *borane*, you never know who they are, but they'll let you know, they'll tell you who they are. My grandfather knows how to fix it. He is very good. He is known as a big man when it comes to this. The *ruuxaan* talk and people bring gifts. The *ruuxaan* already know what happens.

Marja Tiilikainen (2007) writes of “peacefulness” among a sample of women living in Finland who have *mingis*. The same is true for women living with *barkiin* in Kansas City. A person can live with *barkiin* for extended periods of time without becoming ill. However, unmet demands may disturb the spirit to make a body unwell.

Associated symptoms with *barkiin* and other *saar* spirits include, but are not limited

to, malaise, headaches, frenzy, vomiting, fevers, fainting, anxiety, agitation, and aches and pains throughout the body or in specific locations.

Yes, I have it now. But when I'm sick nothing happens. It doesn't come every month. I'm not sick every month or all the time. I only get help when the dancing happens. This doesn't happen very often because there is no one to do it here. There is no person here that leads. There is no one that speaks Arabic. So we have to bring someone here. Sometimes I get a headache and I don't feel well. It happens when I'm sitting and not doing anything or when there's fighting.

This woman explains that her symptoms are brought on by fighting and idleness.

For her it is not a constant issue, but when her symptoms occur she has a difficult time treating them because what works best for her is the ceremony with someone officiating.

Another woman describes having symptoms in Kenya, and her strategy for diagnosis and treatment.

I know I have it [*barkiin*] because I get sick first. The first time I was having *barkiin* I was in the camp and was 23 or 24 years old. I didn't have a period for 4 months and I was pregnant. At 5 months I lost the baby, I went to the doctor and they were no help. So I went to Somalia to find help. The people there found out that I had *barkiin*. They said that I couldn't have kids. They danced and drummed and gave me coffee. They did some stuff like that and they made it okay. [She now has children.]

Such sentiments were frequent. While living in Kenya an individual would fall ill, suffer a miscarriage, or undergo intense headaches. No one in the camp could help, so the sufferer travelled to Somalia to determine the cause of her ailing state. Specialists identified *barkiin* and provided treatments.

All of the women I interviewed had their first experience and diagnosis of *barkiin* in either Somalia or Kenya. Due to the difficulty of treating the *ruuxaan*, whether it is *barkiin*, *mingis* or *boorane*, some women negotiate with the spirit before leaving Somalia or Kenya because it is too difficult to maintain the relationship abroad. Reports of negotiating with the *ruuxaan* before coming to the US suggest a strategy of settlement. A woman explains she used to have *ruuxaan*, specifically *mingis*, yet she no longer has it. As she left camps in Kenya, she asked the *mingis* to stay away and not follow her to the US. She explained to the *ruuxaan* that people in the US do not have *mingis* and it is difficult to meet demands. Since the treatment is not widely available in her new home, she gave everything the *ruuxaan* wanted before she left the camp. After pleading with the *ruuxaan*, the *ruuxaan* agreed to leave her alone. And she has not had a visit or heard from the spirit for several years.

Different strategies are employed to treat the symptoms for those who are unable to get rid of the spirit while abroad. Some opt for a variety of self-treatment methods to calm the *barkiin*, which include, but are not limited to, *uunsi* (incense), *catar* (perfume), *jawhar* (precious or special items), *udgoon* (fragrance), *xalwo* (a sweet food), and *bun* (coffee). These are some of the same treatments individuals used before arriving to the US. The *barkiin* will let an individual know what is accepted and what is not. A person may invite people over and may drink *bun*, burn *uunsi*, and eat certain foods. Even though a person invites a group, it is small and is not as effective as it would be if they had a person to help with a “real” group session.

Some attempts to treat *barkiin* work, others fail. As this women describes, the best treatment for her is a gathering headed by a specialist.

I didn't have it until I was older. It is difficult to explain. You go crazy and you dance a lot. You open your hair and eat what the *ruuxaan* wants and do what your heart tells you. Here we don't have really good people. When we do it people have different ways. Some people keep to themselves, some have their mind on the beat. You live in another state. We need a professional that comes with speaking Arabic and knows about medicine. I feel sick, I get headaches, my body aches all over.

The needs of those who require a specialist (who can communicates with the *barkiin* in Arabic) may go unmet for a period of time. *Barkiin* gatherings do not happen often because there is no one to administer a healing session locally. The parties happen once a year, sometimes twice. I witnessed two encounters with *barkiin*. Both took place at *aroos* (marriage) celebrations. Each event lasted a few minutes and only two or three people participated. I have not witnessed an actual gathering solely dedicated to placating or treating *barkiin*. During my interaction with the Somali community over 21 months, four sessions took place. I was unable to attend any of them.

Since no specialist lives in Kansas City, those who have *barkiin* exchange information about specialists in other cities. It is difficult and expensive to get someone to come to Kansas City and perform. Participants in the healing session pay a fee for his services. The rate for such a session at the time of the research ranged from \$20-30, an exorbitant sum for Kansas City Somali women. Where to hold the session is a concern. Many homes are unable to accommodate a sizable

crowd with dancing, drumming, and healing. Women don't want to rent a hall because they would prefer to spend money on the treatment.

Bringing someone from out of town does not ensure proper treatment. The two quotes below explain access issues for those women.

There is a woman who lives in Michigan that knows how to treat *barkiin*. I don't have money to pay her. There is another lady in Iowa. Since I don't have money, I can't receive services. I don't have work, so I don't get SSI. No money, no services.

I used to take care of it before, but there is nobody to do it here. And if somebody does come to help, there is no money to pay. I don't work. I go to school. So if I feel a headache, I just leave it. I don't do anything. I need someone to come and help, but I have no money to pay for the professional to come and help.

Both of these women recognized that the person who comes is a professional and should be compensated for his work. These women choose not to participate in a gathering because they lack money for the specialist. Therefore, they decided to leave the *barkiin* alone or resort to home remedies.

Women who pay for a professional make certain arrangements: travel, lodging, and food. In addition, women reassure the healer that individual treatments are needed. The specialist may not view the trip worthwhile if few women participate. Steps taken may involve a few or several women contributing to a fund that will pay for a plane ticket. Households will volunteer space for the guest to stay. Meals must be cooked. If there is no suitable home a community center will be rented to hold the event.

As women plan and discuss with others for an upcoming *barkiin* gathering, women in other cities may want treatments as well. So a trip for a professional healer may include other cities and sessions. For example, a specialist came from San Diego to Kansas City. His plane ticket was \$400 and it cost \$20 for someone to get help. His trip coincided with another appointment in Ohio. After his session in Kansas City, he and a handful of others traveled to Ohio. Networking on this scale provides access to those who may not otherwise receive treatment and it maximizes income.

These gatherings are not to be videotaped and fighting sometimes results if it is recorded. While the example below demonstrates the opposite, the reason given is that a wedding took place in Somalia in absence of the groom. Therefore it was appropriate to videotape so he (and his relatives) could witness everything that happened in the wedding.

Yes, everybody comes together with drums, dancing, and clapping. In Somalia and Kenya there's *barkiin*, but it's not in Kansas City. Back in Somalia men, women, and kids—everybody comes together, but here it's too difficult. I know when it's time for me to give something for the *barkiin*. I won't be able to sleep until I use perfume and *uunsi*. I've had it since about 7 years old. I'll show you an *aroos* (wedding) in Somalia where they videotaped people with *barkiin*. Normally it's not on video, but the groom was in the US and he should see everything that happened. If I need something, I just go to the pharmacy. I just ask, that I need medicine for my problem, and the person working will pull something off the counter. I just buy it. The problem with it is sometimes the *barkiin* does not accept me to treat my headaches with *daawo* (medicine).

Since this kind of relationship with spirits is not commonly found in the US, some women are nervous as to how it is perceived, while others believe the majority of Americans would respond negatively. Others remain unsure as to what the outcome would be.

There is nobody here to do it. Nobody here knows Arabic. People need it. People get headaches, but they don't want to tell people because they are afraid of what others might do or what the government would do.

The Somali community is diverse. Not everyone agrees or accepts that spirits interact with individuals. One woman simply stated, "No, I don't believe it, because it's no good." In her view, Islam rejects such practices. She maintains that Somalis have one religion and communicating with a spirit is outside of what is deemed religiously important. "The religion does not believe it. I pray every day, five times a day. They are crazy. *Saar*, *barkiin*, and *mingis* I do not believe. I believe Allah will not like me, but he likes me because I pray five times a day. If I make like that [have a relationship with a *ruuxaan*] He does not like me." Not all people have *barkiin*, nor does everyone agree to its authenticity, validity, and correctness. Some people see a conflict with being afflicted with a *ruuxaan* and religion, or what Allah would deem appropriate or permissible. This finding is in agreement with Tiilikainen's (2007) assessment of the role and interpretation of Islam in day-to-day living among Somalis in the diaspora. In addition, there may be conditions that require extra treatment (i.e., request from a religious specialist) for a mental problem (*dewell*). These categories are deemed socially acceptable because Islam acknowledges it. A common treatment is to read the Qur'an. Others may go to the

doctor. According to women who have *barkiin*, it is a condition that has little to do with Islam. Those who have it see no contradiction with Islam, while those who find themselves in opposition to it find relationships with spirits inconsistent with Islam. This description conforms to Tiilikainen's research in Finland (2007: 223) where women believe *saar* is part of everyday life and attach its meaning with cultural significance.

The majority of scholars who write about spirit possession relate it to the social context, meaning that possession is in response to a strong patriarchal society or women's inferior status (Lewis 1996; Lewis 1989; Doumato 2000: 177), class and social relations (Constantinides 1991), relationships that enhance women's power (Crapanzano and Garrison 1977), and relationships that surround power (Morsy 1993: 142-3). Others claim that possession allows an individual to voice concerns that would not otherwise be accepted or allow for "escape from everyday life," and, thus may alleviate headaches, pains, and nervous system issues (Sengers 2003: 121). At times, possession relationships depict an individual struggling to overcome oppression when that particular individual's consciousness is temporarily suspended. The message translates into a contradictory situation of an individual having the greatest potential for overcoming hardships when consciousness (intentional agency) is absent. Since the mind cannot recall a possession event, the event itself becomes suspect. (Keller 2002: 2-4).

Keller's (2002: 74) discussion of instrumental agency promotes a strategy that strives to disrupt dualistic thought, to channel the experience as lived by the possessor and possessed, and to capture complex negotiations. "The terms used by

possession traditions to describe the dynamic of the possessed body include mounted, played, pounced, wielded, emptied, and entered. Reflecting on these terms, the most fundamental analysis of the agency of the possessed body is that it is instrumental in the possession. Consciousness is overcome, and the body is used like a hammer or played like a flute or mounted like a horse so that the possessed body is an *instrumental agency* in the possession.” Keller’s conception of instrumental agency places negotiation at the heart of the matter. Possessed bodies are not conscious entities, rather they are vessels that allow a spirit, ancestor, or deity to make something known. Therefore, the analysis of possession does not directly look at women who are possessed; rather, possession is read as a normal mode of expression through time.

The notion of intricate negotiations can be mirrored in the relationship of the spirit and the individual alongside those of networks with others who experience spirits in the same location and beyond it. Individual networks trigger wider networks within the diaspora. It is possible to extrapolate from the intricate negotiation taking place from the possessor and the possessed and situate this interaction on a plane which redefines a social world. People who are possessed make something known through the ties they have to each other—whether partaking in a home-based healing without a specialist or reinforcing social networks to others who are afflicted in cities that have limited access to a specialist. These connections happen in other capacities and also operate in a normal mode of expression over time.

Women continue to hold a relationship with a spirit despite the move across borders. Individuals network within communities and involve others in neighboring and distant cities to arrange for healing sessions. People adapt to and accommodate the situation by treating themselves. A minority of women see this as an integral part to their own wellbeing. Others do not want to admit to the *ruuxaan* presence, while others reject the existence of such spirits altogether and see it in opposition to the principles of Islam.

“It’s been nine years and she needs to take the test!”: Somali Women’s Pursuit of Citizenship

Individuals who do not communicate well in English or who are nonliterate face many challenges in the process of becoming a citizen. Sharing information among members who have both passed and failed the exam provides a background as to how to approach the interview, examiner, and questions. Knowing what kind of attitude and behavior to display during the interview is talked about as well. Based on the experiential stories that individuals divulge, modeling the interview is a technique that many students engage in before the exam. Continuing practice, holding mock interviews, critiquing spoken words, using appropriate body language, showing how to exude confidence, and partaking in conversations, are some of the strategies employed. Impressions cannot be underestimated in the process. Somalis believe these impressions affect examiners’ assessments. Therefore, individuals want to be “doing everything right” by shaking hands (even though some women would not ordinarily do so), saying key phrases in English (that would make

one appear to be competent in English even if one struggles with the language), and smiling at appropriate times. Examinees feel that these actions may help offset other deficiencies examiners notice.

The rumors and stories people share about exam experiences are beneficial because they demonstrate a network of support for increasing positive outcomes for those seeking US citizenship. The stories and rumors about other people's experiences during the exam have the potential to turn into legendary status—whether they detail someone raising the left hand for swearing in or inadvertently speaking Somali—people learn from others' mistakes.

The discussion is not limited to local experiences. These stories transmit to others across state lines. Some individuals who experience difficulties consider their chances in other state exams. How do other states handle their interview process and how do they compare with Missouri? The exam produces more stress and anxiety for pre-ESL learners. Some of the older ladies I spoke to were frustrated with the slow progress they had made toward gaining their citizenship. There was an account of a woman who spoke little English. The examiner picked up on this and deviated from the standard script and asked for word definitions. The woman did not expect this and became nervous. She failed, and discussed going to another state to take the exam in the hope that the examiners would be more understanding. This is an example of how one strategizes alternative ways to pass the exam.

Individuals may pay for an advocate, which is common and recommended by participants, ESL instructors, and social service agencies. An advocate proves

beneficial especially if she does not express herself well or if incorrect information exists on the application. At the time of the research, the fee was \$390, and the standard fee for an advocate was \$150. [Note: USCIS fees changed on July 30, 2007. Now, one can expect to pay a few hundred dollars more.]

Belonging to American society and being “fully accepted” motivate some people to attain citizenship. The discussion of partial and full rights underlies this issue of being official. Labeling someone “official” contributes to being legitimate. So if someone is not “official” she does not feel legitimate. “I want to stay here and get a passport,” said one woman, “I want to be like you and other Americans. I want to be part of American society by being official.”

“To be like other Americans” is a phrase I often heard as a motivating force for becoming a citizen. The desire to be part of a functioning society, to just live daily life, describes the sentiment. It is the idea that citizenship is preferable because a citizen has more rights and has more protection than a refugee. For example, if a noncitizen was to commit a crime and be punished, she would not get the same treatment as if she were a citizen. Citizenship promotes equality (Holston and Appadurai 1999).

Once individuals successfully pass their exams, many want to contribute to society in some capacity. While some individuals may have very specific ideas in mind of how to do this, others are not sure how to accomplish their goals. Regardless, the image of people reaching their aspirations and harboring the desire to give back so others can achieve their dreams is powerful. As an example, I spoke with a family where the matriarch had just successfully passed her exams. Her son

joked and said now that his mother is a citizen, she wants to be president. She wanted to attend a local university and do “more” than she is doing now. Even though she is old, she spoke of wanting to do something important with her new status. She would vote in upcoming elections, but beyond that she was unsure how she could contribute to society. She wanted to be a productive member despite her professed lack of literacy and English skills.

Even though the woman is unsure how she can contribute to society, she already does. This woman holds the idea of giving back in high esteem. As a way of contributing, older ladies often assist others who settle in Kansas City. They take care of children and help them stay out of trouble. These activities do not require one to be a citizen. Positive contributions can be made regardless of status. Dreams of citizenship may inspire an individual to do something beyond normal activity, but in reality, everyday living consumes most of one’s time and energy.

One action people take with their new-found status is to sponsor others, but sponsorship costs money. Some people feel stretched as they save money for citizenship, sponsorship, remittances, and bills. As one woman explains, “I have two kids in Ethiopia. I want to bring them over but I have no money. I’m a citizen but there’s no money so what I do is limited.” Depending on one’s social network and its access to so-called opportunities, particular circumstances influence the process of sponsoring family members. As one woman described her future plans, “I don’t have a job, so I can’t help. I want to send money, but I can’t. I can’t work. I went to SSI for help and they didn’t help me there. Since I am sick, I can’t do anything and I

am not able to help. If I am able to get my citizenship, I will bring others here. I am able to help in that way.”

Study participants’ average length of stay in the US totaled seven years and three months. This timeframe is significant because a person can apply to be a citizen after one has been a permanent resident for five years. However, if she does not become a citizen after seven years of being a permanent resident, then she loses her benefits. Therefore, when I conducted my research the incentives surrounding citizenship were on people’s minds. As one daughter discussed her mother’s study habits, she exclaimed, “It’s been nine years and she needs to take the test!” The threat of losing government assistance is a real motivational force to pass, although some unrealistic expectations seeped into the psyches of some. Some believed that once a person has attained citizenship everything becomes easier and access to services is more or less guaranteed. A point of contention is Medicaid. A woman commented, “When I go somewhere, you need to be a citizen and I need my Medicaid. I don’t get food stamps even though I’d qualify . . . I need my Medicaid. Medical costs are expensive. What am I to do?” Citizenship will not solve all of her problems, including access to Medicaid. It is true she will meet one level of eligibility, but the expectation that gaining citizenship will make life remarkably better is overrated. Al-Sharmani (2007) writes Somalis residing in Cairo fantasize gaining citizenship in a Western country. Citizenship has advantages, but it does not eliminate the experience of being “racialized and economically marginalized” (Al-Sharmani 2007: 89).

Overall, my research focuses on redefining local moral worlds. To do that, Somalis attempt to preserve aspects of their culture along with making accommodations and adjustments while living in the diaspora. Individuals strive to attain citizenship for a variety of reasons. The string that ties citizenship to redefining local moral worlds is the desire to legitimately participate in a functional democratic society which provides security and protection. Citizenship lessens the fear of deportation. Many believe that citizenship is a major factor for living a quiet, peaceful life. They crave a return to everyday living without an underlying fear of something bad happening. Although some people may dream of a better life through their new status, not much changes. Citizenship is a way to “pay it forward.” If sponsorship is made to a family member, then that family member is expected to do the same for someone else.

The Reward and Punishment of Remittances

People who work or secure money to be sent abroad contribute to the wider good of family networks. Sending money is a social and moral obligation to demonstrate that family is not “forgotten.” For those who have limited opportunities, remittances may be the key to making ends meet. To be able to send remittances demonstrates devotion to family through sacrifices made here. In turn, an expectation exists to “pay it forward” when a family member arrives to the US, where hope is placed on that individual to assist family back home, just as networks helped that individual. However, sending remittances may involve problems. Remittances can be sensitive because not everyone is able to provide for those who

need money in Somalia or Kenya. As a result, an underlying tension exists between the perceived obligation to send money, while providing for family members and community events in the US.

One of my interviewees left his son to come to the US. The son now lives in Kenya with his uncle's family. His brother has five children, so the interviewee tries to send enough not only for his son but for everyone. He sends \$200 every month to Kenya. Once he becomes a citizen, he plans to bring his son here. However, he also has a brother and a sister living in Somalia. Neither one of them has a job. Since he sends money to his brother's family in Kenya every month, he cannot afford to send money to his siblings in Somalia on a regular basis. He sends money when he can, but it is usually only twice a year. Other siblings and family members try to contribute on an ongoing basis, so that money received is spread out monthly. The result is that the responsibility does not solely lie on the shoulders of one individual and the recipient family members do not go without monthly help.

Strategizing among familial members to benefit extended relatives is not a new phenomenon in the diaspora. For example, Simons reports that the pastoral population sent children to family members in urban settings to obtain education. Children would learn new skills and gain employment, enabling them to support their families. This strategy also benefitted city dwellers because it lessened their obligation to extended families (Simons 1996: 174).

The following situation depicts familial negotiations of those living in the diaspora to help offset the expenditures for caring for family abroad.

I do send money back home to my family and not only my family, but my wife's family too. I think now probably like three to five hundred dollars a month which is a lot, really a lot of money for us to pay, but we do from time-to-time. I don't send money every month, because I don't have money every month. But I do it time-to-time whenever I get more money than I have. My brother does all the dirty work. He sends every month and we had a deal between me and him. I said, "When I finish school I'll start paying and you don't have to do a thing. While I'm in school take care of them." So he sends them about \$200 which is enough to sustain them. And I do send money here and there. And now since I took my son, I send a lot of money, cuz all the money that was going to his babysitter now I send back home and that is about \$250 a month which is a lot of money for him to have plus what they're getting from my brother, so we do some of that.

In this particular scenario two brothers, one in the US and one in Europe, agreed to an arrangement to care for parents and siblings living in Muqdisho. This kind of partnership continues to build familial relationships abroad and ensures that others are cared for. This relationship is not just about sending money, but over the orchestration of how money is provided on a short- and long-term basis. The arrangement described above works, provided that the interviewee completes his university program and finds a suitable job. It may take a handful of years to see how this pact plays itself out. Sacrifices have been made for his and his brother's migration; therefore, they must succeed in their pursuits to provide support for those they left behind living (Koshen 2007: 86).

The student sent his first born to live with his parents in Muqdisho. The motivating factor was for his son to learn Somali correctly. Learning the language

correctly helps build a sense of being Somali. The opportunity for his son to live in Muqdisho with his parents and siblings, in his eyes, could not be a better arrangement. He knows that his son will be well cared for as he continues to pursue his academic career. So why not send the money they would normally spend on child care, and give his son the opportunity to learn Somali language and culture. He sees this as a way to build an intimate knowledge base through experience.

Life circumstances prevent individuals from sending money on a regular basis and in significant. The two previous excerpts exemplify cases where cash flow is consistent. The first person has had stable employment for several years. He jumps at the opportunity to work overtime and earn extra money. He sends money every month. Others send money when they can. The next description of money transfer is a student who has scholarships, loans, and short-term employment appointments, and whose spouse works, to generate income. Both of their efforts go toward supplementing familial household financial responsibilities abroad.

The amount sent is significant. "If people have no money for food, they'll die. If you send \$50 there, it's something, whereas \$50 here is nothing." The fees charged are noticeable in a small amount. Therefore, people wait until they have a large sum. This is another reason why individuals strategize with one another in taking turns to stagger remittances.

This type of strategizing is done not just across households, but within households as well. Some households rotate which family remittances will be sent. For example, a household has one working partner yet both spouses have relatives abroad who need money. The wife needed to watch her children and her husband

worked a minimum wage job and could not afford to pay bills here and send money to everyone. Therefore, he saved over a period of months to send money to his relatives and the next time remittances are sent, it will be to her family.

According to Al-Sharmani (2007: 89), household members share responsibilities through obligations and expectations. “By making collective decisions about who lives with whom and where, relatives across nation-states share the burdens of securing livelihood, the rearing of children and younger siblings, and providing care for the elderly and the invalid in the family.” This process of determining what is best for the collective family may stimulate conflict with individuals who have their own ideas of what may work best for themselves and others. For example, some individuals may put their lives on hold to fulfill familial obligations for others. Single individuals are most at risk of not being able to pursue their own desires because they do not have the responsibilities that married people with children have.

Some family members living in Kenya or Somalia do not grasp the demands and constraints placed on low-income families here. The perception is that the US is the land of milk and honey where wealth is plentiful. So some family members in Somalia and Kenya are left wondering why relatives send so little while they enjoy riches and economic prosperity in the US.

Hundreds of thousands of people who live outside of Somalia and Kenya communicate regularly back home, so why does the myth persist? First, beliefs about the nature and access to money are reinforced by popular media. Images

projected in films, news, songs, and stories emphasize what is already thought to be true—an endless supply of riches and luxury for those living the “good life.”

Second, people claim that the orientations (before leaving Kenya) feed into a cycle of deception by supplementing the images from media and tales told from abroad. In theory, these “official” presentations prepare one for the expected reality. So, agencies who are recognized and sponsored by international money legitimize the myth.

Third, dream of moving abroad fuels hope for the future. People want to believe that the life in the US is real. Even though it may be a false reality, dreams of migrating to the West play a role in survival. Rousseau, Said, Gagne, and Bibeau (1998) discuss dreams and aspirations of young Somali men who want to come West. They fill time with fantasies of a better life. This is described as a “space of imagination” or “dream space” during premigration. Yet, those who long for resettlement in a land of wealth and riches have a difficult time dissociating the dream for everyday living.

Lastly, refugees themselves do not want to dash the hopes of others. Cindy Horst (2007) discusses expectations and realities in relation to remittances among the diasporic community in Minneapolis. She affirms that providing an image or “keeping up appearances” may be a key for those who need hope while living in dire situations such as Dadaab.

There is a dance of pressure and guilt for both groups who send or do not send remittance. People are well aware of the situation. For example, “Yes, I send money sometimes. . . I send money when I can. When I have two jobs, I am able to

send more money home. My family, they're old and sick. Maybe they'll die. I'm the only one who lives here to send money. My family needs money, therefore I work nights." Anna Lindley (2006: 21) reports that Somalis living in the United Kingdom who rely on state supported funds still send money to Somalia even with their fixed income status. Those individuals and families are able to make do while those living in Somalia have limited resources and opportunities. The same is true for some families in Kansas City.

Others talk about feelings of guilt when one is unable to meet the demands of family.

If there's no work, it's hard to pay the bills. I have a brother in Kenya and I want to help him, but it's hard to help because we have bills here. It's hard to help if you don't have cash. No job, no cash. My brother has 11 kids and if I have \$100 I'll send it because the kids get sick and can't go to the doctor unless they have cash. He'll call and tell me that they don't have food. I do what I can but I don't have a job so I can't help as much as I'd like.

Some have a difficult time coming to terms with the fact that they may not be able to provide, others overwork themselves to contribute to those abroad.

While feelings of guilt eat away at some people, others have decided to stop sending or do not send as much. As Horst (2007: 284-5) describes, some family members living abroad have become dependent on remittances and do not value the work and sacrifice of individuals who support them. She documents stories of those who claim that relatives waste money by chewing *qat* or not spending money wisely. Thus, some individuals are able to reconcile feelings of guilt with the knowledge of wastefulness. Lindley (2006: 22-5) describes a similar sentiment in

her work with Somalis living in the UK. She writes that senders “*hoped*” that the money sent was spent wisely but there is little control or oversight over how the money is spent. Therefore, Somalia’s case does not conform to the traditional ideas of a “transnational household livelihood strategy.” I did not speak to anyone in Kansas City that had these associations, but I understood that some people did not want to work themselves too hard and to enjoy life here. It seems that some realized they needed to live life here and not be *waalin* (crazy) for those abroad.

When pleas are made to dim the demands from relatives abroad, they often go ignored in the quest to acquire resources. That life is not as once believed (the reality of bills, insurance, jobs, etc.), makes it difficult to adjust and explain new expectations to others. Many Somali refugees were shocked that things in the US were not as expected. “I open the door every Friday because I thought money would come. Some of my sisters went to Kenya. When I call, they don’t believe me. They say that I lie. I want to send money, but I can’t work due to my baby daughter.”

A point of contention revolves around weddings.

Back to Somalia, the girls get married and only ladies get together for a lunch. It’s easy. They get engaged and the girl goes to the man’s house. There is no party. Here they get pictures, videos, and singers. It’s a waste of money. They should give the money they spend on the party back to Somalia. Everyone is broke in Somalia and when people marry they spend so much money. They go broke too.

Others stress people should live frugally to send money to those in need.

In Somalia you just get engaged and have a lunch. Then the husband and wife go to his house. Here it is too expensive and many people can't afford it. But they still spend money on it. It is a lot of work. You need to cook yourself and provide money for the hall and singers. They should not do all that stuff. Some people in Somalia don't have food. They should send money there instead. My brother lives in Baraawe and my sister lives in Moqdisho. My sister's husband was killed and she has 10 kids. The two oldest girls are married but it is still difficult to support everybody.

It appears that many people want to have a lavish wedding or at least rent a hall and do all those things that they may not be able to do otherwise. Not everyone takes advantage of the opportunity to have a large celebration. The argument from some people is that this money should go to those who are suffering abroad or they should invest this money into a house (less than 1% of Somalis own their owned home at the time of the research). Young brides compete through their wedding parties. It is certainly okay to have a house party, but the general census is that hotels and halls are awarded higher status. Others in the community project the attitude that people pay too much money for a wedding (which may also include an engagement party (*nikax*) and a *shasaar* (coming out party)). The money should be spent on other things. Additional expenses include renting a hall, paying a singer, buying food, purchasing furniture and other household needs, giving (or promising to give) an agreed upon amount to the bride by the groom, not to mention dresses, nails, henna, decorations, and videographers.

As a woman describes her marriage experience in Somalia, hoping her daughter will be frugal. She married the "traditional" way: her father selected the

man for her; they received six goats; and she just went to her groom's house. There was no party.

If my daughter gets married in the US, I'll do the same way because I don't want to waste money. Some girls are bad because they waste so much money by demanding so many things. I'd be glad if girls didn't accept such stuff. They should stop what they're doing. It's just one night. Don't waste so much money. Those girls aren't smart if they don't care about anything else.

She believes girls are choosing to be wasteful rather than keep obligations to others, such as sending money to those relatives in need. What really matters is the marriage itself and the production of children, not a glamorized wedding.

Numbers, Trends, and Associations

Five of the eight men interviewed sent money abroad. The two men who do not work, do not send money. The other works part-time, is separated, and has eight children. Of both men and women in my sample, only three single persons were able to send money home; whereas, eleven married people claimed to send money home. Single people are not as likely to send money, depending on the number and age of their kids. One may not have to expend as many resources with fewer dependents. And if one does not have dependents to take care of, she is able to work more hours or have jobs with shifts that are less desirable for those with many familial responsibilities. However, married couples are able to pool resources, particularly if they have two incomes. Larger families have more resources and thus more money to send. However, bigger families do require more, and if the children

are not of working age, or if those young adults are not able to get jobs, then they have fewer resources. I detected a relationship between household size and the perception that people “waste.” In addition, young men who do have jobs are reluctant to give their earnings to parents or household heads. This idea is examined in the chapter *Massaging Parent-Child Relations: Somali Women’s Perspective*. Eight of 11 people who worked were in a financial position to send money home or to relatives abroad, and six of 27 who did not have jobs sent money as well.

It makes sense that the people who have jobs are more likely to send money abroad, but where is the money coming from for those individuals who do not have jobs? Women receive money from a spouse, child, or other relative who contributes to overall or specific expenses. Others have an unofficial job or income (e.g., selling jewelry, clothing, and perfume) from their homes. Some save a small portion of their SSI benefits.

The dissolution of Somalia’s state, and its failure to support its citizens, places more responsibility on family members living in the diaspora. Before the implosion of the state, the family provided a strong social welfare system. Now families are separated due to political chaos, and caring for one another is achieved in different ways. Social networks help make sense of unfamiliar cultural knowledge. Social networks share economic provisions. But these economic provisions come with strings attached.

Conclusion

A theory of the everyday illuminates the moral decisions that affect individuals and communal wellbeing. Each of the four illustrations contains elements that exemplify how women rebuild the desired atmosphere within the home and the community. The first illustration, “Networking for Care,” not only describes how women take care of family and community members who suffer from a bad *maskax*, but also how women keep faith and morality intact for future generations (Doumato 2000). As discussed, women cross clan lines to help one another with work, grief, and household operations. Previous relationships are recreated and continued through the use of social networks. These, in turn, help reestablish the social support system that resembles a familiar structure of care, regardless of the actual makeup of the household (Horst 2006).

Families who come to the US experience individualism and what it is to be truly on their own. Women try to keep a communal part of living by offering help. Settling in the US is difficult to do on one’s own. Therefore, many of these relationships, established in Somalia or the camps (my sample mostly draws on experiences from Kenya), contain elements of caring, trust, and reciprocity. The household and settlement patterns allow neighbors to assist one another in daily activities. Women did not necessarily feel obligated to help but rather want to contribute for the betterment of families and community: taking care of children, providing assistance to elderly, and offering help to the disabled or sick.

The second illustration, “*Saar* in the Home and Beyond,” demonstrates that women adapt to their environment by seeking networks with others who have *barkiin* and those who provide healing. Women organize by coming together to

heal. This is a common feature in Somali culture, where women exert their influence to meet a desired end. *Barkiin* is something that few women in Kansas City suffer from, those who have it or have relatives with it, create a network of shared understanding. Women strategize over what can be done to have more consistent care and access to a specialist. These challenges are amplified as women struggle with limited resources.

Through these negotiations and networks, women act in practical ways. They organize themselves to: (1) reach a purposeful goal (arranging a gathering with a qualified, professional healer); and (2) respond to a lack of treatment by creating and sharing their own home remedies. In both cases, women who have a relationship with *barkiin* make something known to each other as the *barkiin* or spirit has done with them.

The third illustration, “‘It’s been nine years and she needs to take the test!’” shows that citizenship offers both a symbolic means for everyday living. The citizenship process ties several themes together: education, identity, defining and sponsoring family, equality, social support networks, and benefits. Citizenship strengthens protection and stability for individuals and families. It also mitigates the fear of deportation, while installing a smoother, relieved rhythm at home.

Women juggle the process of becoming a citizen with everyday existence—taking care of children, cooking, working, shopping, and attending classes. Finding the time to study and saving money for the application is difficult. For those women who are nonliterate, the process may seem unattainable, but it is undoubtedly a goal each strives toward. Moreover, citizenship shows their children that hard work

can lead to other opportunities. Mothers feel more confident and secure in caring for their families, knowing that they are here legitimately and are true members of society.

The fourth illustration, “The Reward and Punishment of Remittances,” describes the strategizing of households to send money abroad. Some work toward this goal individually; others may have an arrangement with a spouse or other family members to pool resources and send money on a rotating basis. Some women will help by gaining their citizenship and sponsoring others. Each strategy provides for those in need. However, some mothers fear their children may not view remittances as a moral obligation and fall into the trap of spending money wastefully. Mothers and fathers try to teach to contribute to family and the community.

The underlying characteristic that ties all four illustrations together is the fact that women want to instill giving and caring as the centerpiece of family morality. Women must negotiate and strategize to achieve this end. The hope is that these acts of living in the day-to-day will be learned by others. This way, they pass the torch to family and nonkin as they demonstrate values that restore and rebuild a community that has survived societal breakdown.

Chapter Six

Migrants in the Face of Continuing State Destabilization

As Somalia struggles with internal issues and larger political happenings in the Horn, the diasporic community uses several strategies to deflect these problems. The issue is not to distract from Somalia and its socioeconomic and political concerns, but rather to build and maintain the community in Kansas City. Strong social relationships tie those who have migrated to those who have remained. Relationships develop in everyday occurrences, through negotiating, exchanging ideas and materials, and engaging others. These forms of communication cultivate, reinforce, and encourage relationships. Even though there are disagreements among community members, people share ideals that relate to being Somali. Ironically, war and instability have enabled women, through their *ilmogalen* or “opening or gateway for children” (i.e., uterus), to literally give birth to Somalia around the world.

Anna Simons (1996: 171-3) refers to these separated familial relationships as being “spread” through different experiences of geographical location, socioeconomic status, educational levels, and generational roles. While many long to return to their homeland, they also desire to take advantage of opportunities here. As war, disputes, and shortages continue, people crave peaceful lives. People here live, interact, share, mourn, and relate to life back home. At the same time, they are able to emulate what people want at home, peace. This chapter discusses

women's involvement and contribution toward peace and stability in the home and community.

Socializing from the *Ilmogalen*/Womb

For Somalis living in the diaspora, social relationships seem paramount for the promotion of wellbeing through interacting, listening, negotiating, and fulfilling obligations. Because I was pregnant, I developed a special bond with Somali mothers. My third trimester coincided with the later phases of my research. I began receiving requests to visit new mothers. At first I assumed this was to congratulate women on the birth of a child or to “help” around the house. The help turned out to be one intimately rooted in social connectedness among babies. I held a baby boy who was three weeks old. He was quiet, relaxed, and peaceful. The first-time mother mentioned that she had not slept the night before because her son could not settle down. As we chatted in the bedroom, she sat on her bed and used an electric breast pump to boost her milk supply. She commented that she wished I could have come sooner. Her newborn son and my unborn son had the capacity to communicate with one another because I was *xamillo* (meaning “very pregnant,” eight months and over). The newborn baby knows when a *xamillo* woman is present. He senses another baby in the womb and interacts with him. Thus, the newborn baby is calm and content and the unborn baby receives messages from a peer who is now on the outside. The effect of the interaction on the unborn is to aid in an “easy” birth. This interaction promotes wellness for both the child in utero and the expectant mother. At the same time, the communication

benefits the newborn because the baby is in a restful and tranquil state. The baby's state comes about as he shares his new world with the one he left behind (in the womb) who will soon join him on the outside.

This socialization extends beyond the relationship among babies. *Xamillo* women, even though limited in the tasks they perform, have a set of extra hands to help, allowing a new mother to tend to other things. The mother described above chose to pump breast milk while her baby and my unborn son bonded. It is especially important for first time mothers because it provides an opportunity to interact with other women who have babies. These soon-to-be-mothers observe and learn from those who have already joined the ranks of motherhood. The immediacy of motherhood transforms how women perceive mother-child interactions. Reality settles in as one is about to embark on such a life-changing event.

Womb bonding involves socialization at the beginning of life. It extends as an analogy for socializing on a wider scale. A focus on the strand of communicating for the sake of wellness for all involved (pregnant woman, unborn, new mother, and newborn) sets the stage for communication among mothers and their children. Bonds formed through interacting, listening, and responding create a shared social space that children and mothers experience through time and across borders. The border of the womb, acting as a bridge to the outer world, facilitates interaction. The same can be said of the nation-state boundaries and the dispersal of individuals around the globe. The social relations formed previously may provide comfort to those who will travel a similar route in their own migratory experiences.

Such nurturing aspects extend beyond boundaries to homes of mothers and daughters. A common practice among first-time pregnant daughters is to travel to the homes of their mothers to deliver. One young pregnant woman left Kansas City to be with her mother in Atlanta. She stayed for her third trimester and for the first couple of months after her baby was born. Another first-time pregnant woman traveled to Kansas City to do the same. Other cases were discussed as well. This seems significant because these first-time mothers received constant help and support through women experienced in child rearing. In addition, a *xamillo* woman does not engage in household chores—cooking, cleaning, and other household responsibilities—to the extent she did previously. So why stay in the husband's household when she will not be able to do expected chores. Therefore, her mother takes care of her before and after the birth, as well as her newborn.

Somali Politics and Practices Spilling into Kansas City

The constant upheaval of Somalia's political and socioeconomic situation and the related political upheavals in the Horn have social implications in Kansas City. Where the dynamics of the war have changed over the two decades of the conflict, tensions do arise within the diverse Kansas City community. These tensions may be viewed as minor disagreements, whereas others may reflect the larger range of attitudes that exhibit the ongoing struggle for power back home.

People speak of peace and security as the number one need in Somali society. Yet this notion relates to who holds power and what that means for various clans. The conflict may not be centered on clans, but rather access to money and

resources. One individual stated, “If they have one Somali president, he’ll only do things for his people and there’s no way for people to stop him.” Sharing exclusive power among several groups seems unreasonable. Individuals may have independent ideas as to what should take place, but usually the situation is framed in terms of clan or group identity. An elderly woman explained the persisting troubles in Somalia.

We want a president. We invite a president but young people don’t want it. They don’t want a president. There’s no government. They may say they want a government. They say they’re gonna get rid of all bad people. But nobody listens. . . . You and your people [comment directed to the interpreter] do not want a president or to end the war.

The woman being interviewed wanted the war to end, but in her eyes, other people (those of younger generations and of different clans) want to keep it going, so the cycle continues. Her commentary reflects the fact that people try to make sense out of a long war with changing dynamics. The continued conflict stirs discussion among community members. According to a community leader,

Yeah, it’s the 16th year of civil war and we don’t know when it’s going to end, even though there is a negotiation or conference or whatever, but still you don’t know what tomorrow brings, you know, especially when, when the government, the proposed government is run by all the warlords who created all the problems in the first place, when they running [sic] the country again, so what do you expect?

Yet the Somali system allows for a flexible, negotiated process to take place. Some of the tensions among groups exist outside of the war. For example, a man

and a woman from separate clans were engaged to be married. Women from the bride's clan contributed to the wedding by preparing food and decorations. Several individuals contributed their time, money, and skills to the festivities. Everyone had a different assignment. However, women from the husband's clan criticized the end result and complained that it was not good enough. Tension mounted and some women decided to "take a break" from visiting one another until the situation sorted itself out. Women from the bride's clan were not pleased by the lack of appreciation for the party. They insisted that if a problem existed, someone from the husband's clan should have been clearer as to what the expectations were. After a few weeks passed, the women got together and discussed their differences and soon reached a resolution.

The Centrality of Negotiations for the Somali Community in Kansas City

Negotiation is a cornerstone of interaction within the community. Disagreements came about in the community during my research. Often these disagreements were resolved through bringing families together, listening and speaking, and utilizing the wisdom of elders. For example, two young men got into a fight and one of them needed to go to the hospital for a broken hand. An elder visited the homes of the individuals and their families to discuss what should be done. As events unfolded, it became apparent that the individual with the broken hand did not have health insurance or Medicaid. The bill was several thousand dollars. The injured could not pay. He felt that the person who broke his hand should pay the bill. This man refused to pay, so the man with the broken hand hired

a lawyer. After considering his options, the man who was liable concluded that he did not want to pay additional fees, go to jail, or have a record. So the two men came together with an elder who acted as an intermediary. For three days they talked it over. The two parties settled before the court date. They “made friends” again. The elder stressed that they are brothers. They are Muslims. Nobody needs trouble with the US courts and the authorities. The man agreed to pay for the hospital bill and solicited financial help from his relatives. In this case, as others, the point is stressed that when problems arise, parties should contact someone to intervene before the situation gets out of control. This is a lesson that older individuals emphasize. In addition, the “Somali way” is considered a superior way of handling situations. People can avoid getting involved with the law here, at the same time reinforcing Somali ideals of cooperation.

The importance of familial ties attributed to a weak, inefficient, contested Somali government, a condition that has persisted for almost two decades. Perhaps this is why social relationships are held in such high esteem. At the same time, a strong familial welfare system existed before the collapse of the state. In any case, a failure at the macrostructural level has created a need for interpersonal agency within the microstructure, i.e., strong familial support networks.

Vignette #3 discusses everyday interactions that families encounter. The networks formed with kin, soon-to-be kin, community, and businesses require an amount of negotiation and cooperation which encourage healthy relationships and transactions. This particular story exhibits the process of recreating a local moral world with past cultural knowledge, while at the same time, learning different codes

of communication and conduct. This production of reformulated knowledge emerges in sites such as a furniture store and a court of law.

Vignette #3: Welcoming a Woman into a Familial Network through Marriage

Nadifa was exhausted. She could not sleep the night before because she was concerned with her brother's upcoming wedding. The wedding is scheduled for June and she is in charge of arranging the house for her brother and his wife-to-be. Nadifa emphasized that everything needed to be perfect. She had spent the last year going from store to store identifying the best deals on furniture, bedding, accent pieces, and decorations. The day before we spoke, Nadifa had gone to the furniture store where she had placed an order. In fact, most of the large furniture pieces were coming from this particular establishment. She recently spoke to her brother's fiancé and mentioned that she had run into a small problem. The fiancé told her, "Not do me wrong." According to Nadifa, Somali women want their house perfect. They have to have everything from clothes to jewelry to a well-furnished house. If they are not satisfied, they maintain the right to reject the man. Nadifa feels the weight of the situation because she is the one making arrangements for the house—and she placed the order for shipment. After comparison shopping, Nadifa decided to go with a local shop because it was a little cheaper. She showed the furniture selection to her brother, his fiancé, and other people in the family and all gave their approval. Now she feels immense pressure because she went to the store the day before and the salesman that she spoke to had not placed the order

for which she paid a deposit five months earlier. He told her that the bedroom set she ordered was discontinued and that she would only receive three of the six pieces. She had two options: order a different set or mix and match. Nadifa was furious. Her brother and his fiancé were happy with the set she originally picked. If the store owner knew that the set had been discontinued, why did he lead her to believe otherwise? Now it is the end of April and there is nothing. The salesman called the manufacturer and tried to find what replacement or deal could be worked out. Nadifa left because she did not think the furniture would arrive in time.

I escorted Nadifa back to the store. An argument immediately erupted. Nadifa was so upset because of the inept business tactics. Her intentional off-the-cuff comments did not set the stage for negotiation: “You’re always causing problems.” “You’re a liar.” “Why are you always doing people wrong?” “You’re a cheat.” The salesman responded: “You are full of crap.” “You Somalis are such a problem.” He directed comments toward me, “You don’t understand what I have to deal with. I put together this set [of furniture] and they live so dirty. Do you know their homes are roach infested? All of them.” By the end of the two-hour session, the salesman promised everything Nadifa ordered was in stock. She could expect her merchandise in two weeks. Two weeks later, the shipment had not arrived and the wedding was a few weeks away. When we arrived, fighting again broke out between Nadifa and the clerk. Nadifa left empty handed and was upset. Afterwards, Nadifa avoided the phone calls from her brother and bride-to-be. It got to the point where the bride refused to talk to Nadifa and only dealt with Nadifa’s mother, because she did not trust Nadifa to get everything accomplished. Nadifa

could not sleep, nor could Nadifa's mother because they were afraid of the ramifications. Nadifa recruited her uncle to go to the furniture store, even though he would miss working overtime (he was saving money for his own wedding. He worked two jobs, plus overtime.)

A few days later, Nadifa's mother and uncle went to the store. The uncle did not waste time and demanded to speak with the salesman's supervisor. When the salesman refused, her uncle asked to speak with the driver. The salesman claimed that the driver did not answer his phone. The driver was in Chicago and would arrive later that day. The uncle said, "No problem, we'll wait." The salesman countered and suggested that we come back tomorrow because the driver had no set arrival time. The uncle was not satisfied and demanded to speak with someone at the main office. He simply stated that he wanted the furniture or the money back. The salesman claimed no responsibility for any shipping delays and it was Nadifa that changed the order. Besides, the salesman exclaimed that no one should make such bold demands when he has not received full payment. The uncle whipped a wad of money out of his back pocket and flashed it in front of the salesman's face. The uncle responded, "I'm ready and willing to pay as long as the shipment comes in ASAP." The salesman turned to Nadifa and yelled how rude and impossible she was. "She's a backstabber and trying to sabotage my business." He threw out several insults and Nadifa and her mother countered back. We were no longer welcomed in the store.

Nadifa and her mother were not looking forward to the reaction of the groom when they did not have anything to show after their visit to the store. The

first thing he said was, “Well, tell me the good news.” An argument broke out, but the uncle calmed nerves and said that he would go back the next day to take care of business.

Since no one believed the salesman, Nadifa planned to purchase furniture from a different store. We went to a variety of stores and showrooms to shop for another bedroom, living room, and dining room set. In addition, the uncle wanted to look at furniture for his upcoming wedding. We went to stores that Nadifa recommended. All the family joked and said that Nadifa knew where everything is. It was Nadifa’s responsibility to know since she has helped people before—what kind of furniture different stores have, where the good deals are, what kind of goods are available at American stores versus African owned stores.

The next day the uncle and the friend were able to get the money from the salesman, then they went to known Somali stores and purchased the furniture. The furniture was received right before the wedding. The wedding took place and the couple was very pleased with their home.

In discussing the situation with neighbors, it turned out that other Somalis had had problems with the same business. Nadifa’s neighbors kept their documentation. They purchased \$1500 of merchandise over a two-month period. Apparently, they did not receive the full order because part of it had been discontinued. Next, they showed me court receipts. He paid several times to take the salesman to court. The total court fees were around \$150. The salesman never attended the court dates. The neighbors had complained to the Better Business Bureau. The family vented their frustrations with the legal system. They felt they

had been duped and decided to take legal action. Now they have neither their money nor the piece of furniture they ordered. And it has been over a year with no results.

After another futile attempt to broker a deal with the salesman outside of court, they decided to return a portion of the items they purchased—headboard and rails (for a footboard which was never received.) A problem arose because the receipt they had contained no itemized amounts. It was impossible for them to pinpoint how much they should get in return. The salesman offered \$200, but the couple expected \$600. The receipt simply said they spent \$1050 for the entire purchase. And that particular style was discontinued and the salesman no longer had a picture with the listing price. The factory issued the price and that is the price he offered the couple. The couple was not pleased and the shouting began. Once again, nothing was accomplished. The couple kept their items and left.

Negotiating “Somali Way” Success: The Case of Somaliland

Negotiations are paramount for political, economic, and social success. This has been proven in the northern region of Somalia, known as Somaliland. Somaliland has achieved relative stability while the southern region remains insecure and uncertain. While several factors contribute to Somaliland’s peaceful atmosphere, Farah and Lewis (1997: 350) elaborate on successful stability: the grassroots use of elders from local to regional levels. Since the reconciliation conferences relied primarily on local funds, side-stepping the United Nations and foundations formed by the diaspora, actions were directed to the particular needs

of locales. The *Guurti* (delegates) culminated their efforts at the 1993 Boorama conference, where they created a national platform (i.e., a National Charter which in effect served as Somaliland's constitution from 1993-1997) and peace agreements that detailed specific concerns for Somalilanders. These elders' councils laid the basis for an executive interim government and a working action-based design for peace.

For four years the interim government operated under the agreements of the 1993 Boorame conference. Another meeting, known as the 1997 Hargeysa conference, convened to discuss ongoing issues. Jimcaale (2005: 66-7) outlines some of the notable contrasts of the two conferences: the increased involvement of delegates (150 at Boorame; 315 at Hargeysa), the reaffirmation of the president and parliament, the involvement of minority groups, and the appointment of minorities in the parliament.¹⁵

Because Somalilanders asserted their "full ownership of reconciliation" the process worked (WSP 2005: 1). Elders orchestrated the involvement of people, which ranged by clan, profession, district, and rural/urban living. The grassroots effort operated with local funds that were then applied to projects in particular ways. Sweden (2004: 176) describes the difference of funds which provided a high profile effort to bring assistance to the southern region: "The heavy-handed

¹⁵ The success of this conference is not without criticism. Some claim the process was directed by the leaders already in power to maintain their positions. The fear is that the pressure exerted by authority figures undermines the positive contributions of the *shir beeleed* (clan conference). Other possibilities may need to be considered in this ongoing process (Jimcaale 2005: 67).

military intervention of the US and UN consumed four billion dollars, without furthering the cause of peace, and left no trace of development behind. Not a penny of these huge funds reached Somaliland.” The success of the conference is ultimately rooted in the social segmentary system, meaning the lineages affected by the process are involved in the decision making. Local groups organize and provide the necessary arrangements for the conference itself. Since the funds are local, it is an authentic arrangement of how a *shir* (meeting, council of elders) would be conducted (Farah and Lewis 1997: 372).

The success of the conferences in providing a base for a new government is attributed to religious men, poets, professionals, politicians, and military officials. Despite the involvement of several people from various professions and interests, women were not among those holding the peace talks. However, women contributed to the process in providing food and domestic service (Farah and Lewis 1997: 366).

Generally women do not participate “in [Somali] political decision making, *Diya* paying (blood compensation), or dealing with the clan’s vital issues” (Osman-Shuke 2004: 154-5). In the recent past, northern Somali women’s contributions are found outside of the *Xeer* (customary law). The greatest impact is within the household and local neighborhoods. “All other activities that women may undertake in the community are valued and appreciated as an additional input, seen through the prism of biological reproduction, raising children and managing household chores” (Osman-Shuke 2004: 159). Women settle disputes and maintain

peace among family members and neighbors, so they are equipped with the knowledge for reconciling arguments (Nagaad 2004: 432-3).

After the onset of war in 1988, women had to create ways to accommodate their situation. Since women mainly deal with the domestic sphere, it was imperative for them to find approaches that worked for the welfare of the family. Their role was even more crucial because of their involvement with broken communities and degraded values. Women strive to restore order and security for current and future generations (Nagaad 2004: 432).

It is known that women's labor in both productive and reproductive spheres increases disproportionately to men's in times of forced migration, which is almost always accompanied by a loss of property and support services. This was typical in Somaliland where women had to find shelter, food, and survive without even the basic amenities. The demand to generate income for the survival of the family increased as did the burden of household chores as she cared for more and more people. The number of mouths to feed and to cook for grew as displaced, wounded, disabled, impoverished, and orphaned relatives sought refuge in their households (Koshen 2004: 413).

Participation in the informal sector helped women provide for their families.

Women in Hargeysa demonstrated their ability to cope under extreme circumstances for family survival (Koshen 2004: 419-20).

Participating in the informal sector is one way to deal with the harsh reality that confronted women in the north. Other efforts to maintain peace and stability within the home and neighborhoods included: composing poems which stressed a peaceful approach for solving problems, exerting their influence with elders to

arrive at a peaceful outcome during negotiations, keeping peace through relationships established through marriages, demonstrating for peace, giving financial support to help fund the peace and reconstructive effort, holding a prayer rally for peace efforts, presenting a signed petition to the government, and providing uniforms to the police force (Nagaad 2004: 433).

Even though women are unable to directly participate in conferences, their contributions remain significant to the process. Kelly (1997: 359-60) refers to the preexisting local organizations of the *Abay siti* (religious devotional groups) and *hagbad* (rotating credit associations), which uses the participation of women regardless of family and clan. These groups reinforce a cooperative spirit that is harmonious with Somali values and have the potential to contribute to the reconstruction of Somaliland.

While Kansas City Somalis are aware of Somaliland's stability and reconstruction efforts, they did not specifically refer to what or how progress was being made. While participants did not explicitly stated that Somaliland's successful negotiations were a conscious model for them, Somali women in Kansas City have taken a similar approach to reconstructing households. Women use knowledge from previous generations. They are regarded as the "backbone of the family" by tending to the home, children's welfare (health), meals, and cleanliness (Cabdi 2005: 280). Women's influence in household management, conflict resolution, and, for some, earning an income, motivates them to be involved in the process, since they are the ones who provide support to those in need.

Women demonstrate their commitment to families and communities through informal support systems. According to Cabdi (2005: 314-8), these informal systems can be viewed under the lens of traditional support, pastoral support systems, urban support systems, remittances, and religious support systems. The same is true for women in Kansas City. Women use preexisting relationships, networks, and moral compasses that have proven beneficial to themselves and families. They have learned to adapt these institutions to current living arrangements and socioeconomic circumstances. Yet, Cabdi discusses the attrition of these systems due to war and the degradation of values. How to restore a sound “traditional” system is not clearly articulated for the population (2005: 320).

Women’s Interpersonal Agency: From Households to Community

Wellbeing requires a gendered portrayal of women’s perspectives on Somali society. Women try to maintain values by teaching their daughters to extend wellness within their homes. Mothers depend upon their daughters to care for others when they are absent. This ensures the household flows properly. Women prefer girls over boys. Girls are viewed as more obedient and easier to raise. However, the preference for girls extends beyond individual behaviors and rearing practices. It is the perpetuation of being Somali. This is achieved through household and community examples, ranging from small displays of care to large-scale actions. For instance, a young married woman with three children described her life as busy: cooking, cleaning, running errands, going to doctor visits, providing rides, and helping with literacy issues. Since her mother had joined a small caravan

to visit relatives in Ohio, she had the added responsibility in caring for her six siblings in a household several blocks away. It was up to her to coordinate her siblings and other relatives who would be able to help with the responsibilities of ensuring her siblings would attend school, work, and mosque. This sketch provides a glance as to what it takes for daughters to keep up daily household rhythms. In the following example, a mother relies upon her daughter's obedience to help her troubled son.

The mother's oldest daughter attends college in Boston. She is married and is several months pregnant with her first child. The mother is very pleased with the accomplishments of her daughter. Knowing that her daughter is on the right path, she believes that her daughter will be able to contribute to a family problem. The mother's teenage son had good grades and did not cause problems. But his grades fell when he began hanging out with "bad" boys. He no longer wanted to go to school, spending days and nights with his friends. Most of the boys he spent time with were Somali, but she found his behavior to be unacceptable. He was not in trouble with the law, but she feared that it would only be a matter of time if no action was taken. The family decided to send him to live with his sister and her husband in Boston. In a new environment, he would be exposed to different people and possibilities. She hopes that everyone (including her son, her daughter, and her daughter's growing household) will be together again. After her daughter finishes her program, maybe, that dream will be realized. She volunteered to take care of her soon-to-be-grandson in Kansas City, while her daughter continues her studies. She understands how important it is to have an education in the US. So the

expectation is that she will take care of her grandson while her daughter pursues her education, and when she graduates with her nursing degree, her daughter will contribute to her mother's household. The mother wants life to be good, it is God's will, and whatever happens, happens, but at the same time she wants to do things that will benefit her family—like stressing school and education and that may get them out of the situation.

This individual understands the importance of education. She has limited education herself, but she understands how the system works here. She does not see herself as challenging fate, rather she is doing what she can to see that her children have educational opportunities. This is the route she sees to a safe, quiet life for her family.

Women say that before coming to the US, neighbors would look out for one another. If a mother needed help, neighbors would watch her children while attending to theirs, cooking, or doing other work around the house. If children misbehaved neighbors would punish them. Now mothers do not trust neighbors to take care of the children with the exception of Somali neighbors. Mothers network with one another to ensure cooperation for the betterment of children and households. This idea is demonstrated in many forms.

A family planned to move to Atlanta, so the parents left to find suitable housing. Their Somali neighbors looked after their children for the week. It was no problem, and there was no additional charge. Neighbors should look after one another. Also, mothers request neighbors to watch their children while they attend to business, i.e., trips to social service organizations, government offices, or the

hospital. These particular places require concentration, and bringing children may create too many distractions.

Established Somali women understand how difficult it is to move to a different city. When the Bantu population came to Kansas City, many Somalis assisted them: showing them the Somali stores, grocery stores, the City Market, schools, social service organizations, and money transfer establishments. Discussions of where to obtain certain items, how to get the best deals, and who to buy from accompanied the informative tour. Requests for rides are an often needed service, although, some of the women involved in helping did not have licenses or could not drive themselves, so they used their network to help find rides for the newcomers. In essence, they relied upon their own family and friends to search for transportation. Another realm of much needed assistance is bills. Bill management (number, type, and due dates) along with cutting costs are constantly discussed. For example, a Baraawe neighbor inquired how much money a newly arrived Bantu family paid toward their air conditioning bill. The mother responded \$160. The neighbor gasped and rolled her eyes. She marched over to the thermostat and explained that controlling the temperature saves money, while shutting windows and closing doors. Helping with children is another way women contributed to the new population. Another concrete way to help is with food preparation.

I help the Bantu people. When I lived over on Wabash, my neighbors didn't have a phone, so I let them use mine. If they need a ride, I call for them. One time a lady was pregnant and I called 911 for her. The police came and the baby's head was in

my hand. I helped deliver the baby. Her husband didn't know what was going on. He called me and asked if I could cook for him and others since his wife was sick. I said okay and went over there and I knew the women was in trouble and needed to have the baby. Something bad could have happened. The ambulance and the police came when the baby's head was in my hands.

In Somalia, neighbors and money come together in times of need when someone becomes ill. "When a breadwinner falls ill, neighbours—especially women—offer their help with all kinds of different tasks: child-minding, cleaning, washing clothes, food preparation, lending of money and food, etc." (Serkkola 1994: 23). Basically, unofficial networks enable different families to depend on one another when sickness and hard times arise. McMichael and Manderson (2004: 95-6) case their research in terms of Somali women in Australia accessing social capital. They note that women rely upon their kin and community contacts to access housing opportunities, answers concerning immigration, to locate government and social services among others. Women also use their "traditional" models to enhance and build their social relationships through celebrations, religious gathering, social events, and community associations.

Crossroads for the War Generation: Continued Violence or Peaceful Change?

Somalis fall into three generations: those born during the colonial era (before 1960), those born and raised in the dictatorship (1960s to 1991), and those born during civil war (1991 to present). The latter group has gained knowledge and

experience by living all over the world. They could really help Somalia's future by moving home and contributing to rebuilding society. How many will take that opportunity? A community leader voices his opinion concerning the lessons learned from the war and the changing mentality of those who live in the diaspora.

One of the things that some Somalis talk about is lesson repeats in Somali and in this country, Somali disintegrated because of the tribe and the factions and you know clan and all that, so I myself and others we advocate let's not repeat that problem. Here we are a very small group of people trying to make you know a living here and all that, if we bring the problems that's happening back home here and apply it to our lives, then we're not gonna go nowhere, there'll be in-fighting and what have you, but if we stay together and identify us as a group and go after to the resources, going after the politicians and say hey we demand services and what have you, then we can go somewhere. So that's the message that we, myself and others, who see the big picture as a solution, that's the message or the story that we always tell. People are receptive to that, some of them, unfortunately some still believe that what's happening in Somalia is the right thing to do.

Even though issues continue back home, people generally set them aside for the good of the community here. Since people live in the US, specifically Kansas City, and it is likely that more relatives will arrive here in the future, a concerted effort is made as a group to avoid causing problems. The problems confronting Somalis in Kansas City are plentiful: literacy and education, language barriers, identity issues, employment, child care, housing, immigration concerns, fear of deportation, and health care.

Conclusion

War is a constant in southern Somalia, and Somalis in Kansas City try to be at peace. To be at peace requires households to continue everyday life in which women and their daughters work together to ensure a sense of security. The work and effort coordinated by women shapes the socialization among households and the community. Somalis in Kansas City congregate in an area of the inner city rather than the glorified “nice” places depicted in stories, media, or films. The living environment forces people to reflect on the American dream or the dream people covet for themselves, their families, and relatives abroad. People strive for peaceful, quiet lives that contrast to the constant social upheaval in the homeland. Throughout this dissertation, I have depicted scenes of the ongoing war and how it perpetuates changing social relationships here and how people attempt to accommodate these situations. Childbearing women’s view of building community in a new place reveals that trying to raise children overwhelms other concerns. In Kansas City, despite ongoing disagreements, women strive to make new homes for children to raise them properly.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

I began this dissertation with three inquiries. The first explores the contradiction of seeking a new local moral world in a new place with the detritus of the fractured morality. Somalis living in Kansas City continue to move through a new landscape that holds big challenges. Even among these changed social realities, women intuitively know they need to “keep things going,” not just in terms of meeting basic needs such as food and shelter, but in providing the kind of environment that nurtures. Women, considered to be the backbone of the household, hope to instill a sound moral basis in their children. The values women want for their children are to keep Somali values intact: respect elders, know the lineage system, instill a religious foundation, speak correct Somali, or accept fate. Women pick up the pieces of caring for their children and dependents. Women’s influence in raising a healthy family may mean sacrificing their own health to provide for their dependents.

While southern Somalia struggles to find peace and security, its refugees simultaneously learn new cultural knowledge in a different setting while constructing a moral world grounded in past experiences. Since women are considered to be the cornerstone of the household, I focus on how what women do to promote wellbeing. Steps taken to rebuild a local moral world usually incorporate activities that women perform during prewar and premigratory times, such as: preparing freshly prepared *halal* food, protecting children from perceived

dangers, deciding how much freedom to give children, redefining family roles, asserting parental authority, and desiring a sound religious education.

Women apply practical knowledge to restore and maintain wellbeing within the household and the community. I provide four case studies that illuminate the fusion of past knowledge with current circumstances. Women tend to those with a bad *maskax* as they once did. These acts reflect a continuing informal welfare system that people maintained back home. In terms of *saar*, women use home treatments to accommodate the fact that there is an absence of professional healers in the community and for many a lack of funds to pay healers for their services. The search for citizenship is another point of contention that reveals how individuals want to legitimately participate in a functional government and have security, protection, and peaceful living in return. Lastly, remittances signal a communal response in providing for others. The hope is that by achieving citizenship they will eventually be in a position to assist someone else. All of these cases focus on the moral obligation of caring and tending to others, continuing an informal social networking system that negates self indulgence at the expense of others.

The second inquiry entails the importance of phenomenology to understand traumatic memory that is embedded in the social fabric. Women know that hosting a secure and stable environment provides a sound place for children and others. Women are better able to care for their dependents when they have a safe place to thrive.

Phenomenology illuminates moral decisions that affect individual and communal wellbeing. Women care for those in need and their services act as a glue that holds the social fabric together. I described numerous situations where women assist others by providing cooked food, offering their home for others to stay, giving rides, orienting newcomers, sharing information, distributing money, obtaining citizenship, and offering social support. These acts have a moral dimension, in that they retain values that contribute to building and restoring healthy relationships. By interacting with one another in a range of venues, negotiations emerge as a key for cooperating and living together.

This inquiry into moral action and deliberation reveals that family members and social identity still reside in southern Somalia and the camps. Refugees living in Kansas City possess intimate knowledge of the strife that relatives continue to encounter. As Das (2006) argues, violence does not disrupt life, so much as violence becomes part of it. To separate or escape the memories of trauma becomes impossible, since war, forced migrations, camp life, and relatives abroad continue. Phenomenology embraces the spectrum of experience from mundane to extreme and accounts for the way a flexible time scale influences current situations. Therefore, phenomenology situates everyday activity and thought within interpersonal interactions. These engagements illuminate the ways violence, insecurity, family loss, sense of place, movement, morality, negotiations, and social networking interact. By exploring daily responsibilities, points of contention, goodwill, and conversations, I articulate the strategies and methods employed to aid in the healing process of stresses resulting from forced migration. These

methods may be viewed within the framework of the continuity of life. Even though the Somali population experienced horrific events, people shift their view of a social world. People adjust to their new reality, while taking previous forms of knowledge and apply them to rebuild a social world within a changed context.

The third inquiry explains how women's social roles have filled the vacuum of value-directed living in the diaspora. Women engaged in the process of redefining local moral worlds wade through diverse knowledge while attempting to rebuild a moral foundation. The restoration of a grounded morality is necessary due to the dissolution of the state and continued war. Women draw on past knowledge and accommodate different living circumstances by finding meaning in new structures. Women accommodate these new structures (whether family law, state benefits, or *halal* food access) by evaluating the positive and negative influences that will affect future generations. Practical actions and strategic thoughts maximize the benefits brought to their families. Reformulated morality may stress the obligation of sending remittances, enforcing religious practice, becoming a citizen, caring for those in need, negotiating relationships, and participating in events that benefit the community. By seeking out personal and community networks, women can capitalize on advice and information received.

Although comparing life in Kansas City to life in Somalia or in the camps is not productive, the exploration of different hardships and ordeals that confront individuals and families in Kansas City is certainly noteworthy. The emphasis of literacy, language, and social networks plays a key role in how women operate their households and contribute to the betterment of their community. Since women's

influence within the home shapes values that build an individual for a lifetime, this preparatory period for a child is paramount for future decision making and living. By setting examples that align with Somali cultural values, women try to promote healthy living by restoring and maintaining a variety of practices. Whether the actions women perform surround caring for the elderly, sick, disabled, and torn family members, their duties have expanded. A considerable amount of orchestration takes place by juggling work outside the home and tending to children, other dependents, and relatives abroad. In the process of reconstituting their lives, everyday living situations surface in areas such as child care, education, and religious practice. Practical decisions made about operating the household are rooted in the basic experiences that imprint the social fabric which Somalis live.

Implications for the Somali Community in Kansas City

The research serves the Somali community in Kansas City in a variety of ways. The results reveal basic information for individuals, the community, and (non)Somali social service organizations. Somalis seek out family, friendships, or acquaintances from the homeland. I provide several situations and reasons behind living arrangements that are a sharp departure from the typical “Somali social structure” i.e., clan relationships. In addition, household formations depict life cycle changes. Life cycles changes often reflect the pressures that force people to move and locate in particular places and combinations.

Somalis locate in Kansas City for a variety of reasons. The pull for many is social networks. Social networks include those relationships established before the

war or in hometowns, relationships that solidified in camps (or other forced movement situations), and through clan affiliation. The research reveals that despite differences (often highlighted in the interpretation of the war through popular media), Somalis in the diaspora strive to maintain and expand social relationships and networks by using concepts embedded in Somali society. Using a Somali way of handling conflicts seems to serve as an alternative to the US legal system. The use of an established social institution pulls the community together, showing the strengths of Somali values, representing an aspect of continuity where Somali values are deemed important. The networks and the actions that accompany problem solving act as stepping stones in building relationships and reinforcing a social code that has been eroded by Somalia's ongoing war. The use of these relationships is flexible and malleable to accommodate a new environment fraught with unfamiliar and diverse religious, racial, and class landscapes. Thus, developing relationships and fixing old ones have the capacity to relate to Kansas City's environment and extend beyond its borders. Therefore, the research concludes that authentic and sincere efforts are put forth to build and maintain a structure for nurturing the community in Kansas City, although the effects of war and societal upheaval are continually present through the networks connecting Somalis to their place of origin.

The research also identifies needs within the community. Perhaps the most urgent is to find solutions for Somali youth. Parents and elders perpetuate a sense of being Somali and pass those values to younger generations. Women aim to perpetuate a sense of Somaliness within the context of the household. This is done

through food preparation, modest dress, community events and celebrations, use of spoken Somali within the home, and religious practice. Despite mothers' vast knowledge, parenting in the US is different due to contextual and lawful practices. Some mothers have a difficult time adjusting their parenting styles to US norms. At the same time, mothers place high expectations on daughters to carry on the responsibility of providing a Somali home for present and future generations.

To look after the young constitutes a continuance of the community, yet seniors need to contribute to the sense of being Somali. The research shows that attention needs to be given to seniors. Since seniors are more likely to have problems with their *maskaxo*, special consideration for those individuals is imperative. This is particularly evident in citizenship efforts. Another area affecting the wellbeing of a future community centers on literacy. There is a need to evaluate the specifics of why some individuals experience such difficulty acquiring basic literacy skills. At the time of the research, some Somalis who had consistently attended pre-ESL or ESL classes for 5 -9 years still struggled with basic skills. Why haven't the strategies employed in the classroom worked? How do other cities address this issue? Literacy is crucial for accessing resources and becoming self-sufficient in US society.

And lastly, Somalis and their counterparts, i.e., Americans, need to find ways to create better relationships. Somalis are able to overcome issues among themselves to live and interact with one another, and the same needs to be done between them and their neighbors.

Implications of Research beyond Kansas City's Community

The practical applications for broader society, nationally and internationally, stem from the actions Somalis employ to live with past and ongoing sociopolitical disparities among friends and family members. Somalis prove that they adapt fluid strategies to their current living conditions in Kansas City. This dissertation demonstrates how migrants strive to find peace and solace within their own households. Somalis discuss among themselves how to contribute to the betterment of households and the community, here and abroad. They work at building relationships. They reconfigure social networks to heal and rejuvenate their sense of who they are as a people to access information and resources.

Contributions to Anthropological Knowledge

The research highlights practical actions and new knowledge that women construct when forced to live in exile. They evaluate choices and negotiate social relationships to secure information, economic resources, child care, care for those with poor *maskaxo*, or the contributions to family abroad. Thus, the research demonstrates how Somalis come to terms with the internalized image and emotions of a shattered social infrastructure.

The research demonstrates theoretical implications as well. Under the lens of the everyday and the ordinary, the research shows how relationships and networks provide care at the household and community level. Das (2006) writes how events in India's history (the Partition in 1947 and the assassination of Indira Gandhi) have become part of the social fabric that shapes everyday ideas and

actions in people's lives. The same could be said of Somalia. Past events of state collapse, war, and the continual erosion of Somali society have seeped into the social fabric of Somali relationships. A phenomenological approach incorporates these past and ongoing events in the embodiment of migration experiences. By using a phenomenological framework, I am able to describe the actions people take to reformulate a local moral world in a new setting. The reconfiguration of local moral worlds is not limited to individuals. The research shows how the interpersonal agency among mothers helps to recreate proper households that extend beyond the walls of home and enters the community. A theory of everyday highlights the moral decisions that affect individual and communal wellbeing (Das 2006; Jackson 1996).

Jenkins (1996) and Kleinman (1999) emphasize that emotional processing of everyday experiences cannot escape the sociopolitical context. Stressful social conditions brought on by oppressive policies or war exhibit in our physiology. It is virtually impossible to remove social situations, emotions, and physical expressions. Somali caregivers rely on past knowledge and incorporate new ideas to accommodate their families living in the diaspora and abroad. They reexamine and devise strategies to live in the diaspora in the face of their common experience of societal collapse, forced migration, and trauma.

Suggestions for Future Research

From the dissertation results, I identify four significant areas for future research. A thorough study of migrant and first-generation children is essential to

understand how they conceptualize their roles and commitment to Somali values, family, and the homeland. This is particularly intriguing because many of these children have never been to Somalia (or at such a young age, no memory exists) and the current dialogue in popular media regarding Somalia is bleak. To evaluate boys and girls (in varying age categories) would help illuminate their understanding of social expectations ascribed to them by parents and elders, and how they view their own sense of being Somali.

Second, a project needs to incorporate family rearing practices that Somali parents, particularly mothers, utilize with infants, toddlers, young children, and teenagers. Once baseline material is collected, then possible intervention strategies may be proposed to ease the burden of those mothers who have difficulty raising children in the US.

Third, more attention needs to be paid to literacy. Research addressing both adult and child needs for positive outcomes is essential for future individual and community growth. In addition, the opportunities available here may in turn affect decisions to help toward reconciliation and rebuilding Somalia itself.

Fourth, the research warrants an investigation of elderly women's agency within the household and the community. These women hold a significant place in the family and share their opinions on important matters. How is their value (as vessels of knowledge) viewed in the face of a changed social context?

Social science literature addressing violence, war, migration, and diasporic communities strives to generate new insights into how individuals and communities operate. While the body of literature contains both macro- and microstructural

works, this dissertation attempts to straddle both arenas. The macrostructural issues shape the situation in which Somalis in Kansas City find themselves. With the onset of state collapse, forced movement, and migration to Kansas City, social relationships reestablish and build from past relationships which, in turn, fuel future obligations and responsibilities. Microstructural matters present themselves as well. The most tangible explanation revolves around the practical considerations Somali women give about household concerns. Mothers' agency is not limited to households but extends to the future wellbeing of Somali society in Kansas City, other diasporic populations, and Somalia itself.

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