

“THAT YOU MAY KNOW ONE ANOTHER”: EXAMINING RACE RELATIONS IN ONE
U.S. CITY’S ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

by

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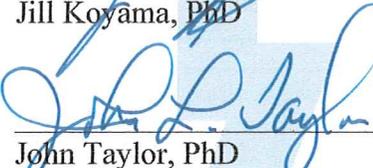
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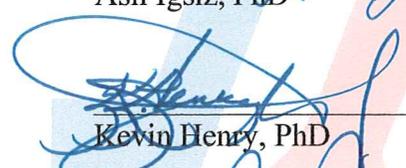
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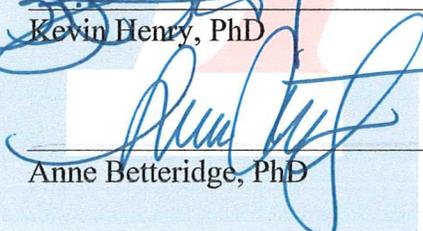
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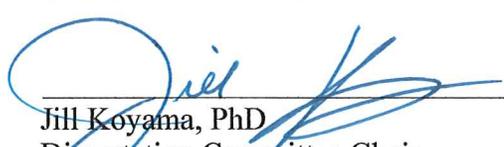


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Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate’s submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

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DEDICATION

For my family and community.

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ABSTRACT

This work focuses on the topic of colorism in the Islamic community of one U.S. city in the southwestern United States. The goal of this dissertation is to better understand how colorism is enacted in Islamic spaces and how immigration policies and the racial classification system of the United States have both assisted in dividing communities. Qualitative data for this dissertation was collected over the period of two years with members of the Muslim community. There is a total of 22 combined individuals that participated in the pilot and primary research. Findings indicate that anti-Blackness, if not outright colorism, has evolved in the community as immigrant Muslims have worked to be seen as model minorities. There is a perception of discrimination that pervades the local Muslim community and it is based on both race and class. Discrimination was found to be exhibited primarily through 1) inequality in social situations, 2) limited opportunities for leadership, and 3) a lack of access to resources. Recommendations are given to address practical participant concerns.

Chapter One: Introduction

The Quran references various types of human diversity in verse 49:13. It reads:

O mankind! Indeed, We created you from male and female and We made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you near Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is All- Knower, All-Aware (Quran 49:13).

This verse is often used by Muslims to explain diversity and equality between human beings because it acknowledges human difference and gives reasoning *for* difference: God’s desire for humans to “know one another.” Yet, if acknowledgement of diversity is the intention, it is not always the practice.

The focus on equality and community building in *practice* is at the heart of this dissertation. This study focuses on the topic of colorism, a type of racism that is more closely linked to an individual’s phenotypicalities, in the Islamic community in one U.S. city in the southwestern United States as a means of better understanding how colorism is enacted in Islamic spaces. Taylor et al. (2017) describes colorism as “a species of racism” (p. 3). Beyond prejudice that is solely based on ethnicity or race, colorism delves into what they define as “the very finest gradations of skin tone and other phenotypicality qualities” (p. 3). The authors highlight the fact that colorism has been widely studied and documented in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Taylor et al. (2017) specifically mentions the works of Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011), Glenn (2009), Monroe (2013), Russell-Cole, Wilson, and Hall (2013). I maintain that the body of literature on colorism has overlooked the region of the Middle East. In terms of research related to Asia, although the Middle East is located in the geographic region of Western Asia and Central Asia, most research on colorism focuses on East Asia and South Asia. I also believe that the Islamic community in the United States offers an excellent means for examining colorism’s

intersections with religion, the increasing racialization of Islam in the “West,” legal frameworks, and common racial practices in the United States.

My interest in this topic emerged during my own experiences as a community member in various Islamic communities throughout the U.S. and as a teacher, and administrator in Islamic schools. I identify as Muslim, and I am of Turkish and Euro-American extraction. I phenotypically appear to be “White.” Though Muslim, I do not wear hijab, a common referent for Muslims and non-Muslims alike when identifying other individuals as Muslim. I also do not speak Arabic or have other characteristics about me that would lead one to identify me as a Muslim. All of these factors likely influenced my research and findings.

Originally, I intended to examine the complexities of race and phenotypes specifically in Islamic school classrooms. However, upon conducting my pilot study and learning from participants about the wide range of spaces in which colorism manifests itself, I pursued a broader analysis of colorism in the Islamic community. I did this by examining the community as a whole through the experiences of Muslims in various institutions that have been developed to meet the religious, social, and educational needs of the city’s Muslim population. Learning happens as much outside of school classrooms as within them and socialization is a form of learning. I define the Islamic community in very broad terms, though this dissertation focuses on the experiences of research participants who tend to fit into the more rigid definitions of how “Muslim” is frequently defined. The majority of research participants are “practicing” Muslims, meaning they pray regularly, fast, and do other forms of religious worship. The majority were also born into Muslim families, though there are a few who converted to Islam. I personally define the Islamic community as including all individuals who self-identify as Muslim. I do not exclude individuals from Islamic identity based on their sexual orientation, whether or not they

wear hijab, gender, level of adherence to Islamic practices of worship, political views, length of time as a Muslim, sect, race, or any other factor – unless *they* tell me that they are not a Muslim. I also include all institutions of the city that are Islamically inspired, this means formal and informal mosques/places of worship, cultural centers that include Islam and Islamic practices as part of their culture and traditions, and Islamic schools. My choice to analyze the Islamic community in one U.S. city allowed me to examine the interactions between those of various ethnic groups, a variety of generations, and of different genders. I tried to pay particular attention to experiences of research participants in formal learning contexts, particularly in my pilot study. However, experiences had within general Islamic settings became my primary focus after the pilot was completed.

“Values” and “culture” are both subjective and are no doubt weaved into formal Islamic school curriculum from a particular perspective. Yet, this is not unique to formal schooling alone. Rather, social spaces present opportunities for the policing of “values” and “culture” – both highly subjective. What values are instilled, and which cultural practices are made to matter are all indications of which groups are members of the “in-group” in particular spaces, and which are tolerated because they are members of the *ummah*¹, or “community of believers” (McCloud, 1995, p. 4). In theory, membership in the *ummah* belongs to anyone that is a Muslim and it is used to express one’s membership in the Muslim community. Which perspectives are made to matter are valuable to understanding how Muslim children in the U.S. are educated and socialized. The purpose of this research was to examine the complexities of identity in Islamic spaces as a means of better understanding how colorism manifests itself in practice.

¹ This term has a variety of spellings and there is variation in spelling throughout this dissertation.

Terminology

It should be noted that throughout this work, primarily two subpopulations of Muslims in the U.S. will be discussed: indigenous Muslims or African-Americans and immigrant Muslims (McCloud, 1995; Memon, 2009; Jackson, 2005). Regarding the designation "indigenous Muslim," Islam first came to North America primarily via sub-Saharan Africans who were forced into slavery (McCloud, 1995, p. 1). In that sense, African-Americans are indigenous to Islam and also born in the U.S. and that is why they will be referred to as such throughout this work. Within the category of "immigrant Muslim" are "Black ethnic" Muslims (Greer, 2013). For the purposes of this dissertation, it is important that African-American Muslims and Black ethnic Muslims are not necessarily conflated into the same category. I have chosen to use Greer's (2013) term "Black ethnic" to discuss Black Muslims born outside of the U.S. I do this in order to try and recognize the diversity of origins and experiences within the Black population of the U.S.

"African-American" was a term first coined by the Reverend Jesse Jackson in 1988 as a means of pointing out the fact that being African-American speaks to a particular American experience among members of the African diaspora in the U.S. (Martin, 1991, p. 83). Specifically, he said that the term placed African-American people in their proper "historical context" (p. 83). This dissertation focuses on the experiences of a variety of Muslim people from various national origins. The participants all have roots in the Black racial groups of Africa. However, that does not mean that they are African-American, in that they do not come from the particular context from which African-American people hail. "Black ethnic" encompasses Black people who live in the U.S. but may come from any number of different places. "African-

American" is a term related primarily to those individuals who are descendants of African individuals brought to the U.S. by force and placed into the horrific institution of chattel slavery.

Throughout this dissertation, I aim to state from where participants emigrated. There are points in this work where African-American and Black ethnic experiences appear to be homogenized into one. I have tried to avoid that, but it should be noted that there are overlapping experiences, particularly in matters of racism and discrimination. However, I have done my best throughout this work to try and avoid neglecting the diversity existent within the Black population of the U.S. When speaking specifically about the African-American experience, African-American will be used. This is by no means meant to separate African-American people from their roots in Africa and as an African diaspora community, the acknowledgement of which was part of the original intent of the creation of the term African-American.

The term "immigrant" Muslims is used primarily as a means of distinguishing between those Muslims and their descendants who immigrated to the United States, primarily during and after the 1960's and African-American Muslims. It should be noted that there were Muslims immigrating from the "Muslim world" prior to the 1960's, though immigration policies and quotas made it difficult and will be discussed at length later in the chapter. Those immigrants and their descendants are also included in the "immigrant" Muslim category.

These designations are not meant to exclude or essentialize any group. Within each of these groups there is wide variation of every type imaginable. There are also Muslims who are not of Black immigrant origin who may consider themselves as indigenous to the U.S. as African-Americans, at least in terms of their ancestors' length of time in North America. Similarly, there are second and third generation Muslims who would likely take issue with being labeled with an "immigrant" designation. The bigger issue with the term "immigrant Muslim" is

that it makes the diverse immigrant communities who practice Islam appear to be monolithic.

This could not be further from the truth. Throughout this work, every attempt has been made to ensure clarity when discussing each group.

Context

Colorism and racism. Racial discrimination operates through race, a social construct, and color, a biological characteristic (Hunter, 2007, p. 237-238; Hirschman, 2014). Colorism is essentially "skin color stratification" and is related to "actual skin tone, as opposed to racial or ethnic identity" (p. 237). It should be noted that colorism can also be comprised of characteristics outside of an individual's skin tone. These characteristics can include hair texture or color, facial features, body type and vocal expression (Monroe, 2013). Taylor et al. (2017) conducted a collaborative autoethnography that documented experiences of colorism amongst the co-authors, each of Mexican American or African-American heritage (p. 48-49). The authors point out that in terms of colorism, hair was the most "salient characteristic after skin color" (p. 53). Taylor et al. (2017) found that "White hair" was considered a marker of beauty in various racial and ethnic communities (p. 54). Therefore, colorism goes far beyond just skin color alone.

Colorism is practiced by White members of society and people of color alike, and it often occurs between individuals even within the same racial group (Hunter, 2007, p. 238). Colorism encompasses a wider breadth of discrimination than racism because it involves more characteristics than race does and can operate even within one's own racial group. Hunter (2007) breaks colorism down by pointing out that, although Black members of society with every shade of skin tone are discriminated against, "the intensity of that discrimination, the frequency, and the outcomes of that discrimination will differ dramatically by skin tone" (p. 238).

Furthermore, Hunter (2007) offers a summary of a number of works written on the economic implications of colorism (p. 246). Although colorism affects all people of a particular race, all members of the Black race for example, darker skinned people are more likely to experience various types of disadvantages, economic disadvantages are particularly apparent as a result of colorism (p. 240-242). Therefore, the implications of colorism have a greater possibility of life altering consequences for darker skinned individuals than lighter skinned individuals, even when those in question are from the same racial group. A wide array of research has shown that, in the U.S., skin tone impacts everything from employment opportunities to the concept of beauty in most communities of color (Hunter 2007).

It is worth noting that colorism is global and there is an international market specializing in providing people of color the ability to change their look to appear more Anglo Saxon or stereotypically "White" (p. 248). The global nature of colorism is tied to the internalization of White aesthetic ideals, the legacy of colonialism and slavery throughout the world, and how these factors all manifest into a desire to assimilate into the dominant culture (Hunter, 1995). The desire for assimilation is maintained even while knowing that assimilation can only be done if one has a White body with which to do it (Hall, 1995). This legitimizes body modification that elevates and maintains the privileged status of White characteristics.

In their study of advertising and the cultural politics of beauty in India, Paramerwaran and Cardoza (2009) contend that the global nature of body alteration towards Whiteness goes beyond just aesthetic ideals and is part of "discourses of overlapping statements – global mobility/local authenticity, tradition/modern, and nationalism/cosmopolitanism – about particular geographies, namely 'modernizing' India and its closer alliances with the west" (p.

218). "Light" pigmentation is assumed to be modern and progressive – "Western." In contrast, "dark" pigmentation is part of the past, associated with tradition, and "Eastern."

The tendency to see darker skin tone as more closely related to "tradition" and "authenticity" happens in the U.S. as well. Light-skinned individuals are often assumed to be more assimilated into White society and within ethnic communities they are often deemed to be less "ethnic" than those of darker skin tone (Hunter, 2007, p. 244). Hunter (2005) claims that this is one way that light-skinned individuals are robbed of power by those who are of darker skin complexion. This successfully pits members of particular communities against one another and ingrains racial stereotypes among members of the same race. Ultimately, colorism is about power and authority. As Hall (1995) astutely points out, "anywhere in the world where domination is the preferred model of assimilation, the characteristics of the dominated groups will be stigmatized" (p. 179). As Paramerwaran and Cardoza (2009) highlight, preferred phenotypes and cultural practices deemed worthy for replication are all connected to domination and power over the dominated.

The Black/White binary. The stigmatization of characteristics by the dominant group has far-reaching and varied effects for individuals. If Whiteness is the standard, bodies that are not White are "othered" because they are located outside of the normative framework. Yet, within the confines of the rigid racial classification system of the U.S., even "White" or "light-skinned" bodies can be outside of the normative framework. A person can be "White" in terms of pigmentation and not a member of the dominant group and can therefore experience aspects of this. For example, there was a time in U.S. history when Irish, Jewish, and Italian immigrants were deemed to be neither White nor Black (Khoshnevis, 2019, p. 121). This is a result of the Black/White binary that has been established in the U.S.

Many individuals of Middle Eastern North African (MENA) origin feel in "racial limbo" as they do not believe that the racial categories of the U.S. are representative of their identity or heritage. Grewal (2009) writes, "even those Arab Americans who have physical characteristics typically considered definitive attributes of whiteness (blond or red hair, fair skin, etc.) often reject whiteness as their racial identity within the spaces of their communities (p. 328). They would be far more likely to call themselves "Arab" or identify a particular country of origin than to identify themselves as White. Furthermore, Grewal (2009) uses the work of Naber (2000) to explain that this "rejection entails a political claim to the right to protection from discrimination as well as the reclamation of self-definition 'on their own terms, in the face of the state's and the media's distortions of their identities'" (p. 328). Avoidance of associations with Whiteness are related to identity but are also a political decision.

For many individuals of MENA origin, regional and civilizational differences are often more impactful than color. Yorukoglu (2017) discusses the fact that in Turkey, "Whiteness" is related to the "East/West" civilizational divide and not to race. Yorukoglu (2017) writes, "whiteness" has become a claim to being part of the West, instead of the East, to "the civilized world" instead of the world of "terrorists" (p. 3). Therefore, for Turks, the concept of racialization has little to do with color, aside from the country having adopted "Western" notions of White and Black as it pertains to authenticity versus inauthenticity of "Turkishness." Yorukoglu (2017) says that the term "White Turk" is a class reference to one who mimics what are deemed to be "Western" ways of life and "Western" values and has now been juxtaposed by those who claim to be "Black Turks," or those who value Anatolian heritage and Islamic culture. Ironically, there are some individuals who would never be considered a "White Turk," despite the fact that they have very little in common with the Anatolian working class. This shows that

this is actually related to habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). There is a great deal of commentary that could be provided about this topic, however, my point is that race for those of the MENA region is not as Black and White as it is in the U.S. Furthermore, it is complicated even in the U.S., as indicated by the fact that the U.S. Census Bureau does not know how to classify individuals from the MENA region.

The U.S. Census Bureau held the “2015 Forum on Ethnic Groups from the Middle East and North Africa” to decide whether or not to add a “MENA” category to the U.S. census, as experts contend that “many people of MENA origin do not feel White or Black” (Buchanan, Marks and Alvarez Figueroa, 2016, p. 14). The forum came to the conclusion that “current categories on the race and origin questions do not work for many respondents” (p. 14). However, there has been no change to the census. Those of MENA origin who choose a race other than White actually have their race recoded by the bureau (Maghbouleh, 2017, p. 185). Although many of MENA origin support the move to change the census, there is also some backlash against it. Some individuals of MENA origin feel that the current categorization allows the community to remain “invisible” in terms of government data (p. vii). The fear is that the stripping of “invisibility” could open the door for further and more in-depth government surveillance of MENA communities nationwide.

Ultimately, discrimination varies based on skin tone and other phenotypes; this is true within the broader categories of Muslim, or within ethnicities deemed “White,” such as Arab. For example, knowing that one has an Arab body, even of light complexion, does not prevent that body from being an “othered” body. Knowing that ones’ body is stigmatized and deemed to be an improper *type* of “White” can also have detrimental effects. These effects are different from those experienced by darker-skinned members of society and have different consequences

related to them. Yet, the identification as an Arab for those of "light-skin" is often related to cultural signifiers, which, and unlike skin, can be removed if necessary. Examples of cultural signifiers would be hijab worn by some Muslims, facial hair worn by others, and names that derive from a language other than English, such as those of Arabic origin. The same is not true for dark-skinned Arabs or dark-skinned people of other ethnic and racial categories.

Skin color simply cannot "rub-off" or be removed the way that names can be changed, or beards can be shaved. Though hurtful, the Black White binary that provides no official middle space for those who are not Black or White, does afford those individuals a certain amount of room to move between the two spaces. Whiteness has always been exclusive in the U.S. Ignatiev (1995) points out that even the Irish were initially excluded from the privileges of Whiteness until they proved their dedication to "solidarity based on color," primarily done by supporting slavery (p. 96). This was partially due to economic factors, but there was also a "tendency to equate freedom with whiteness and slavery with blackness" (Ignatiev, 1995, p. 96). Like immigrant Muslim groups who are non-Black, the value of Whiteness in the U.S. was clear to the Irish and deemed something worth working toward. The ability to manipulate the racial binary of the U.S. is partially what opened the borders of the U.S. to immigration from the MENA region at all. Yet, movement within the racial classification system of the U.S. is a privilege that is not afforded to the darkest skinned members of U.S. society and those of the Black race in particular.

Multiple "othered" Identities. Colorism not only has social and economic implications, but there are psychological consequences as well. Franz Fanon (1967), in his work *Black Skin White Masks*, discusses how the consciousness of having a Brown or Black body by a person of color becomes a "negating activity" (p. 110). Fanon says that the consciousness of a body of

color “is a definitive structuring of the self and the world” (p. 111). In other words, the acknowledgement of having a body of color is the acknowledgement of one’s marginalized place within White society. The two are interrelated and so there is no way to acknowledge that one has a body that is not White, without also acknowledging what that means socially. This leaves an individual in conflict with their own body and assists in what can be the creation of an inferiority complex within the individual (p. 194). That inferiority complex is also related to the internalized White aesthetic ideals that Hall (1995) believes leads some people of color to alter their body toward Whiteness.

Much of this is tied to W.E.B. Du Bois’s (1903) concept of double consciousness. Double consciousness refers to the dual identity that people of color must maintain, while simultaneously being aware that the gaze of the dominant group is perpetually on them, continually negating both the color of one’s skin and denying the individual the ability to stake claim to White culture or society – even though one has been born into it. Du Bois wrote, “one ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro . . . two unreconciled strivings” (p. 16-17). There is a conflict between the varied identities that people of color, and Black people specifically, are forced to grapple with. The body and the individual that resides within it are one being and yet, the body is negated and this leads to the negation of the individual as a whole. One is neither fully African or fully American, instead, the individual is only allowed to be what the society will allow and that is neither. Moore (2005) writes:

To be American is to be a Black person in skin pigmentation who mentally identifies with White people and European culture. For today, it is implied that double consciousness is a struggle to be both an African American as well as an American (p. 751).

Moore (2005) calls this a maladaptive survival technique because it creates “mental conflict” within the individual (p. 752). Moore (2005) continues, “it is not psychologically healthy to measure your worth through the eyes of others. Moreover, it is not psychologically healthy to be denied full expression of your Blackness or manhood in a White-dominated society” (p. 753). Though non-White people of varying racial identities live aspects of these complex realities every day, how these dynamics manifest themselves in Islamic institutions is of particular significance. While one is never free from the burdens of history, society, or the rejection of the self by society, the Islamic institution is hoped to offer some form of security or solace. For many, Islam is related to community-building, resistance to oppression, and, depending on one’s origin, the throwing off of colonialism. Yet, when the Islamic institution becomes a space of the same oppression that exists outside of it, the individual is robbed of the hope that they invested in the doctrine of Islam and its claims of a united community that operates outside of race, language or ethnicity – the *ummah*.

The impact of how negative experiences in Islamic institutions impact individuals is a major point of concern in my research, particularly as it applies to youths. Many, if not most, Muslim youth in the U.S. live within the reality of being a minority in more than one form. Islamic institutions are often the space that is considered “safe” to live one’s multiple identities. Yet, what happens when it is not? Colorism has a major influence on how individuals conceive of their own identity, and what they believe they are able to achieve in life. It also impacts the level of involvement one wishes to have with Islamic institutions and the Muslim community, salient issues and a significant reason I have chosen this topic for my dissertation.

Problem Statement

The primary issue that this dissertation addresses is the prevalence of colorism in U.S. Islamic communities. There needs to be a greater awareness about what type of messages are being provided by the Islamic community to young people. This is the first step to creating safer spaces for those of all backgrounds and phenotypes who identify as Muslim.

Purpose Statement

As previously stated, the purpose of this study is to better understand what colorism looks like in practice in Islamic institutions in the U.S. This research examines the intersections of race, phenotypes and Islam as a means of better understanding the impact of experiences in Islamic institutions on Muslim identity. Additionally, it provides a historical analysis of racial relations within the contemporary Islamic community in the U.S. All research findings are evaluated using a critical cultural lens. The findings of this study can inform future policies and practices at the institutional level within Islamic spaces.

Research Questions

The primary research questions of this dissertation are: What does colorism look like in practice in Islamic institutions in the U.S.? How is colorism enacted? How is colorism manifested in Islamic institutions? The goal of this research is to try and better understand colorism in the diverse setting of Islamic institutions and to use that understanding to inform further research intended to open more inclusive spaces for those who participate in Islamic institutions. Additionally, the data from this study adds theoretically and empirically to the growing body of data on colorism and identity formation.

Pilot Study

In October 2016, I conducted a pilot study in the same city as I conducted the primary dissertation research. The city is located in the southwestern region of the U.S. There were six research participants in the pilot and it has been used to inform my literature review and subsequent research for this dissertation. The pilot research concentrates on the experiences of a small group of individuals in the Islamic community who have been affiliated, to differing degrees, with the same local Islamic school in the city. The selected participants were comprised of former students, previous teachers or administrators, and parents of children who attended the Islamic school. Participants have also been attendees of one or more mosques or cultural centers in the city and some have held leadership roles in one or more such organizations. It is necessary to provide some context about Islamic schools prior to explaining the research findings of the pilot study.

Memon (2009) defines Islamic schools as, "institutions that strive to define school ethos, curriculum, and pedagogy through the traditional sources of Islamic knowledge: the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition" (p. 3). While this definition is an excellent one, it should be mentioned that Islamic educational programs are diverse in their goals and also in their structure. Islamic educational programs are often, though not always, closely related to other Islamic institutions, such as a local masjid (mosque). Islamic schools can include weekend schools, after-school programs, and full-time school programs (Badawi, 2005, p. 10). The school in this case is associated with one of the two largest mosques in the city. Both of the biggest mosques in the city also have weekend school programs for children.

Though there are two sects in Islam that are traditionally recognized, Sunni and Shi'a, the religious aspects of the curriculum in U.S. Islamic schools are most often Sunni in nature. The school in this case is Sunni.

In general, private schools have less regulation than public schools, but most Islamic schools attempt to align their core courses to state standards (Merry and Driessen, 2005, p. 419). Many Islamic schools seek accreditation as a means of trying to maintain high academic standards and also to gain or maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muslim and non-Muslim community. Islamic schools are competing with other private schools and public schools for²students and must maintain a certain level of academic rigor to be a viable option for many families. The schools must have some institution that holds them accountable and in many cases, that is the accrediting organization. The push for Islamic schools to attain accreditation has been led by the Council of Islamic Schools in North America (CISNA) (p. 425). The local Islamic school in the city has struggled with maintaining a reputation of academic rigor, and as a result, it has struggled with maintaining high enrollment. This has also led the school to face financial hardships.

Funding is almost always a major concern for Islamic schools and has been a challenge for the school associated with my research. The majority of the students at the local Islamic school, though not all, come from refugee backgrounds and tend to be low-income. Tuition for students is frequently covered by tax credit, donations, and scholarships. Nationwide, few Islamic schools are able to provide extracurricular activities or the most up to date teaching resources (p. 424). Low salaries often result in a difficulty in finding certified teaching staff or

² There are schools that are non-Sunni and also schools run by the Nation of Islam (NOI) or by those affiliated with the Nation of Islam. I differentiate between Sunni Islamic schools and those affiliated with the NOI simply because the two tend to have *some* ideological differences.

administrators (p. 424). Islamic education often becomes a tradeoff for parents, as they must choose between sending their children to public schools with certified teachers or to an Islamic school where teacher certification may be questionable. This is not to say that every Islamic school struggles with these concerns, but challenges do abound in Islamic educational settings.

Despite the hurdles, Islamic schools are a popular choice for Muslim families and the local school is popular in the city, though the performance of the school has often been put into question. The literature related to Islamic education in the U.S. and Western Europe tends to focus on how Islamic educational settings are tied to identity and cultural maintenance (Merry, 2007). There is a belief that Islamic schools lead to the preservation of Islamic values. Clauss, Ahmed, and Salvaterra (2013) say, "religious schools in general seek to preserve their core values through direct instruction and religious practices" (p. 3). One participant of the pilot study confirmed this through her own understanding about why her parents put her in an Islamic school, "I think it was for cultural reasons. It's to help us learn our religion because we are not in an Islamic country." For this participant, the school is seen as standing in the place of what the "Islamic country" would offer to the individual if they were being reared within it. Similarly, another participant said that he made the choice to put his children into an Islamic school so that they could, "learn the culture." "The culture" being "Islamic culture," which is a quite undefinable concept.

Aside from providing a foundation grounded in "Islamic values," studies have shown that Muslim students in public schools face a number of unique challenges that are concerning for parents. One challenge in public schools is related to low teacher expectations related to stereotypes and the assigning of stereotypical societal roles to Muslim students. Sirin, Ryce and Mir (2009) contend that teachers in public schools often do not view Muslim students as having

high academic potential (p. 470). It is also often assumed that education is of little importance to Muslim families. Muslim students are often placed on non-collegiate tracks in school and Muslim girls frequently find that their career goals are not taken seriously, as school officials have internalized the Orientalist (Said, 1979) belief that Muslims unanimously devalue the education of girls (Zine, 2001, p. 414). The stereotype of Muslim girls being prepared solely to be wives and mothers is deeply ingrained and that a Muslim woman does not *have* to have education to be a wife or mother. Muslim students have also been placed into ESL courses, even when English is their first language, simply because they appear "foreign" (Elbih, 2012, p. 160). In theory, Islamic schools allow students to move away from what Sirin and Fine (2008) call, "living on the hyphen," or struggling with negotiating their diverse identities, at least in the school setting. Islamic schools are expected to offer "education for cultural coherence" (Merry, 2007, p. 7).

There are also fundamental curricular differences between Islamic schools, regardless of the form of Islam being taught, and public schools in the U.S. Many advocates for Islamic schooling believe that public education in the U.S. is based on Eurocentric education and is therefore not inclusive of the culture and history of the region(s) from which many Muslims hail (Apple, 2004). Sensoy's (2009) study on school curriculum in its relation to the Muslim world supports these claims. Sensoy (2009) found that public school textbooks tended to present Muslims as ethnically Arab, rural, and engaging in activities related to "traditional work" that includes "fishing, selling spices in the marketplace, leading camels, harvesting crops by hand, and carpet weaving" (p. 78). This reinforces the Orientalist (Said, 1978) ideas of the lazy Muslim Arab. Sensoy (2009) says, "such representations simultaneously reinforce a discourse of mediocrity as they serve to be evidence of how a lack of hard work leads to an absence of

advancement, modernity, and the personal reward of that hard work" (p. 79). The laziness of the Muslim Arabs can be contrasted with the progress and hard work of the "West" (p. 79).

Therefore, success is because of the diligence of "Westerners" and has nothing at all to do with slavery or colonialism, both of which helped to provide economic advantages to certain "Western" countries. Stonebanks (2004) takes the argument a step further by highlighting the element of ethnicity and violence in public school curriculum. The author brings up the fact that the image of the violent Muslim with that of the Arab ethnicity combines into a "pan-terrorist-Arabism" that is far more indicative of opinions in the "West" than the realities of the Muslim world (p. 96). The author points out that Muslim in schools means "Middle Eastern," or more specifically, Arab, and it also means violent (p. 95).

The way that Islam is taught about in the public-school system is related to Paraskeva's (2016) concept of epistemicide, which argues that Western ontological and epistemological tools "either undermines or denies the existence of other forms of episteme(s) before and beyond the Western hegemony" (p.140). This lack of "inclusivity" is enacted through the null curriculum, or what is not taught (Eisner, 1994). The null curriculum is everything not explicitly taught within a school's curriculum and, just like what *is* taught, what is *not* taught are all a matter of curricular choice (Flinders et al., 1986, p. 34). Public school curriculum is Eurocentric and members of various communities feel not only underrepresented but also discriminated against via the curriculum being taught (Marzama & Lundy, 2012, p. 725). There is no non-Eurocentric curriculum in the U.S. or the majority of "Western" countries.

Many parents hope that by attending Islamic school, their children will grow into their Muslim culture and identity without shame or embarrassment. The caveat to this is that the staff in Islamic schools can also have low expectations for students and can present different

challenges to identity – particularly if the students in question happen to be African-American or Black ethnics. Black Muslim families may feel that their children’s needs are not best served in public schools, but also not being adequately served in Islamic schools either. Islamic schools are not immune to colorism; it leads to a different set of experiences for students with particular phenotypes and it influences how students’ identities are constructed. Furthermore, beyond the relationship that colorism has to identity and self-esteem is the effect it has on educational achievement and later professional opportunities of the individual. All of this will be examined further in this chapter.

In the pilot research, the majority of the participants were immigrants or first-generation citizens of the U.S. from Sudan, Somalia or Kenya. All of the research participants from Sudan, Somalia or Kenya were reared in Muslim households and by Muslim parents/caregivers. There was also an African-American participant. That particular participant converted to Islam and was initially reared in a Christian household. Participants were all members of what is considered the “Black” race by the U.S. census bureau. According to the U.S. census bureau definition, a member of the Black race is “a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa” (U.S. Census Bureau). All names used to identify research participants are pseudonyms, created to protect the privacy of research participants.

Table 1

Pilot Research Participants

Name	Family Origin	Length of time in U.S.	Approximate Age Range
Malik	U.S.	Entire life	Late 30’s
Ahmed	Somalia	8-10 years	Late 30’s to Early 40’s
Ali	Sudan	8-10 years	Late 30’s to Early 40’s

Muhammad (this is the same individual that participated in the primary research)	Sudan	10 years	Mid to late 30’s
Aisha	Somalia/Kenya/U.S.	Almost entire life but also lived in Kenya.	Early 20’s

All participants in the pilot study believed that there are serious forms of discrimination happening within the city’s Muslim community. There was also almost complete unanimity related to there being two primary factors upon which discrimination is based. The two primary factors are: 1) race and 2) class. Some interviewees also included education level, however, I deem this to be related to class and will not therefore make a separate category for it. Interviewees felt that they, and members of their racial and in some cases, ethnic/national group as well, are hindered by discriminatory practices in a number of ways. Discrimination is expressed through 1) inequality in social situations, 2) limited opportunities for leadership, and 3) a lack of access to resources.

Some of the major concerns were related to leadership, or barriers to it for African-Americans or Black ethnic Muslim individuals. This is primarily in terms of leadership at the local masjid, which was deemed by many interviewees to be the primary site of obvious division. Ali, a Sudanese immigrant who has lived in the U.S. for nearly two decades, said the following:

It [the masjid] is controlled by [people from] a bunch of countries: Iraqi, Jordanian, Lebanese and Palestinian and they are controlling everything, even the elections and everything. They do not have Africans, I don’t remember if they have any member of these [African] countries. All the people who are controlling these two masjids are from the area of *Ash-Shams* [The Levant].

Ali's belief that there is a monopoly on leadership on the part of those from the Levant region of the Middle East certainly confirms McCloud's (1995) claims that masjids have become ubiquitously tied to ethnic and national identity (p. 170-171).

Ahmed, a member of the community who is of Somali origin and came to the city as a refugee made similar statements.

First of all, we [Somalis] don't speak Arabic. That language becomes discrimination to us. The other thing is that we don't have education...the other one [is] we are from Africa. If a person speaks Arabic and I speak another language, what do you think? They'll always be with the Arab people...most of the discrimination is on race, education, and money.

Ahmed identified language, ethnicity, and national origin as barriers to inclusion. The mention of education and money is also an important consideration. Classism is a major element of the discrimination that many interviewees described. Many felt that they are deemed "unworthy" to have full participation in the community if they face financial hardship. However, most participants highlighted that, even when education and money are not an issue, race still remains a dividing point between different ethnic communities.

According to some, race can be seen even through the distribution of financial resources. This is particularly true when the community decides who receives financial support, particularly among the many refugee populations that are present in the city. Ahmed made some interesting comments regarding this issue.

I've seen people raising money for Syria. I've seen Syrian students get foundation money. They secure money for them. I've seen that. Why Somalis don't get that? They [those distributing funds] are from the Middle East and Syrians are from the Middle East.

"Arab" and "African" tend to be fluid terms. In this case, it is important to note that for Ahmed, country and region are made to matter. Ahmed went on to address how he feels that his community is perceived. "The way the Islamic community sees us, as Somalis – we are money suckers - we are seeking money." The term used by Ahmed, "money sucker," cannot help but remind one of the equally offensive term, "welfare queen." "Welfare queen" is a term used to describe the view that the majority of welfare recipients are African-American single mothers with a desire to economically drain the U.S. social services system because they are 1) hyper-fertile and 2) lazy (Hancock, 2004, p. 6). According to Hancock (2004), the politics of disgust are enacted when a person's public identity, an identity which has been created in the mind of others, is then used as a justification to silence the individual (p. 4). Hancock's (2004) argument is that "welfare queen" is an identity that has been thrust upon African-American women in general, but on low-income African-American women in particular, so that their voice is essentially rendered "not worth listening to" (p. 62). It begs the question of does something similar happens in mosques when one happens to be a Black ethnic Muslim or an African-American Muslim who is also low-income?

The view that Ahmed's community is not only overlooked but also looked down upon has led to widespread division and a lack of desire on the part of many members of the African-American and Black ethnic community to want to work with or establish a relationship with community members of other ethnic origins. These patterns of discrimination are one of the primary factors that lead to the division of masjids on racial and ethnic lines in larger cities. As cities expand and populations grow, numbers within particular communities get large enough that members are able to segregate themselves within their own ethnic enclaves.

Ahmed commented on this, “recently, the Africans they try to separate themselves from Arabs. The divide has become bigger...it’s national.” Ahmed’s family is a good example of this phenomenon. He had his children in the local Islamic school and described his experiences, “teachers were calling me all the time – your kids did this, your kids did that.” This led him to feel that his children were being targeted by teachers. Parents assume that their children will receive more equitable education in Islamic schools and yet, as stated above, this may not always be the case.

Aisha made similar claims about discrimination in the local school. She is an eighteen-year-old woman of Somali origin. Her family left a refugee camp in Kenya for the U.S. and has lived in the city for a number of years. She is the sister of a number of elementary school students who attend the local Islamic school. She also attended the school, although she aged out of the school years ago. She addressed some of the concerns related to preferential treatment.

In the school setting kids are being treated differently. I don't know, my brothers and sisters they complain about being treated differently than the other children...they would do something and the other kids would also do something but the teacher would mainly pick on them. Like they get in trouble from it.

Though she did not identify the ethnic, racial or national heritage of the teachers, she did say that they were “light-skinned” and do not have a relationship to the African-American or Black ethnic community.

The results of the pilot study provide a better understanding about colorism in the Islamic context, particularly in the microcosm that is the city in which the research was conducted. As a growing and increasingly diverse community, the city’s Islamic community is struggling with many of the issues that Muslims in other parts of the country have faced as they have tried to

build a cohesive community of very diverse people. The experiences of Muslims in this city provide valuable insight into larger issues that occur throughout Islamic institutions all over the U.S. on a daily basis. These include accusations of openly divisive behaviors, such as limiting leadership positions in Islamic institutions to those of particular racial or ethnic origins, or micro-aggressions that include continually referring to anyone of Black African origin as *abd* or slave, even when there are more appropriate alternatives that can be used to refer to people of Black African heritage.

This pilot study was conducted to inform the development of the problem statement. It led me to recognize that racism and discrimination within the Muslim community needs to be addressed within Islamic institutions, more generally, and not just in schools. Islamic schools cannot provide equitable education for all students as long as masjids operate as ethnically based cultural centers and schools have no method for identifying and addressing internal biases of staff members. Racism and classism are strongly related to one another in Islamic institutions and need to be addressed in conjunction with one another.

The participants in both the pilot study and the primary research are all Black community members of immigrant or African-American heritage. I made the decision to work with Black community members after I conducted the pilot study. During the pilot study, I realized that there is a lack of discussion in the Muslim around race and a sense among participants that Black community members are not heard, even when they do try to express their opinions on issues of race within the community. I wanted to gain a better understanding about racialized experiences as told by those who have experienced them. While non-Black community leaders and members certainly have opinions about these topics and many have themselves faced discrimination in some form, I wanted the focus to be on those community members whose opinions are often the

least likely to be heard. It is these community members who are the most impacted by community practices about which they feel they cannot voice opinions.

I am well aware of the common rhetoric about the *ummah* and topic of equality in Islam. I am not attempting to critique Islam. My intention is not to focus on how Islam *should* be practiced, but how it often *is* practiced. My fear was that non-Black participants might provide answers about race that would focus on Islam in theory and not in practice. This is particularly true if they have not had experiences of prejudice in Islamic institutions. Many of the research participants in my dissertation have pulled themselves away from the larger Islamic community. Others have an insider/outsider relationship to the community – even while holding important leadership positions within the community. This is an interesting dynamic and one worth exploring but it is explored best through the experiences of those who are living in this liminal state. Ultimately, this dissertation focuses on Islamic institutions as a means of trying to better understand what is occurring at the local level and how to create more equitable spaces for those who identify as Muslim. I felt that working with Black community members was the best way to understand the dynamics of race in the community and to hear potential solutions from those who have the greatest stake in seeing changes occur.

Institutions and Colorism

Masjids/Mosques, Islamic centers, and ethnically based cultural centers.

It is important to note that Islam is flexible in terms of worship. Metcalf (1996) refers to Islam as having a “portability” to it (p. 6). In the U.S., the mosque can be an actual place that has been built for worship or a group of people worshipping and not a building designed for worship – or a building at all (p. 6). Given this, it is difficult to define mosques in the U.S., particularly

when there are a number of other community center and cultural centers that also include Islamic worship.

Masjid and mosque are both used as a means of describing an Islamic place of worship. I use these interchangeably throughout this dissertation. Islamic centers are similar to masjids and mosques, but a "center" has a connotation of an organization with a broader purpose than just religious (GhaneaBassiri, 1997, p. 33). In reality, masjids, mosques, and Islamic centers in the U.S. all serve similar purposes of both worship and community activity organizing. Experiences in Islamic institutions cannot be discussed without mention of the varied roles that mosques often play in the lives of Muslims living in the U.S.

Mosques in the U.S. have often been initially established in the home of a community member for the purpose of holding Friday congregational prayer (p. 34). Biondo III (2006) elaborates, saying, "Muslims families began arriving en masse during the 1960s, but they generally prayed in private homes and nondescript storefront mosques before 1990" (p. 404). What has generally occurred is that once the population of a community grows in a particular area, a mosque is built, usually through donations (GhaneaBassiri, 1997, p. 34). Biondo III (2006) identifies mosques as of three types: house, storefront, and purpose-built structures (p. 417). The way a "purpose-built" mosque is constructed in a particular community can tell a lot about the needs of the community and the size of the Muslim population that resides there (Biondo III, 2006). It can also hint at the worshipper the mosque leadership is expecting to attract, generally based on community demographics and location (p. 407). If there is a tendency for the building to appear more reminiscent of one ethnic heritage over another, it can also tell a lot about the level of exclusivity one may encounter in the mosque (p. 407). The architecture can

provide a sense of welcome to those of particular ethnic communities, but may provide a sense of exclusivity for others.

In cities with a limited Muslim population there may only be one official mosque that was built for the purpose of Islamic worship. However, as the population increases and becomes more diverse, mosques tend to be built and ultimately separated along ethnic, racial, and/or sectarian lines. This is the case in the city in which the research for this dissertation was conducted. There was initially one larger primarily Sunni mosque (Mosque A) and now another primarily Sunni mosque (Mosque B) has been built in the city. Both of these have been built for the purpose of worship. When asked about the reason for the establishment of two mosques in the city, the common answer from most community members, including community leaders, is that it is related to population growth. One mosque is centrally located and the other is located outside of the city center in what could be considered the suburbs. This ensures that there are two options for places of worship so that no one has to travel too far. Interestingly, Mosque A is commonly known as the primarily "Arab" mosque and Mosque B is known as the primarily "Pakistani" mosque. That is somewhat misleading as they both have diverse attendees, but there are obvious ethnic majorities in each of the mosques. The establishment of two mosques is widely known within the larger community to have been related to differences between community leaders and members. Yet, what those differences happen to be are often expressed in vague terms and conversation about the division is often avoided. There have been claims made by some community members that one mosque is more religiously conservative than the other and that the less conservative mosque tends to have Sufi leanings, though neither claim can be substantiated. There have also been claims made by community members that individuals have been kept out of leadership positions without reason in Mosque A and that those

circumstances prompted community members to establish Mosque B. Supposedly, Mosque B has a number of attendees of substantial financial means and there is an assertion that they did not feel they were being treated fairly and so funded a mosque that would better serve their needs. The two mosques represent what most community members talk about as the "division" in the community. The purpose of this study is not to focus on the division in the community or the establishment of the two mosques. For the purpose of this dissertation, it should be noted that some research participants expressed that they felt marginalized in both mosques, despite whatever ethnic majority or religious views exist in either. It must also be noted that there are other places of worship in the city.

In general, part of the reason that mosques divide based on particular affiliations has to do with the differing needs of the various populations in attendance. Nguyen et al. (2013) describes the role of the mosque as being part religious and part "Muslim social center" (p. 538). Rather than simply a place of worship, mosques act as a space for both community building and advocacy. Yet, mosque structure and leadership choices often lead to questions about how community is defined and what causes are deemed to be the most important for mosques to advocate for.

Aside from providing a space for worship, mosques help to mitigate issues within the community and act as a representative for the community to the non-Muslim population (GhaneaBassiri, 1997, p. 33). GhaneaBassiri (1997) calls mosques in the U.S. "a mediating link between Muslims and their host society" (p. 34-35). The mosque serves so many functions for Muslims in the U.S. that it can even take on the role of "head of the family" (p. 35). GhaneaBassiri (1997) says, "in the absence of relatives, mosques in the United States are often called on to fulfill functions provided by families in the traditional setting" (p. 35). To

demonstrate, in a study of 416 mosques, Ali et al. (2005) found that 74% of the mosques in the study have imams addressing counseling-related issues that run the gamut from marital problems to psychiatric symptoms (p. 204). This is despite the fact that imams are not generally trained in counseling (p. 203). The mosque has become a space for therapy, the facilitation of social services, an ally on matters related to discrimination, and "a hub for social networks" (p. 35).

The mosque also helps to promote what Al-Krenawi (2016) calls "group consciousness" (p. 363). This "group consciousness" can also be understood as awareness of the *ummah* or one's place in the Islamic global community. Often, there is a desire to elucidate the common "struggle" of those in the Islamic community both globally and nationally. Yet, many African-Americans are quick to point out that the concerns of the African-American community are often overshadowed by that of the immigrant population (McCloud, 1995, p. 4; Karim, 2009, p. 35). GhaneaBassiri (1997) largely attributes this to "the disparity in the economic status of immigrant and African-American Muslims" (p. 175). Mosques need the support of the Islamic community because they are not government funded (GhaneaBassiri, 1997, p. 35-36). This means that there is a reciprocal relationship between the mosque and the community. This can also mean that the needs of the majority, particularly the majority with the greatest resources, can often end up being the focus of attention. However, while economics no doubt play a role, the legacy of racism, stereotypes, and the history of discriminatory immigration policies in the United States are also factors that cannot be overlooked.

The multifaceted nature that mosques serve in the United States means that when individuals feel ostracized from the community, the effects can have greater consequences than they would if the mosque were a place solely for worship. The mosque is the one place where some individuals likely feel that they have something in common with those around them – the

mosque is assumed to be a "safe space." In reference to Al-Krenawi's (2016) idea that the mosque serves to provide "group consciousness" and a sense of where one's place is in the community, it is the unfortunate reality that for some individuals, their "place" is not one that is equal to that of others.

Research participant Muhammad is a Sudanese immigrant in his 30's. He is a student at a local university and has been active in the greater Islamic community of the city in various capacities. He relayed the following story:

M: I have a friend, I played soccer with him and he's from Sudan and he's dark-skinned. He was staying with me for a couple of months and I noticed that he didn't go to the masjid on Friday.

Friday is like a mandatory kind of prayer where you need to go to the masjid and I asked, "Why? "Why do you not go to the Friday prayer?"

He said, "I don't go to any. I don't go to the masjid."

And I asked why and he said, "You know, there is something happened and that caused me just to hate the masjid."

He said literally, "I hate the masjid."

It was in Egypt [the friend's experience]. And I said, "what happened?"

He said one day he went to one particular masjid and um, he was um, the first to arrive and of course he was in the first line.³ Then when the imam came, the imam, ok, the imam is the leader of the, the, you know, the group, when he came, he saw the people

³ During communal prayer, it is "Sunnah" or "custom" that Muslims to move to the front of the "prayer lines" and "push-in" toward one another. It is commonly held that there should not be wide spaces or gaps in the lines of prayer goers.

were lining for the prayer. The imam came and asked him to move to the back lines and he said to him, "you cannot be in the front line."

R: Did the imam give a reason?

The reason was, for him it was obvious. However, however, the imam said basically "only Egyptians, and you are Black," he, he never said the word Black. He said "*asmer*," like *asmer*, which is like Black. There is that kind of hierarchy I am talking about. Even during the worship, during the practice of worshipping God.

R: Do you see that carried over in the U.S.?

Of course. Of course, I do. You know it happened to me [similar experiences]. It happened to others.

Though this occurred in Egypt, Muhammad expressed the belief that these views travel with those from other countries and that such behaviors are replicated in the U.S.

Ethnically based mosques or "cultural centers" are frequently established among Muslims of particular communities and the ethnically-based character is sometimes, though not always, related to events such as those mentioned above. Karim (2007) writes, "most African-American Muslims worship in mosques in which 90% of the population is African-American" (p. 226). This tells a great deal about the relationship between African-American Muslims and immigrant Muslims, though research on Black ethnic Muslim communities actually shows solidarity with African-Americans. Abdullah (2009) writes, "rather than merely self-segregating themselves as a strategy against failure, many [Black ethnics] forge alliances and build bridges between themselves and native-born Blacks and, particularly, African American Muslims" (p. 39). According to Abdullah (2009), though this relationship is not always conflict-free, it exists because Black ethnic Muslims share the same racial designation as African-Americans and

therefore face the same racial disenfranchisement (p. 44). Yet, for those who do not face the same level of racism in society, there is no need to establish bonds with Black Muslims, African-American or Black ethnic, and in fact, it puts security at risk for immigrant Muslims. This will be elucidated upon further in subsequent chapters.

Outside of the African-American and Black ethnic community, ethnically based mosques are sometimes established as a result of language used in religious services, whether that is Arabic, English or another language. If an attendee does not speak the language being used, they sometimes prefer to worship at an institution that uses the language with which they are most familiar. Division can also result from differences in religious opinion between individuals. There is not one particular way to practice Islam and it is practiced differently depending on the origins of the population. Yet, for many communities, it is based on the desire to be treated as equals with others and avoid the type of incidents Muhammad highlighted.

Though often labeled as "cultural," such centers, depending on their religious ideology, may host Friday prayers, have someone who is formally or informally designated as an imam, celebrate religious holidays, and offer Quran reading and interpretation classes or other religiously based courses. These types of activities are frequently combined with culturally specific events and activities as well. These may include classes to learn the language of the country that the majority of the attendants hail from, cooking classes of culturally specific food, and the celebration of country specific national holidays. This combination of religion and culture is not new in the U.S.

In Chiat's (1997) catalogue of religious architecture in the U.S., the Islamic Center and Mosque in Cedar Rapids, Iowa is highlighted (p. 155). It is known today as the "Mother mosque of America" (p. 160). Built in 1925, it is one of the longest standing mosques in America and

was originally a cultural center for the Syrian diaspora (p. 155). It was originally known as "The Rose Fraternity Lodge" and the intended purpose was to maintain the Syrian community's "religious and cultural traditions" (p. 160). Similar goals are still stated among cultural centers that have a Muslim population.

In their research on a Turkish cultural center in the southern part of the United States, Paul and Becker (2017) found that for many attendees, the focus was on "cultural education" (p. 150). Yet, this does not eliminate religion from center activities as religion is deemed by participants to be part of the culture of Turkey (p. 150). Indeed, the mission statement of the organization highlights that the center is "operating for spiritual and educational purpose" (p. 150). This is not far from the original stated goal of what is now the "Mother mosque of America." It is clear that cultural centers serve various purposes for community members. These purposes include everything from community building and social networking to religious education.

The city in which I conducted my research currently has a Somali cultural center, Sudanese community center, Shi'a center, Ahmadiyya community center, Turkish cultural center, Muslim cultural center and two large Sunni mosques. Many of these institutions have competing doctrines with one another and each of them could be defined as a mosque if mosque is defined as a place of Islamic worship in some form. My research focuses on the two large Sunni mosques that have been built primarily for Islamic worship. I have chosen these institutions because of their size and predominance in the Muslim community. It should be noted that, in terms of population, the Muslim community in the city is dominated by Sunnis. There may be additional groups or mosques unknown to me. There are many informal groups that regularly meet and then dissolve. All of the above-mentioned groups offer a combination of

cultural and religious activities and events. Each center or group has a different reason for having been initially established and much of the reasoning is related to an outsider position within the greater local Islamic community. For some, it is more closely linked to race and for others it is related to sectarianism or differences in religious customs or practices. Yet, the feeling of being an "outsider" exists nonetheless.

While ethnically based mosques and centers may have their place, it is important to scrutinize the purpose for their establishment and their impact. Though ethnically based spaces may exist to serve the cultural needs of the population attending the mosque or center, they are often also closely linked to ensuring equality in religious and community spaces.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The modern history of Islam in the U.S. has a strong impact on the way that members of differing ethnicities within the larger Muslim community interact with one another. Indigenous Muslims or African-Americans and immigrant Muslims of all backgrounds are two distinct groups that are also highly interconnected. Yet, Islam presents different experiences for members of each group. Though this literature review is about institutions, it is also about positionality, the impact of U.S. racial policies, and racism itself on distinct, but closely connected communities.

It is worth noting again that the terms being used are essentializing the groups being discussed. Scholars tend to use the terms "indigenous Muslim" for African-Americans and "immigrant Muslim" when discussing topics related to race and Islam in the U.S. For lack of better terminology, I too, use these terms. The two groups must be distinguished from one another and this is the best way that scholars have devised. Yet, the term "indigenous Muslim," in reference to African-Americans leaves out other Black people who are also Muslim, though

not specifically African-American, Black ethnics. Similarly, Black ethnics who are not African-American sometimes do not fit under the designation of "immigrant Muslim" as used throughout this work because those being referenced are not racially Black. It should be noted that Africa is itself a very diverse continent and the concepts of race that apply in the U.S. simply do not have the same definition in African countries. "Indigenous Muslim" also allows African-American Muslims the sole authority over indigeneity, as it pertains to Islam in North America.

"Immigrant Muslim" is equally problematic because it eliminates the unique and differing identities and experiences of Muslims who have immigrated to the U.S. Lastly, "authentic" Islam is a term that is used throughout this work. It should be made clear that there is no "authentic" Islam, but that the perception in many Islamic institutions in the U.S. is that Sunni Islam is the most "authentic" representation of Islam. Similarly, Islamic institutions in the U.S. often have a heavy Arab influence. The Arab world is diverse and the definition of "Arab" is a shifting one. The Arab world includes individuals who would be deemed White by U.S. standards, Black by U.S. standards, and a variation of phenotypes that cover everything in between. It should be noted that though the broad term "Arab" may often be used as a generic term, every attempt has been made to identify which specific community is being discussed.

The first section of this literature review is titled "Islam in America: African-American roots." This portion provides a brief history of Islam in the U.S. and discusses how the influx of immigrant Muslims to the U.S. has changed Islam for all Black Muslims, but for African-American Muslims in particular. The next section is titled "*Ummah vs. asabiya: Exclusive tribalism or community solidarity?*" This section discusses tribalism versus a belief in a unified *ummah*. Beyond that, it explains why Black Muslims and non-Black immigrant Muslims might view this topic through a different paradigm, given the different history that the communities

have in the United States. The third section elucidates how immigrant Muslims have worked to be deemed "model minorities" as a means of survival within the U.S. racial hierarchy. This section is called "Claiming "Whiteness:" How to become a "good" Muslim" and demonstrates how the close relationship to Whiteness that has often been sought out by immigrant Muslims distances them from Black Muslims. The racialization of Islam is a contemporary topic of concern and so the next section is designated "Racialization of Islam: Forever foreign." This section aims to describe the difficulties that are faced when Islam becomes tied to race and how this link leads to a perpetual "foreignness" for immigrant Muslims, further exacerbating the desire to "fit in." Finally, the last section is titled "Colorism: No safe space." Colorism has managed to rob Black Muslims of the safe space Islamic institutions are often expected to provide. This section discusses how colorism manifests itself, but the nuances of the phenomenon in the Muslim community will be focused on in the next chapter.

Islam in America: African-American roots

The exclusion that some African-American and Black ethnic Muslims experience in Islamic institutions is ironic, given the fact that Islam technically first came to the U.S. through the religious practices of slaves from Africa. The history of Islam in North America is directly related to the history of slavery in North America. The first Muslims came to North America in the 17th century as slaves (Clauss, K., Ahmed, S., Salvaterra, M., 2013, p. 2). Islam was lost among many adherents, as African people were willingly or forcibly converted to Christianity. Yet, Islam was revived during the 20th century, much to the credit of the Nation of Islam (NOI). For example, the first recorded Islamic schools were established in the 1930's by the NOI (Memon, 2009, p. 59).

The Nation of Islam, under the leadership of Noble Drew Ali and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, provided a new interpretation of Islam (Jackson, 2005). Jackson (2005) contends that these leaders saw Islam as a "basis for an alternative modality of American Blackness" (p. 39). From the outset, Islam was largely African-American and related to nation-building until immigration quotas were changed in 1965 (Jackson, 2005). Through the adjustment of quotas, immigrant Muslims came in waves during this era, though there were immigrant Muslims in the U.S. prior to the 1960's. As a result of the increased numbers, the reality of Islam as lived by African-Americans was dramatically altered.

After the arrival of immigrant Muslims, immigrant Islam was seen by immigrant Muslims as the "authentic" version of Islam and deemed to be grounded in Islamic history and the Islamic sciences, thereby negating other interpretations of Islam (Jackson, 2005, p. 40-41; Karim, 2009, p. 33-34). Voices of African-American Muslims are still silenced in matters of religion, as Abdurraqib (2009), inspired by the works of Sherman Jackson, points out. This is because the conflation of Islam with Arabs makes Islam the "intellectual property" of Arabs (p. 141-142). Some would contend that the "immigrant" designation even excludes those of Black ethnic immigrant origin, most of whom grew up Muslim and in countries with a population that was largely Muslim. For example, in the pilot study, Ali and others pointed out that leadership in the Islamic community in the city is meted out mostly to Levant region Arabs. This further removes the indigenous Muslim population from the immigrant Muslim population.

For Black Muslims, this has all had detrimental effects on their relationship to non-Black immigrant Muslims, as they feel they are perceived as less knowledgeable. As Jackson (2005) states, "with this development [the arrival of immigrant Muslims], Blackamericans who identified with Islam, especially Sunnis, came under increasing criticism as 'cultural heretics':

self-hating 'wannabees' who had moved from the back of the bus to the back of the camel" (p. 38). Karim (2009) writes that many African-American Muslims become "frustrated" with the fact that they are almost always assumed to be converts simply because they are African-American (p. 33). This is understandable, given the fact that many African-American Muslims have been Muslim for multiple generations.

This history has far reaching implications when it comes to community relationships and Islamic institutions. According to those of immigrant origin, what is deemed to be the "authentic" path to Islam is often the immigrant experience. This perspective then translates into practice within many Islamic institutions throughout the U.S. As mentioned earlier, it must be noted that the "authentic" brand of Islam that many immigrant Muslims offer is most often ethnically Arab or South Asian and almost always Sunni. Much of the conflict is related to interpretation and the concepts of *ummah* and *asabiya*.

***Ummah* vs. *asabiya*: Exclusive tribalism or community solidarity?**

The relationship between differing racial and ethnic groups within the Islamic community in the U.S. is impacted by factors both within and outside of Islamic theology. Within Islam, the commonly used term *ummah* refers to the "community of believers" and is one of the defining concepts of the faith (McCloud, 1995, p. 4). However, as Ghaneabassiri (1997) notes, "Muslims of various ethnicities and doctrinal affiliations have different understandings of the *umma*" (p. 170). Despite this, the concept of the *ummah* is intended to be one of unification around Islam. This is vastly different than the idea of *asabiya*, which describes a form of community solidarity that is closely linked to tribal affiliation (p. 4). More specifically, *asabiya* refers to "kinship relations, which exert themselves in a feeling of tribal solidarity, common ethical understandings and, ultimately, in a community identity" (p. 4). *Asabiya* is generally used as a negative term in

Islamic discourse because it separates Muslims from one another based on other aspects of their identity, such as language, genealogical ties, or tribal affiliation. However, in the U.S. context, *asabiya* has begun to take on a different role in the life of particular communities that are part of the wider Islamic population of the U.S., such as that of the African-American community.

The original concept of the *ummah* was meant to remove divisions that could separate individuals from one another. One of the most cited Quranic verses related to the concept of the *ummah* is in Surah Al-Imran.

And hold fast, all together by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of fire, and He saved you from it. Thus doth Allah make his signs clear to you: that ye may be guided (Quran 3:103).

As indicated by this verse, all potential divisions between differing groups are theoretically superseded by Islam and the idea of the collective Muslim community and shared "universal faith" (McCloud, 1995, p. 4). Indeed, it is this concept of community that appealed to one pilot study participant, Malik, an African-American convert to Islam originally from St. Louis, Missouri. He said, "seeing racism at its finest, it's very nice when you can see, when you can visually see differences but physically feel together." This unification is no doubt appealing, particularly to those who have experienced blatant racism or what Malik identified as "racism at its finest." Muslims are expected to be united under the banner of Islam and to choose between the "formation" of *asabiya* or the "experience" of the *ummah* (p. 4).

However, the "othered" position of certain groups in the U.S. has led those communities to establish a form of *asabiya*, as individuals work to navigate through the marginalized nature of

their identity and that of their community. The African-American and Black ethnic community is an excellent example of this. For African-American and Black ethnic Muslims, *asabiya* has come to serve a wider purpose than the original definition implies.

The reestablishment of community is one of the methods utilized by the disenfranchised to resist their unequal position in society (Karumanchery, 2005, p. 85). Many Islamic institutions within the African-American community were initially formed through a "rhetoric of protest" that opposed the horrific abuses that those of Black racial origins historically faced in North America, prior even to the official establishment of the United States (Memon, 2009, p. 13). The concept of *asabiya* takes on a different meaning once placed into the framework of marginalized groups that are impacted by an oppressive racial system, such as the existing racial system in the U.S. As much as *asabiya* is related to "tribalism" and a certain amount of exclusivity, among the African-American community it has also taken on a meaning related to nation-building and community solidarity (McCloud, 1995, p. 4). Institutions within the community, such as schools with Afro-centric curriculum, were dedicated to "racial protectionism" as a means of building strong and proud communities.

Yet, *asabiya* has been one of many issues between the African-American Muslim population and immigrant Muslims (McCloud, 1995, p. 4). The African-American Muslim population has often found that the needs of their community are lost when the focus is exclusively on the *ummah* (p. 4). This is true in terms of where mosques are built, who has positions of authority in Islamic institutions, and which causes are seen as worthy to invest financial resources.

Kahera (2002) writes that mosques with large populations of African-American attendees tend to follow the pattern of urban African-American churches by emphasizing "liberation

theology" (p. 371). This theology has a strong focus on community rejuvenation (Kahera, 2002). Kahera (2002) further highlights that "new immigrants tend to reside where there are established Muslim communities; second, recent arrivals are more likely to live in ethnic urban and suburban enclaves, with other Muslims from the same country" (p. 374). The author brings to light the fact that the "ethnic" mosque becomes an ethnic "enclave." The goals of those living in the ethnic enclave rarely intersect with those in the African-American community, particularly those in large urban spaces. Therefore, there is a disconnect in terms of representation, needs, and services.

Culture is not static and there is no one "Islamic culture," just as there is no one form of Islam. Yet, Islamic institutions are often seen as the source for transmitting Islamic culture, particularly for those living in non-Muslim majority countries. Unfortunately, the culture that is sought is rarely clearly defined and is in fact, un-definable. Despite advocates' claims, Islamic institutions, and schools in particular, have been accused of simply transmitting the cultural customs of those in positions of community leadership (Elbih, 2012, p. 170). For mosques that are used as an "ethnic enclave," as described by Kahera (2002), this is the culture of the ethnicity of the majority of attendees. It cannot be denied that in all Islamic institutions there is a form of culture that is being taught and that the culture is deemed Islamic by the leadership. However, Islam is not monolithic and therein lies part of the conflict within the Muslim community in the U.S. regarding which brand of Islam is being transmitted and who has the authority to determine the appropriate version of Islam to be taught to congregants.

Though the U.S. may not consider itself a "nation-state" according to the traditionally understood definition of the term, Joshi (2006) points out that the normative identity in the U.S. is White and Christian and this norm operates on all levels of society, including the institutional,

societal/cultural and individual levels (p. 215). Identity construction requires that a group become normative by identifying what is not the norm and therefore what the group is not (p. 212). Creating a normative identity allows the dominant group to be privileged, while the "othered" group(s) are marginalized (p. 215). As Barth (1998) maintains, the identity of a group is determined not only by the group, but also by those outside of the group. Although the U.S. is multicultural in terms of the population residing within it, the normative identity in the U.S. is still White and Christian. Those who fall outside of that norm are the "other." For many Muslims, this creates overlapping "othered" identities. It could be argued that no one experiences this more than Black Muslims. Yet, for some, the disconnect that seems cultural is economic and not even restricted to economics in the U.S. Instead, it is a disconnect that is also related to funding sent abroad and to which countries are prioritized.

As pointed out in the findings from the pilot study, there is a common belief among many Muslims in the city that the needs of particular groups are placed above the needs of others. Aisha commented on this trend.

In the Mosque, they do a lot of fundraising and charity work for Syrians but they don't do that much for the people in Somalia or Africa...I think it's because they don't really know what's happening in Africa.

This quote is indicative of how some of the members of the Muslim population feel about the unequal distribution of resources in the city and the lack of education about the countries of the African continent. Nearly all participants commented on the unequal distribution of resources, and Ali posed important questions related to how resources are distributed.

There is money coming to the poor people and it's supposed to go to the refugees and, like that and I don't know, we don't know how it's being distributed. I'm not accusing

anyone but nobody, I know a lot of people, and nobody tells anything about how money is distributed. I didn't see any sign or anyone say 'I get,' like, 'any help.' But maybe they help but I don't know how it's being distributed. I mean, is it according to the most poor people? According to the nation or according to the countries? So you choose people's countries, certain countries to be distributed to the most poor people? And who decides that?

There are other issues that create huge conflicts among members of the Muslim population and not just in in this city, but nationally. Yet, what does one owe to the *ummah* and what does one owe to their community? Furthermore, if we take into consideration Anderson's (1983) concept that all nations are imagined communities, how does one determine to which community they belong? In the U.S., race certainly is a factor in community building efforts.

As McCloud (1995) points out, the conflict between the concept of *asabiya* and that of the *ummah* even led famed activist, writer and community leader Malcolm X/El-Hajj Malik El Shabazz to establish two Muslim places of worship and organizing: Muslim Mosque Incorporated, which focused on building relationships within the *ummah* and the Organization of African American Unity, which focused on *asabiya* and the goal of nation-building among the African-American community (p. 4). Though he recognized the value of the *ummah*, he also believed that individuals have both "accountability and responsibility" to the community from which they hail (p. 38). McCloud (1995) theorizes that this is the reason that after returning from the pilgrimage to *Hajj* and being asked if he would refer to himself as El-Hajj Malik El Shabazz he responded, "not until the condition of my people changes" (p. 37). Erasure of "X" from his name would not erase the reason that he began using it – the legacy of slavery among the African-American population in the U.S. and the loss of African cultural signifiers, such as

names, that came with it. Through *asabiya*, the African-American community has been able to use Islam as a uniting force within their own community.

The concept of the *ummah* is elusive partially because it is complicated by the complex dynamics of race in the U.S. These include stereotypes of particular racial groups, the racialization and stigmatization of Islam in the U.S., and colorism – both outside of and within the Islamic community itself (Selod, 2013). Lee (2010) points out that African-American Muslims, particularly in the inner city, are subjected to a number of stereotypes by immigrant Muslims (p. 147). The idea that Islam within the African-American community is a “prison phenomenon” is a prevalent one (p. 147). Lee (2010) says that the entire community tends to be labeled by the immigrant Muslim population as “violent and hypocritical” (p. 147). The spiritual journey experienced by African-American Muslims is often overshadowed by the national stereotypes of African American women as “promiscuous” and African-American men as “violent” (p. 147). Many immigrant Muslims have accepted the racial stereotypes that are projected onto African-Americans by the larger U.S. population. In turn, many immigrant Muslims rejected Black America as a means of ensuring their own social mobility (Karim, 2007; Prashad, 2000). There has been a continued trend among immigrant Muslim communities to adopt the dominant racial discourse of the U.S. and this has continued to affect the relationship between differing ethnic communities that fall under the umbrella of Islam.

The legacy of immigrant Muslims adopting the racial discourse of the U.S. is linked to what immigrant Muslims saw as the historical necessity to claim “Whiteness.” By doing so, immigrant Muslims could attain citizenship and convince non-Muslims of their value to American society in the face of violence “in the name of Islam,” for which they are blamed, and international politics, over which they are assumed to have some control. Of course, this

ideology has often come at the expense of the relationship with the Black Muslim community.

The Black community in general, African-American or Black ethnic, has never had the ability to avoid minoritization and has had to suffer whatever treatment that label brought with it.

Claiming "Whiteness:" How to become a "good" Muslim

There is no single Islamic identity or Islamic experience, within the U.S. or outside of its borders. Yet, Islam in the U.S. is experienced differently within the Islamic community and much of this is related to race and phenotypes. Abdurraqib (2009) points out that immigrant Muslims tow the line between depicting African-American struggles as "like their struggles – to assimilate, to belong" and at other times they put "distance" between themselves and Black American Muslims as a means "to make a case for their assimilation and belonging in mainstream society" (p. 136). In short, distance from Blackness and the benefits of being associated with Whiteness in the U.S. have not escaped members of the U.S. immigrant Muslim community.

"Whiteness" in the U.S. provides particular privileges and rights that non-White people simply do not have, this is related to White privilege (McIntosh, 1991). McIntosh (1991) first coined the term and explained White privilege as an "invisible package of unearned assets that I [a person classified as White] can count on cashing in each day, but about which I [a person classified as White] was 'meant' to remain oblivious" (p. 10). Though White people are 'meant to remain oblivious' to White privilege, people of color and those from minoritized communities are not oblivious to its obvious operation in U.S. society. In fact, one of the first thinkers to comment on this socio-political phenomenon, and indeed years before McIntosh (1988) labeled it White privilege, was W.E.B. Dubois. In examining racism among White workers, themselves marginalized and economically exploited, Dubois (1964) found that Whiteness was a

"psychological wage" or what Gualtieri (2009) explains as "a form of compensation rewarded for not being Black" (p. 6). The "unearned assets" of being White are the "compensatory rewards" for not being Black. Even if certain members of society are oblivious to that fact, individuals of color and those from minoritized communities have never been privileged enough to be allowed to remain oblivious to it.

For immigrant Muslims, claiming "Whiteness" was, at one point in U.S. history, their only option for citizenship in the U.S. To be clear, however, though marginal, the position of many, particularly those of "light-skin," was still one that allowed them to manipulate their identity in order to gain a certain amount of rights, even within the rigidity of the U.S. racial system. Acceptance meant rejecting Blackness (Karim, 2009). In order to demonstrate their "Whiteness," immigrant Muslims needed to juxtapose it against "Blackness" (Karim, 2009). Karim (2009) says, "the fear of not being accepted, of not making it in America, always looms and lingers. Why associate with the native underclass when one's immigrant status already threatens one's assimilation?" (p. 26). Maghbouleh (2017) points out that Whiteness can be revoked for those of MENA origin (p. 6). Yet, the reality is slightly different for those from the Black community. As McCloud (2009) states, "survival by most immigrant Muslims has translated into being like White Americans. For African-Americans survival has meant group solidarity" (p. 165). The strategies are different because the context for each community is different.

The implications of immigrant Muslims aligning themselves with the White community has far reaching consequences, for Muslims in general, but especially for those members of the Muslim community who cannot "pass" for White. The majority of Black Americans have never been able to "pass" and so have never had a choice about working to build solidarity within the

Black American community or not. The strategies of indigenous and immigrant Muslim communities have historically differed as a result of racial relations in the U.S. and the extent to which communities can or cannot transform themselves to mold themselves into the rigid U.S. racial classification system and attain rights reserved for select groups. For Black people in America, "passing" has simply never been an option. Newby (1981) eloquently writes, "to extol the desirability of whiteness denies the appropriateness of blackness" (p. 54). For immigrant Muslims, choosing Whiteness as a means of ensuring their own success actually pits them against the Black community – whether they are aware of that fact or not.

At this juncture, there is an important distinction between indigenous and immigrant Muslims to be made. In the 20th century, Islam in the U.S. among the African-American community was related to resistance and largely tied to Black nationalism (Curtis, 2002). Among the Black community, Islamically inspired groups were never dedicated solely to religious ideology. Though originally established by Noble Drew Ali in 1913 under a different name, the Moorish Science Temple was officially named in 1925 and was one of the first Islamic groups in the 20th century in the U.S. Their tenants of faith extended beyond religious worship and delved into the political and personal life of believers (McCloud, 1995, p. 12-13). Followers were told not to participate in the military and to reject racial designations such as "Negro" (p. 12). Later, the Nation of Islam, under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, continued this trend by advocating for a separate state for Black people or a return to Africa and by extending dietary prohibitions for believers beyond abstaining from pork (p. 28). Instead, foods that were considered "reminders of slavery," such as collard greens, corn bread and neckbones were also prohibited for followers of the faith (p. 28). These are examples of how Islam in the African-

American community went beyond simply a religion and to the heart of Black identity and political struggle in America.

These are examples of why Jackson (2005) refers to Islam as the "Black man's religion," because it was originally related to identity as much as spirituality (p. 39). He goes on to say that "Black Religion [in general] is a holy protest against White supremacy and its material effects" (p. 40). "Black Religion" comes in various forms, including Christian, and Islam is simply one of those forms of "holy protest" (p. 40). For African-Americans and oftentimes, Black ethnics as well, Islam is a form of spiritual resistance to White supremacy.

In contrast, as McGinty (2012) argues, Muslims in the U.S., specifically immigrant Muslims and particularly since the events of 9/11, have worked to create an identity that is acceptable to the dominant population – White Americans. A mainstream non-threatening Muslim that is "just like White people," only Browner and Muslim but with a lower case "m." Tehranian (2008) calls this the "Faustian pact" that "Middle Easterners" have made with Whiteness (p. 1205). Tehranian (2008) writes:

On one hand, society at large has selectively racialized individuals of Middle-Eastern descent, thereby unleashing a pernicious stereotyping feedback loop that ossifies the negative connotations associated with the group and the prevalent sense of their Otherness. On the other hand, many Middle-Eastern Americans have adopted assimilatory covering measures to downplay their Otherness in the eyes of society (p. 1205).

The decision to embrace Whiteness on the part of immigrant Muslims is consciously strategic and unconsciously psychological. Pyke's (2010) work discusses the phenomenon of "internalized oppression" wherein the oppressed desires to be more similar to the oppressor (p.

554; Fanon 1963; 1967). The oppressed try and become "unothered" by being more like the dominant group (p. 557). According to Pyke (2010), the moment that the oppressed accepts the identity of the oppressor, is the moment that internalized oppression has occurred (p. 557). The work of Jamal (2005) elucidates this theory.

Jamal (2005) discusses that many immigrant Muslims are slow to criticize the U.S. for topics like police brutality because they fear "economic repercussions if they are seen to be ungrateful or overtly critical of the system" and because they worry that criticism "may feed into pre-existing, harmful stereotypes about the community" (p. 66). There is a need to be less "stereotypically" Muslim and more normative and White. Stereotypical Muslims would likely "complain" about police brutality. White Americans often defend the police and assume they are "doing their job" and that the police would only get violent if provoked by an assailant. McGinty (2012) declares that in response to the "othered" position of Muslims in the U.S., Muslim advocacy groups have worked to create the 'Muslim-American,' an Islamic public representation of what characterizes "American values" (p. 2959). Good American Muslims – do not "complain."

The apologetic stance about the religion of Islam on behalf of many immigrant Muslims is detrimental to the community as a whole, but to African-American and Black ethnic Muslims in particular. Zaman (2008) points out that apologists tend to practice a "theology of accommodation" which "delegitimizes religious interpretation" and creates a "good Muslim/bad Muslim policy framework" (p. 472). This is a form of "defensive othering" or "identity work" that one engages in as a means of resisting stereotypes associated with the group to which they belong to get closer to the dominant group (p. 557). Yet, the closeness that the immigrant Muslim community gets to the dominant group puts greater distance between themselves and the

indigenous Muslim population. Ironically, Gotanda (2011) would argue that no matter how accommodating immigrant Muslims try to be, no matter how economically successful they become or how closely they align themselves with Whiteness, they will always be in a perpetual state of "foreignness." Maghbouleh (2017) discusses the fact that many of MENA origin would contend that they have lived experiences that contradict their racial category. Khoshnevis (2019) writes that people from the Middle East in the U.S. are liminal in that they are "on the margins of the white category and attacked at by the white center (p. 129). Even if technically "White" in terms of skin tone, they are not the right "kind" of White.

The framework that has been established, knowingly or not, by immigrant Muslims has unintentionally placed African American Muslims into the "bad Muslim" position because Islam for the African American community has been part of resistance and resistance is itself part of the stereotypes associated with "bad Muslims." Good Muslims do not complain about police brutality or seem ungrateful for a piece of the "American Dream." Good Muslims keep their head down and avoid resistance. The choice of immigrant Muslims to align themselves with Whiteness is a strategic one related to both survival and internalized oppression. It also simultaneously threatens Black resistance to White supremacy, for which Islam has been a source of inspiration. Jackson (2005) points out some of the issues that exist when immigrant Muslims adopt "Whiteness" and expect Black Muslims to also conform:

Blackamerican Muslims who feel penalized, threatened, or devalued by the dominant culture are effectively called upon, now in the name of Islam, to abandon protest and the legitimate aspects of Black religion and acquiesce to the indignities implied by White supremacy (p. 152).

Therefore, the faith that began as a "holy protest," a powerful force for social change, and a means by which Black people in America built solidarity within their community, has been transformed into a historical brand of Islam. Black Muslims are now expected to conform to the dominant culture and ideologies that they have been struggling against for centuries simply because some immigrant Muslims feel compelled to do so. This ideology is further legitimated in the minds of immigrant Muslims by the devaluation of African American knowledge and contributions to Islam in America. Islam is deemed to be the faith of the immigrant Muslim – the intellectual property of immigrant Muslims and so there is an expectation that indigenous Muslims should acquiesce. This has led to further bifurcation between indigenous and immigrant Islamic communities.

Many immigrant Muslims come from countries with a legacy of colonization. Yet, McCloud (2009) points out that many African American and Black ethnic Muslims see the behavior of some immigrant Muslims as behavior akin to "imperialists" and "colonizers" (p. 170). The direction of the imperialism and colonization is toward Black Muslims in this case.

As previously mentioned, the claiming of "Whiteness" among Middle Eastern, North African and South Asian members of the Islamic community in the U.S. is a historical one that is entrenched in the desire for U.S. citizenship. At the turn of the century, when large numbers of immigrants were coming to the U.S. and even litigating their right to stay in the U.S., nativists reacted by supporting ideas of eugenics, engaging in violence against immigrants - including lynching, and advocating laws that prevented immigrants from attaining citizenship (Gualtieri, 2009, p. 54). The Immigration Act of 1924, which amended the Emergency Quota Act of 1921, restricted immigration from particular regions of the world (p. 4). The legal system was structured to work against non-White individuals and to the sole benefit of White Americans,

who in most cases were also Christian. There are even documented court cases against White defendants for such offences as murder that were thrown out of court if the witness was considered non-White, the reasoning being that "Black was a generic term encompassing all nonwhites" (p. 58). In an increasingly more diverse U.S., the term "colored" was eventually established as a means of expressing the sentiment that all non-White people were of one lesser group, akin to Black people but with different phenotypes (p. 58). "White" was an exclusive category that did not provide space for members of particular regional, ethnic or religious affiliations.

Prior to the 1920's, specifically by 1909, the citizenship law of the United States had a racial requirement attached to it (p. 1). In order for persons born outside of the United States to be a citizen they had to be a "free White person" or of "African nativity or descent" (p.1). One example of how this was dealt with is through the case of Syrian born Costa George Najour. After fulfilling all other requirements for citizenship, Najour was deemed "Asiatic" and denied citizenship based on this fact (p.1). To challenge the ruling, Najour took his case to U.S. federal court and claimed that he was of the White race (p.1). Ultimately, he was not able to prove that Syrians were White, but did convince the court that Syrians were "different from the yellow race" (p. 2). The judge also commented that Najour was "not particularly dark" and therefore established that "darkness increased the chances of ineligibility [for citizenship], while that of lightness decreased them" (p. 60-61). Najour thus became the first applicant for citizenship, among all ethnic groups, to successfully litigate his status as a White person in a U.S. federal court" (p.1). The immigrant Muslim and non-Muslim community quickly figured out that color and classification in the U.S. not only mattered in terms of treatment, but also in terms of legal rights and citizenship.

The Immigration Act of 1924 was minimally altered until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was established. The latter act changed the previous system, which had both quotas for immigration from particular regions and restrictions on particular countries. Proving and performing Whiteness was necessary to immigrant Muslim survival in the U.S. It was not until 1965 and after that immigrant Muslims became a sizeable population in the U.S. Yet, since the 1960's there have arisen new reasons for immigrant Muslims to claim Whiteness. Much of this has to do with acceptance and the desire to "prove" that immigrant Muslim communities are American enough for acceptance.

One way to do this has been through becoming "model minorities" (Karim, 2009, p. 26). It is what Karim (2009) calls "'inferential' anti-black racism" that compares the success of one group, immigrant Muslims, to the perceived inability of another group to succeed, African-Americans (p. 26). This is despite the fact that "highly-skilled" immigrants were preferred in 1965 and many immigrant Muslims came to the U.S. with a wide array of skills that helped them to compete in the labor market (Karim, 2009, p. 27). This also does not take into account the historically marginalized position of African-Americans in U.S. society and its impact. This is not to down-play the effort put forth by immigrant Muslims, but to point out the fact that the circumstances of each group are probably not similar enough for comparison. Yet, they are compared and many immigrant Muslims use their success as a means of trying to prove to society that they are not to be associated with other minority groups such as African-Americans or Black ethnics. In turn, they establish themselves as "honorary Whites" and perpetuate racism and anti-Blackness in the U.S.

The decision to claim Whiteness has marginalized various members of the U.S. Muslim community, particularly those who cannot "pass." Though immigrant Muslim communities have

been able to achieve some level of acceptance as "honorary Whites," most are still deemed only nominally White, this is especially true given the fact that Islam is becoming increasingly racialized in the U.S.

Yet, in general, second generation Muslims with immigrant roots are more likely than their parents to question America's moral high ground on various issues and they are doing so (Bagby, 2009, p. 485). The "not-quite-White" status of immigrant Muslims rears its ugly head in the form of discrimination, hate crimes, and stereotyping (Gualtieri, 2009, p. 188). Among many members of immigrant Muslim populations, particularly second-generation individuals, there is a modern-day backlash to claiming Whiteness; ironically, it invokes much of the sentiment of the Black Power movement of the 1960's (p. 188).

The Black Power movement fought against the ideas of color blindness. As Martin (1991) states, "the Black Power movement condemned racial assimilation and the embourgeoisement of upwardly mobile blacks as self-denial and shame" (p. 93). There are similar sentiments growing within the immigrant Islamic community in the U.S. For some immigrant Muslims, "passing" is deemed an "act of betrayal," a choice to be included in "broader categories that erase Islamic identity," and "a form of collusion with White racism" (p. 152). Many Muslims from immigrant communities are now engaging in solidarity with other people of color and claiming their status as people of color as well (Tehrani, 2008, p. 1233). This is occurring simultaneously as the religion of Islam in the U.S. is racialized. In terms of claiming Whiteness, Islam itself is now presenting an increasing challenge – despite one's skin tone.

Racialization of Islam: Forever foreign

One complicating factor for the U.S. Islamic community and relationships between various racial and ethnic communities is the increasing racialization of Islam. To be Muslim has historically meant to be non-White (Selod and Embrick, 2013, p. 649). When a religion becomes racialized, a person's race begins to be tied to a particular faith. As this occurs, members of an ethno-religious community become essentialized and the community is presented as "homogenous" and "undifferentiated" (Joshi, 2006). Within this framework, Islam is monolithic and its members, homogenous.

Joshi (2006) points out that Christianity is associated with Whiteness. There is noted "Christian entitlement to share in Whiteness" (p. 57). As a result, all members of non-Christian faiths and oftentimes even non-White members of the Christian faith, become "othered" (Joshi, 2006). Joshi (2006) astutely comments that puritans seeking to establish a religiously free society is a myth and that in reality, the goal was to ensure their own religious freedom and not to create a generalizable religious tolerance (Joshi, 2006). This has carried over into the ways that those of non-White races and non-Christian faiths have been historically treated. The "othered" nature of being non-Christian has historically taken on an element of being non-human.

Beyond simply "othering," religion begins to be seen as a biological trait. A belief that a group is spiritually misled leads to a belief that the members of that group are irredeemable. There was, and unknowingly still is, a historically based belief that one can have Christian or non-Christian blood (Selod and Embrick, 2013, p. 647). The Jewish population in Iberia during the 12th and 13th century is a good example of this (Joshi, 2006, p. 212). As Joshi (2006) says:

A racial meaning became ascribed to a previously unclassified relationship, and Jews and Judaism became racialized. They went from being excluded in society because of their

religious beliefs to being excluded from society because their religious identification became a biological trait that could not be changed (Joshi, 2006).

Racism and Christian supremacy combined and Whiteness and Christianity became two strands of the double helix of American identity (Joshi, 2006). To be a normative American means that an individual is Christian and preferably White and a group can be "whitened" by their affiliation with Christianity.

Indeed, even when Syrians at the turn of the century were trying to prove their Whiteness as a means of gaining citizenship, one of the most compelling arguments that was made was that Syrians have a connection to the "Holy Land" and Christianity (Gualtieri, 2009, p 57). Often, Syrians who were trying to gain citizenship tried to emphasize "Christian heritage to distinguish themselves from the "Asiatic" Muslim Turks who were the sovereigns of the Ottoman Empire" (p. 69). Additionally, among Syrians in particular, "interracial" marriage included marrying outside of one's religion (p. 146). This shows that the racialization of religion, both Islam and its association with non-Whiteness and Christianity and its connection to Whiteness, is not a new phenomenon.

As race and religion become tied together, members of the Islamic community in the U.S. become increasingly related to the "foreign enemy" (Joshi, 2006, P. 217). As Selod and Ebrick (2013) state, "Muslim signifiers and symbols have become riddled with essentialized racial meanings such as foreign, violent, aggressive, and misogyny. Taken together, these stereotypes result in the belief that a Muslim body is incapable of upholding democratic or Western ideals and values" (p. 651). Therefore, the Muslim body is increasingly becoming rejected from Whiteness despite the color of the body in question. Markers of Islam have become the tools with which to conduct surveillance and police the Muslim body. Khoshnevis (2019) refers to

the racialization of Islam as "the invention of inferiority of a legally white population that culturally is not sufficiently white" (p. 123). The author goes on to say that this belief has helped to shape U.S. policy in the Middle East, "it is the white man's burden, to humanize the civilizational other through dehumanizing techniques: 'democracy' at home and colonization and war abroad" (p. 123). Violence in the Middle East only further perpetuates the stereotype that the culture of Middle Eastern people is inferior to that of "Western" or "White" culture.

In the U.S., Muslims are further dehumanized and one of the methods of fighting that the community employs is further insistence on Whiteness. This, in turn, further marginalizes those who cannot "pass" for White and creates deeper rifts in the Islamic community. Ironically, the fight for civil rights has been one area where immigrant Muslims have appealed to the indigenous Muslim community to receive advice and support (Chande, 2008, p. 239). All of this also pushes Muslims to establish Islamic institutions in order to provide a welcoming space for Muslims, youths in particular. Yet, Islamic institutions are not necessarily free from the same structural violence from which many Muslims try to remove themselves. Instead, the perpetrators are oftentimes also Muslim and this creates an entirely new type of conflict for many Muslims as they try and navigate their multiple "othered" identities.

Colorism: No safe space

Hunter (2004) asserts that colorism is "a derivative of White racism (p. 24). She writes that it is "the process of differentially allocating resources and value among people of the same racial-ethnic group according to skin tone" (p. 24). "Skin color stratification," also known as colorism, is a growing issue of concern globally (Hunter, 2007, p. 237). Yet, colorism is not new in the U.S. or throughout the world. Chandler (2017) writes that colorism is a plague on those societies that have faced "the tyranny of Western imperialism" (p. 144). Chandler (2017) also

points out that is a significant issue in various parts of Asia, and that color was used to distinguish differences in class (Hall, 2010), and that light skin is a marker of beauty that has led to a significant rise in skin bleaching and cosmetic products to attain lighter complexion (Hunter, 2011).

Kerr (2005) writes that in the U.S., colorism was a salient issue in the White community before it was ever an issue in the Black community, though it quickly began impacting all members of society (p. 273). The reason for this is because the ability to buy "light-skinned" slaves was a marker of wealth in the antebellum south (p. 273). This points to the era's established color hierarchy and the economics that are tied to color. Having a slave of lighter complexion was a marker of status. Hunter (2004) maintains that a "color-caste system" was put into place on slave plantations (p. 26). "Lighter skinned Blacks were often assigned to chores in the slave owner's home and darker skinned Blacks were often assigned to the fields, thought to be the harder and more unpleasant work" (p. 26). Hunter (2004) is quick to mention that working in the slave owner's home was "dangerous, alienating and more highly monitored than was fieldwork" and so it was "not necessarily a better option" (p. 26). Yet, there were social advantages held by those with "lighter-skin" and this eventually translated into economic advantages as well. This stratification has led to an ingrained hierarchy that persists today, both inside and outside of the Black community.

Over time, the "one-drop" rule was put into effect and that meant that essentially anyone with any Black ancestry was deemed to be Black (Hunter, 2004, p. 27). Hunter (2004) points out that this served as justification for laws against miscegenation (p. 27). Yet, there was still a high rate of children born who were of mixed racial origin; those with the lightest complexion and with the most European seeming features were socially and economically favored. Historically,

those with "light-skin" were selected to hold positions of leadership as opportunities arose and this only helped to further ingrain the belief that those with White blood were superior to those assumed to have less White ancestry (p. 27). They were deemed to be successful not because of their abilities, intelligence, or hard work, but they were successful because of their "White blood" and the "breeding out" of their "Black blood." Intentionally or not, this trend has continued and statistically, lighter-skinned individuals have better economic opportunities and higher incomes than those of darker complexion (Hunter, 2004, p. 30). In fact, many of the first students to attend the Black colleges and universities established after reconstruction were primarily of mixed ancestry (Chandler 2017, p. 144). Indeed, in most cases, the most influential Black members of society were often those with the lightest skin tone (Reuter, 1918). Whiteness became "treasured property" as it is so intrinsically tied to economic success and therefore there is still an "economic logic" when it comes to pursuing it (Harris, 1993, p. 1713). This is one explanation for its continued prevalence.

Great lengths were gone to in order to determine ancestry and to keep "Blackness" from being allowed to "taint" "Whiteness" and the White institutions that upheld the racial structure. "Complexion tests" were created first by Whites, but then adopted by those in the Black community in order to create and maintain a social hierarchy based on skin tone (Kerr, 2005, p. 277). "Paper bag societies" excluded those with skin tone darker than a brown paper bag and helped to create a "light-skinned" elite within the African-American community (p. 272). Physical characteristics were used to determine heritage. This included examining hair texture and color, as well as the nail beds of babies as a means of determining if a "drop" of "Black blood" was in a child because there was a belief that a child with any African ancestry would have a purplish color to their nailbed (p. 277). Again, much of this was most widely practiced in

the White community, but certainly became internalized within the African-American community as well.

Many individuals of "light" complexion did their best to "pass" into White society. In other words, individuals with "light skin" attempted to pass themselves off as White in order to take advantage of the social and economic privileges that being White allowed. Post-slavery, the Black middle class was comprised of those who were formerly "favored" in the slave system (Hughes et al., 1990; Frazer, 1957; Bond 1972, Mullins and Sites, 1984). Naturally, this resulted in a bifurcation in the Black community and those with "light skin" were robbed of "ethnic legitimacy" by those of "darker-skin" (Hunter, 2004, p. 35). Hughes and Hertel (1990) contend that those of lighter complexion are assumed to identify more with "middle-class White culture and values" (p. 1106). Even today, those of lighter complexion are often understood by the members of their community with darker skin to be less aware of racial issues and more prone to want to "be White" (Hunter, 2004, p. 35). Hunter (2004) writes, "one of the most interesting aspects of skin color stratification is the paradox between light skin as beautiful, and light skin as not ethnically authentic" (p. 38). Therefore, those who are often seen as being the most attractive in any particular non-White race, also tend to be the ones deemed the least "ethnic" and closest to Whiteness.

Lacy (2007) asserts that in the modern era, "passing" for White by those who are of a lighter complexion has been replaced by "strategically assimilating" (p. 126). Finley and Martin (2017) deem this to be navigation between two worlds (p. 179). The authors write that "strategic assimilation involves keeping one foot in the black world and one foot in the white world (p. 179; Martin, 2008; Lacy, 2007). Lacy (2017) writes that this strategy further ingrains racial hierarchies, particularly in institutions, because it does not challenge the status quo (p. 179). In

reference to the Black Muslim community, this presents an interesting conundrum as a third world is added to the "Black world" and "White world" that is navigated, that of the immigrant Muslim world.

Chandler (2017) maintains that three processes have led to what he calls the "criminalization of Blackness" in institutions: disconnection, de-humanization, and degradation (p. 145). First, those with darker skin tone are unfairly marginalized. This is followed by de-humanization, which involves "the projection of unwarranted negative attributes onto an individual or group" (Chandler, 2016). The group is deemed to be inferior and therefore, worthy of mistreatment. Finally, degradation or oppression occurs in the form of acts. Chandler (2017) explains that the de-humanization process that occurs when a group has been targeted for degradation involves both an internalization of oppression within the minds of the oppressed and the institutionalization of oppression by the dominant group (p. 154). These are the circumstances that the African-American community has been fighting against for centuries and arguably the trap in which immigrant Muslims currently find themselves. This is also the reason that acquiescence to the dominant narrative about race in the U.S. is so offensive to the African-American community.

The processes mentioned by Chandler (2017) occur to different extents in Islamic institutions. Colorism and its effects are understudied topics within the context of Islamic communities in the U.S. and yet, it greatly impacts the identity formation of young Muslims of all races and skin complexions, but Black Muslims in particular. Finley and Martin (2017) write, "for non-black people to become white they must distance themselves from blackness, adopt white standards, and participate in the racial socialization of anti-black sentiments and ideas" (p. 185). This reality has not been missed by immigrant Muslims and even if many would say that

they do not consciously feel they are making a choice to align themselves with Whiteness at the expense of their Black brothers and sisters, that is exactly what is occurring. The situation of colorism and discrimination in Islamic institutions is pervasive and will be covered more completely in the subsequent chapters.

Conclusion

In summation, this dissertation seeks to better understand what colorism looks like in practice in the Islamic community. It has been a persistent issue, even prior to its acknowledgement. The same institutions that are hoped to give Muslims a sense of security and provide a space for community-building efforts, may be pushing the "dark-skinned" Muslim individual to the periphery and negating aspects of their identity that are outside of their spirituality.

Muslims in the U.S. are in many ways divided along color lines. This is as much a result of U.S. policies related to race and immigration as a lack of dialogue between Muslim groups. Yet, these divisions are beginning to be challenged as many immigrant Muslims are questioning the politically safe decision to "pass" into Whiteness. The continued racialization of Islam is also taking away the formerly semi-safe, albeit uncomfortable, space in which Muslims who "passed" for White were able to live. It is forcing immigrant Muslims to grapple with civil rights issues that the Black community has been trying to tackle for decades, while also having the authenticity of their Islamic-ness challenged by many within the immigrant Muslim community.

The experiences of those from the city's local Muslim community help to provide information about where boundaries may be drawn between groups. Ultimately, while class is a major factor when considering discriminatory practices, race likely plays as large a role. Aisha

made an important comment about the lack of communication that occurs between members of the city’s Islamic community:

I think that the older parents, they like try to stick with their own groups, but in the masjid, you know how the youth come together. They kind of hang out basically with anyone they become friends with so, basically. There's no groups between them. I think that's what's happening, but then when you go outside it's like everyone sticks to their own group. Some Muslims don't even talk with each other.

The observation that Aisha makes that some individuals at the masjid “stick to their own group,” alludes to major issues occurring between ethnic communities within the city’s larger Islamic community. Yet, they are not exclusive to this city and occur in most other Islamic communities throughout the nation.

The “group” mentality that Aisha discusses, or the myth of the imagined community (Anderson, 1983), is of great concern when considering how young people in Islamic spaces are socialized and what they are learning about race. This is particularly true since Aisha also points out that it is the youth who overcome the tendency to segregate themselves based on race or other factors. What does colorism look like in practice in Islamic institutions in the U.S.? How is colorism enacted? How is colorism manifested in Islamic institutions? These and other related questions will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Space and Belonging

A study of prejudices that exist within Muslim communities in the U.S. is needed because the findings of such research help to elucidate upon aspects of Muslim populations in “Western” society, immigrant communities in general, and diversity in the U.S. overall. The ways in which

discrimination manifests itself, even in already “minoritized” spaces, offer a glimpse into the obstacles faced by those of particular phenotypes – even in so-called “safe” spaces. It also shows the ways in which the dominant racial discourses and historical discriminatory practices of the U.S., though not the only cause, can assist in creating a hierarchy based primarily on race and class. Space has a unique position within this dissertation because many of the complications for Muslims of all backgrounds and phenotypes has to do with space – “American” normative space and “Islamic” space. Consequently, I begin this chapter with a discussion about space.

Space is most often understood as being related to the physical, or more specifically – “an empty area” (Lefebvre, 1992, p. 1). Yet, this is confusion between space and place (Gustavson & Cytrynbaum, 2003, p. 256). Using the work of De Certeau (1984), the authors draw attention to the fact that place is a location but “space is the way in which place is used, or more specifically, the meaning that is made out of place” (p. 256). Space is closely linked to what has been socially organized and extends far beyond area alone (Lefebvre, 1992). Space extends into one’s identity and sense of belonging to a place or community. Space can provide or deny access to particular identities, give or take away social capital (Allen, 2010), and rob one of belonging altogether. Space is a center of meaning and is as much related to psychology and emotion as it is to “empty area” (Nasser, 2015). Space is related to belonging and is distinguished from the physical on account of the emotion related to it.

Isakjee (2016) conducted a study with Muslim men in the U.K. and found that the denial of “British” space in conjunction with a disconnected sense of belonging led to “dissonant belonging” (1350). This dissonant belonging is a sense of belonging and un-belonging to various types of spaces that, theoretically, are as much Muslim spaces as non-Muslim ethnically British ones. As pointed out by Isakjee (2016), belonging is further discussed by Crowley (1999) who

brings to light the fact that politics of belonging are related to space because they serve as boundary maintenance. More specifically, maintaining the boundaries of belonging and space helps to classify who is “eligible” to cross into full spatial identity, national and otherwise, and who is not.

Spaces that serve as alternatives to mainstream ones are often created, but some individuals can still be denied access – even to those alternative spaces. Boundaries can be policed within the alternative spaces, just as they can within the mainstream ones. In terms of the Muslim community, when one feels as if they have no place within Muslim spaces, they are essentially ostracized from both the normative mainstream space and the alternative space. Their identity is pushed to the margins and a sense of “un-belonging” is often the result of such treatment. The spatial identity of individuals is then put into question. Therefore, colorism, which can lead to the denial of access to space through its rejection of equality, is a denial of sacred and community space and the sense of belonging that comes with it.

The Setting

This dissertation examines community interactions in Islamic institutions. The “field” consists of Islamic institutions throughout the city and the city itself. The city of choice has been selected because it is a small city with a growing Muslim population. The population is not yet large enough for extremely noticeable divisions to have yet occurred as widely as they have in larger cities. Division has also not yet been solidified within the social memory of the community to be accepted as, “the way it has always been,” as is the case in many larger cities. Yet, the city is big enough that division has begun to take place and is evident, particularly among members of the Muslim population of the city. In fact, most Muslims in the city are aware of and acknowledge that a community “division” does exist within the city. This has

manifested itself into two separate Sunni mosques and a number of other places of Muslim worship throughout the city. In reality, there is not one division but many divided groups within the city. Divisions are seemingly along ethnic and sectarian lines, though it must be noted that class is also a factor of community division. Class plays a significant role in stratification within the community and it should be highlighted that occupation, and even immigration status ties into that social stratification.

The city of choice for this dissertation is both a "college city" and a common refugee relocation site. The state is one of ten states that settled more than half of all refugees to the U.S. in 2016 (Radford & Connor, 2016). Both the college atmosphere and the large number of refugees play a significant role in class stratification. A medical student on a student visa and a refugee who has recently arrived from a refugee camp are often viewed very differently by some members of the community. As a result, each may be treated differently by some community members as well.

Participant observation is a significant aspect of the research associated with this dissertation. I have been a member of the local Islamic community in the city since 2007. I am familiar with the community, have had leadership roles in the community, and I am in a position of leadership currently. Yet, in many ways, I am also outside of the community. Hume and Mulcock (2004) contend, "the ethnographer must be able to see with the eyes of an outsider as well as the eyes of an insider, although both views are, of course, only ever partial" (p. 9). They also note that there must be "intellectual distance" so that researchers can critically observe (p. 9). Interestingly, I have always remained an outsider to the community as a result of never having quite conformed to stereotypical ideas of what it means to be a Muslim woman. I do not wear hijab, I did not grow up Muslim even though my father was a Turkish Muslim, I do not

regularly pray, I rarely attend Islamic events, and I am not Arab or Pakistani – the two dominant ethnic groups in the city’s Islamic community. These factors have always kept me distant and yet, my skill set and desire to be involved in some capacity, have also kept me somehow tenuously involved. While my insider-outsider relationship to the community has often been a source of personal emotional distress, I am thankful for it now because it allowed me to see the community in the exact way that Huma and Mulcock (2004) recommend. In addition to participant-observation, this dissertation is also dependent upon multi-sited ethnography but in an unconventional sense.

Marcus (1995) explains that multi-sited ethnography is a method for dealing with research in an increasingly interconnected world (p. 98). Not only does multi-sited ethnography meet the needs of the interconnectivity between spaces, but also what Wogan (2004) calls, “the relationship between ostensibly disparate elements” (p. 129). Elaborating on his claims of addressing interconnectivity, Marcus (1995) says, “Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography” (p. 105). Essentially, location is rethought in multi-sited ethnography and the focus is on interactions (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2014, p. 134). The caveat to my research is that, while it involves multiple sites, it is really about the way in which those sites have been abandoned by attendees as a result of their experiences within them or the ways in which participants navigate them, because of feeling unwelcome. For my research, the “argument of the ethnography” is largely associated with relationships of individuals to institutions and those institutions to one another.

The city's Islamic institutions must be thought of as an often disharmonious, yet interconnected web or network. Bartlett & Vavrus (2014) highlight the work of Ball (2012) to emphasize that "the network is both a conceptual and a methodological tool that helps to develop historically specific, spatially aware analyses of social relations" (p. 133). In other words, the goal is not solely to focus on a place, but relationships within a specific location or interconnected localities in their proper historical context. The institutions are connected to one another, sometimes established because of or even in spite of one another, and often serve as complements or even alternatives to each other. Therefore, this research is dependent upon understanding connections and not just locations, and, not just the connections between institutions but to individuals and ethnic and racial communities.

Marcus (1995) also brings up the fact that migration studies frequently utilize multi-sited ethnography as a means of showing "the connection between ethnographic portraits of their subjects and the posited relationship of these portraits to the fates of these same subjects in other locations" (p. 106). In other words, as expected, subjects who are affected by what Marcus (1995) calls "preplanned or opportunistic" (p. 106) movement must be studied in relation to various locations due to the transient nature of their existence. This research was conducted among those of various ethnicities, national origins and immigration statuses and the research must be conducted in manner that takes movement, space, and identity all equally into account.

Gustavson and Cytrynbaum (2003) write, "space is not limited or contained by place. On the contrary, we create spaces through the use of our imaginary, extending our reach beyond the here and now to pull from memory other people, places, and things not located in the present place" (p. 256). For that exact reason, multi-sited ethnography intersects migration studies generally, and is effective for this research project specifically. For Muslims who have

immigrated to the U.S. recently, the nature of their experiences in their home country certainly impacts their relationship to institutions in the U.S. Furthermore, relationships between individuals from different communities are also impacted by recent movement(s) and experiences associated with it.

The looming racial attitudes and fears associated with “not fitting in” for newly immigrated Muslims plays a significant role in their relationship to those of communities they deem to be different from their own, particularly communities already understood to be marginal to normative American identity. History of immigrant Muslim communities in the U.S. shows that many have been wary to align themselves with those already too far outside of normative American identity, in other words – Whiteness, because they are aware that aspects of their own identity already position them outside of the norm. The way to “fit in” is not through a close alignment with those who themselves already do not “fit in.” These learned, often unconscious beliefs, and the behaviors associated with them are related to movement. Multi-sited ethnography allows for a better understanding about how movement helps to form such perspectives and how those perspectives are then turned into actions and are ultimately institutionalized. In addition, it helps to better explain why some individuals feel that with all these “Islamic” spaces, they have no space in which and in relation to which they feel comfortable enough to call their own.

Field Sites

The field site of this research is the Islamic community of the city and my research focuses on two sites: Mosque A and Mosque B. These are the two largest mosques in the city and they are both Sunni leaning. My research is more about the relationship that individuals have to these spaces than to the spaces themselves. I have attended or otherwise been involved with

each of the two sites over the past eight years. Both mosques function as mosques and are architecturally built to be mosques. Each institution has at least one dome and a minaret.

Field sites have been chosen that are representative of particular positionalities within the Muslim community in the city. Mosque A is commonly deemed to be ethnically based but takes issue with that label. Both mosques makes claims to inclusivity that are widely contested among some members of the city's Muslim population. Mosque B is known to have a number of South Asian attendees and some community members refer to it as a "Pakistani community center." Mosque A is similarly widely associated with those of Arab origin and seen by some as the "Arab mosque," though leaders no doubt contest this claim. To varying extents, each of these institutions blurs the line between culture and religion and formal and informal education. To be clear, each of these institutions has attendees of various ethnicities and backgrounds. Yet, they are each still known to be closely affiliated with particular ethnicities. Both institutions offer various types of events, classes and a weekend school for children.

Something my research will show is the way in which cultural messages are transmitted through seemingly innocuous choices within religious institutions to tip them into the realm of one geographic region or ethnicity over others. Mosque B is not colloquially referred to as a "Pakistani cultural center" simply because of the national origin of many of the worshippers. That reputation has been earned through particular choices and actions by leaders and staff, intended or not, that are seen as associated with one nation over others. In this case, it is the nation of Pakistan.

There is an Islamic school in the city and I am well acquainted with the school as I was once employed there. It is affiliated with Mosque A, though this has no bearing on where those who have a relationship with the school choose to worship. I have opted to work with affiliates

of the school but did observe in the school itself. Participants include former students, parents of former students and former or current staff members. In my year working at the school, I witnessed a number of incidents that were closely linked to colorism.

Many research participants in the pilot study maintained that they feel they have “no place” within the greater Islamic community and so their voice is outside of the institutionalized setting. The city itself is their space. Yet, they are still connected to the institutions through their feelings of marginalization and the loss of their presence within formal Islamic spaces. Their position is a liminal one as they are part of the greater Islamic community but outside of the institutions that the community has built to theoretically serve all Muslims. They are present in the city and this creates complex interactions between community members.

For Muslims in the city, the Islamic institutions they are affiliated with determine much more than simply where they worship. The stores Muslims patronize are often related to the institutional affiliation, ethnicity, or the sect of the owner(s) and worker(s). The location that an individual chooses to live in is frequently related to proximity to a place of worship or ethnic community with which an individual has an affiliation. Schools are sometimes even chosen because a particular school has a large number of teachers or students from a specific ethnicity or who are Muslim. The Islamic institutions of the city impact various aspects of the lives of Muslim residents. Therefore, this dissertation will go beyond what can be learned within Islamic settings and instead look at the wider range of experiences of Muslims in the city in general.

In this sense, this research is generalizable to other communities, particularly other immigrant and minority communities, as the intersections between identity and territory are examined. This research offers a fuller picture about Muslim life and division in this small city with a burgeoning Muslim population. Relationships between community members extend

beyond what happens within the mosque and into how daily life and interactions between people are experienced.

Data Collection and Critical Analysis

Data for this dissertation was collected over the period of two years. My aim was to interview community members of varying ethnicities, immigration statuses, genders, education levels, socio-economic statuses, religious sects, and community roles. I interviewed 5 individuals for the pilot study and 18 individuals for the primary research, one individual was interviewed for both. Therefore, there is a total of 22 combined individuals that participated in the pilot and primary research. Of the individuals interviewed, only 4 were women. I used snowball sampling and the reality is that many participants who were male connected me to other participants who were also male. This unfortunately makes my research skewed in terms of gender and is a shortcoming of my work. Interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and data was stored on a password-protected computer.

While I personally know many of the research participants, I used snowball sampling to gain access to others. Interviews were conducted in places selected by participants. These locations included homes, places of work and public businesses. All research participants were asked to sign a research participation consent form per IRB requirements. Research questions were open-ended and centered on the experiences of participants. For example, one research question asks the participant to describe the relationship between differing ethnic communities in the city's Islamic community and their personal experiences in terms of community relations.

Once data was collected it was transcribed and coded. Data was open and selectively coded. Codes such as "different treatment" and "racial difference" were used to categorize the data. I then analyzed the data in order to present my findings. In order to ensure accuracy, copies

of transcriptions were provided to participants as a means of allowing them to ensure that the data were transcribed correctly.

Members of the Muslim population of the city are diverse ethnically and linguistically, but also in terms of education level, occupation, and immigration status. This makes the city ideal for carrying out this research, both in terms of size and diversity. As a result of this research, a wide breadth of understanding can be attained about interactions between members of the local Muslim community in terms of colorism and also class. These findings can also be used to inform researchers and academics about what occurs in other Muslim and immigrant communities across the nation.

Chapter 4: Findings

The findings of my research show a spectrum of views related to race and colorism in the Muslim community. Those who participated in this doctoral research almost unanimously expressed that there is at least a perception of discrimination that pervades the Muslim community, even if they did not personally experience anything that they deemed to be racist or discriminatory. This section will first analyze colorism and discrimination, as it is understood by community members. Next, there is a discussion about how discrimination is exerted within Islamic institutional spaces. As in the findings of the pilot study, discrimination was found to be exhibited primarily through 1) inequality in social situations, 2) limited opportunities for leadership, and 3) a lack of access to resources. A lack of access to resources is not a lack of access to tangible resources but those which could be theoretically provided through the Islamic space. These will all be examined further in this chapter.

A chart with participant pseudonyms, country of origin, approximate length of time in the U.S. and age range is below. I have included as much detail as possible about individuals, while

also working to ensure anonymity. One group of participants are all relatives and interviewing them provided me the opportunity to examine perspectives intergenerationally. I have included a kinship chart for reference purposes. The chart only includes those most pertinent to this study and is in no way meant to be a comprehensive kinship chart of their entire family.

Table 2

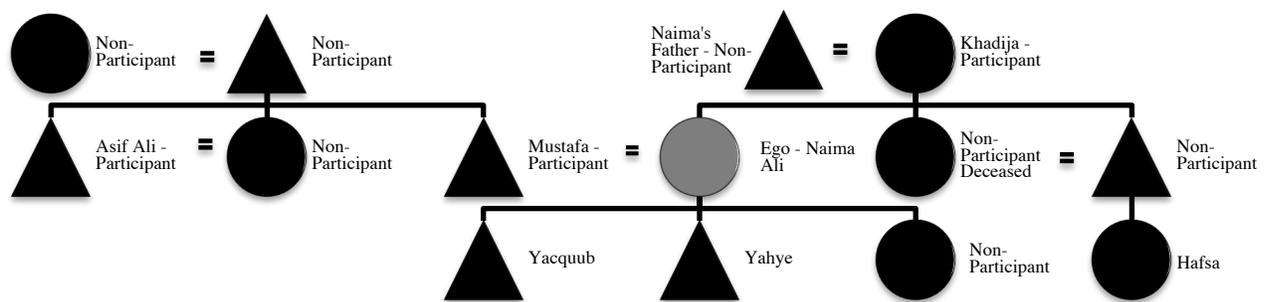
Primary Research Participants

Name	Family origin	Length of time in U.S.	Approximate Age Range
Muhammad (this is the same individual that participated in the pilot research)	Sudan	10 years and has lived in various other parts of the Middle East	Mid-late 30’s
Yusuf	Burundi	12-15 years	Late 30’s
Mansour	Senegal	Almost his entire life. His family came when he was a toddler.	Late 20’s to early 30’s
Hamza	Somalia	13 years	
Asif (Member of participating family)	Somalia	35 years in the city but has lived in other parts of the U.S. and world	Late 40’s
Naima (Member of participating family)	Somalia	20 years in the city but has lived in other parts of the U.S. and world	Early 50’s
Mustafa (Member of participating family)	Somalia	26 years in the city but has lived in other parts of the U.S. and world	Early 50’s
Yahye (Member of participating family)	Somalia/U.S.	Almost entire life	20’s
Yacquub (Member of participating family)	Somalia/U.S.	Almost entire life	20’s
Khadija (Member of participating family)	Somalia	20 years in the city but has lived in other parts of the U.S. and world	Elderly
Hafsa (Member of participating family)	Somalia/U.S.	Lived in the city off and on for 7 years and also lived in other countries as well	Early 20’s
Hammad	Ghana	11 years	Late 30’s to early 40’s

Kaamil	Sudan	Lived in the city for two years, has also lived in another state and the Caribbean	Early 30’s
Muhsin	Sudan	5 years	Mid to late 30’s
Mahmoud	Sudan	13 years	Mid 30’s
Juan	U.S.	Entire life	50’s
Hashem	Sudan	4 years but has also lived in the Middle East and Europe	Early 40’s
Tahir	Senegal	8 years	Early 30’s

Figure 1

Kinship Chart



Community Perception Versus Personal Experience

All research participants expressed that they were aware of a *perception* that discrimination exists in the U.S. Islamic community and the community in which they live, specifically. Some were quick to point out however, that they personally did not experience anything that they felt was discriminatory. It should be noted that the participants who tended to describe themselves as “less involved,” were also those who said they had not experienced colorism or discrimination. Many of those same participants also attributed what appeared to be discrimination to factors other than race, such as differences in cultural practices or cultural mores.

Some interviewees seemed to want to avoid discussing colorism or discrimination altogether. At this juncture, there are two important points to consider. In Islam, there is an abhorrence for both gossip and for making assumptions about the behavior of others. In fact, the Quran goes so far as to compare it to eating one's brother. In chapter 40, verse 12 of the Quran it says:

O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is accepting of repentance and merciful.

In general, good Islamic manners essentially suggest that one should assume the best about others and about their intentions. This could be one reason that some participants seemed wary to discuss these sensitive topics. However, it is also possible that my racially "White" appearance and "American" demeanor led some individuals to want to avoid making Islam or the Islamic community look bad. My "Turkishness" and dedication to Islam have frequently been placed into question because of my appearance and my lack of adopting Islamic signifiers, such as wearing hijab. Because I do not don typical signifiers of stereotypical Muslim appearance, there may have been a desire to avoid "airing the community's dirt" to a perceived outsider, though I told all participants that I am a Muslim and ethnically both Turkish and Euro-American.

Despite some participants' hesitancy about discussing these topics, the majority of participants were very open in saying that they felt that colorism and discrimination do exist in the community. Furthermore, they also expressed that they themselves have been victims of it or witnessed it firsthand. Many of these participants have been or are currently very involved in the community in some capacity.

Community perception: "I'm not going to say it doesn't happen, we're all human." -

Tahir

Mansour's family is from Senegal and they moved to the U.S. when he was three years old. He is in his twenties and graduated from a local university. He has lived and traveled throughout the U.S. and attended a number of mosques throughout the country. He is involved in the city's Muslim Cultural Center. Attendees consider it to be a mosque but only hold prayer there on Fridays and it is known to be unconventional in terms of worship. For example, women do not cover their hair. To my knowledge, the mosque is not well known within the wider community. When asked about discrimination, he commented:

You know I used to live in [a neighboring city] for several years and uh, I wouldn't say that I noticed racism myself but I remember my mom saying once that, how um, many of the Africans didn't really like going to the, the mosque that we went to, like they had their own mosque that they went to and she said that the Africans thought that the Arabs were all, tended to be racist against them. And again, I didn't really experience that myself I wouldn't say, but that's what um, that's what the perception was and you know I never um, I feel like when, whenever I've been in the mosque it's always been um a pretty harmonious atmosphere. I never uh, noticed hostility myself.

Mansour's comments are revealing in that, while he did not feel he has been discriminated against, he identifies that there is a perception of racism among those within his community and that it has led to some individuals of African origin to establish their own institutions of worship. His mother's warning, if it can be called such, was likely an indication of what she felt her son might expect when attending the larger more mainstream institution and those concerns had to stem from somewhere.

The denial of racist or discriminatory experiences intertwined with an acknowledgment of them was persistent throughout numerous interviews, particularly with those who had not faced racism or discrimination firsthand. Mansour's statements have some similarities to another participant, Hammad.

Hammad is originally from Ghana and is an engineer. He explained that his relationship broke with the Islamic community as a result of having started a family and working full-time. However, he expressed that he believes that Muslims in the U.S. tend to be united, particularly during events.

Those who are all Muslims, I saw there was bonding between them. I mean we're all from the same religion. Even, I think, during some of the times we were meeting, there were some Europeans, who were Muslims, and they would also come and join in those activities. Yeah, so I think it's, it's, it helps if you all belong to the same religion. They show up for activities together.

Yet, when asked about claims of colorism and discrimination from some community members, the Somali community was mentioned specifically, he said the following:

I didn't come here – I think it depends on their situation, right. They came here as um, as refugees and I don't want to say anything bad, but they came as refugees and they may get treated a little different. You know I came here with a green card. You know, I could work. I could do everything from the beginning and I didn't struggle in any way. So, I did what I want to do, just like any American would do. So, I didn't get any, you know, treated badly or didn't not get what I wanted. You know? And I had the qualifications too. I had a degree, I had everything, so it was easy to get what I wanted...they came as

refugees, you know the people who brought them in as refugees, they consider them lower, as different. It's not supposed to be, but they do.

His comment directly speaks to the role of class in the Islamic community. In his opinion, he has not had experiences that are racially charged or discriminatory, but at the same time, he points out that he came with the qualifications and status that elevated him to a "higher" position in the community. Immigration status is significant when it comes to treatment within the community and this is likely related to financial stability. Those who are not deemed to be a financial "burden" on the community may have more positive experiences than others. Much of this starts with immigration status but it is also linked to education.

Unlike Hammad's view that discriminatory practices do exist and may be related to class, Yusuf related them to a lack of attention to worship on the part of the worshipper. For some participants, Yusuf included, there was a belief that there should be an emphasis on personal worship and not on the behavior of others. This view is likely aligned to the Islamic verse formerly mentioned and the emphasis on assuming the best of others.

Yusuf is an immigrant from Burundi who converted from Christianity to Islam. He attends Friday prayer and holiday events at the local masjid and has been in the city for 12 years after having lived in another state for a year.

I've never been mistreated. I know when I go to the community, when I go to the masjid, I know the purpose of why I'm going over there. I'm not going to get the praise of people. I'm not going to do anything, I'm going to pray because I know what I'm going to earn when I go to prayer...I go to the mosque, that's what we're supposed to do. You earn more when you pray with more people.

He went on to emphasize that one's attention should be on God and that the focus of the worshipper should be on their own relationship with God.

A lot of people have different opinions but at the same time, you've got to see the bigger picture, why you're there.

Yusuf became emotional when discussing his conversion and emphasized that Islam has been extremely positive for him. His desire to focus on the spiritual, despite the "different opinions" that he acknowledges may exist, is admirable and possibly stems from his feelings surrounding his own conversion. Yet, this sort of view does contain an element of victim-blaming at the worst or a humility and "turning the other cheek" type of attitude, difficult for even the most patient individual to maintain, at best.

Another participant, Juan, made a statement that speaks directly to Yusuf's comment. Juan is a convert to Islam who identifies as "multi-racial." He is likely perceived and treated as African-American by most individuals in society. Juan is middle-aged and volunteered that he spent 20 years in prison and that it is there where he first began his study of Islam. He has a child who attends the local Islamic school and tries to be active in the community. He regularly attends Friday prayer and religious events at one of the local mosques.

You know, you shouldn't go there for other men accepting you. You're supposed to go there to do your salah (prayer). But then I questioned myself one time and I'll say this – [it's] hard to come here and do as long as guys are stepping all over you.

Juan brings up a good point. When one feels they are being physically or metaphorically "pushed aside," worship can be less than pleasant.

While the aforementioned participants' experiences were not overwhelmingly negative, many other participants had much stronger feelings about the level of discrimination that exists

within the city's Islamic institutions. These participants also offered a number of personal anecdotes to add to the discussion.

Personal experience: "Put the masjid on lock and say this masjid belongs to Arabs."

- Hamza

As mentioned earlier, in the U.S., the mosque serves as a space for social support, resources, and community-building activities, among other purposes (Nguyen 2017, p. 96). It is more than simply a place of worship. Wang (2017) contends, "for generations of immigrants in the United States, religious organizations often function as safe spaces for those who suffer from mistreatment in the larger society" (p. 429). Ozyurt (2010) writes that mosques provide religious services but also act as a space for creating social networks (p. 298). In fact, Ozyurt (2010) goes on to say that mosques in the U.S. take on a "congregational" form that they do not have in Muslim majority countries (p. 298). This is a new form function for the mosque in the U.S. context as it is transformed into a congregation (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 1999). When racialized and discriminatory practices occur, this strips away the safe space that the mosque often is for Muslims living in the U.S.

Asif is part of the Ali family and works at a local university. He has lived in the city for roughly 15 years and in the U.S. for over 30. He has lived in a number of other states, primarily in the northeast. He made an interesting statement about the role that the mosque plays in daily life for many Muslims.

The mosque is the center of the community [and] helps normally prayer recitation and a place to pray. But also, a place to find information, place to find for help if you need help, especially burial grounds and things like that.

He elaborated more throughout the interview:

I think in the Islamic world, the mosque is the community center, besides being a place of prayer. So, you will need information, like you haven't seen in some people for a long time - that's where you go. 'Let's meet at the mosque on Friday.' So on Friday, you meet the mosque. You say hi, to catch up with family and problems and, and, in, in, in the U.S., I think it still serves that, especially on Fridays.

The mosque is the "center of the community." In other words, the place where one both builds and participates in community life.

The mosque also serves as a space for integration of newly arrived individuals to the U.S. Using the Muslim American Public Opinion Survey (MAPOS), Dana et al. (2011) contend "mosques are catalysts to social, civic, and political integration, providing a place of shared commonality, identity, and culture that allow Muslims to continue to practice their religion and live their everyday lives as Americans" (p. 505). Rather than the mosque being a space for segregation from U.S. society or isolation, it becomes a simultaneous source of both integration and community-building. Therefore, for Muslims in the U.S., there can be a sense of trauma that comes when they feel they have been rejected within such an important and multi-functional space.

During the interviews, there seemed to be an overall understanding on behalf of various participants that racism, and colorism specifically, was simply a given. Khadija is the elderly matriarch of the extended family from Somalia that was interviewed. Her daughter acted as a translator between she and I. Khadija's husband was an ambassador and she is extremely well-traveled and offered a lot of information in terms of experiences related to race and the Islamic community worldwide. Khadija discussed what occurred when her nephew asked a girl from Kuwait to be his wife.

K: My nephew, remember, Ali was a [local university] student. And he fell in love, deeply in love, with a Kuwaiti girl. Then when he asked her to marry him, she, you know, he made his intentions clear. She said, "oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no you're Black. And in addition to that, you're poor." [Laughter]

So, so, only I know how heart-broken he was. So, my assumption is, if the younger one - if that's what happened to him, that's what the other ones might encounter. And I said to him, "well, you're a fool if you approach an Arab girl. So, that's where the foolishness lies. What were you thinking would happen?"

R: Why was he a fool?

K: He's a fool because we're very familiar with Arab behavior and the colorism that is embedded there. So, had he known maybe he would have known better. But he certainly learned.

Khadija expected her nephew to be more aware of his marginal status. She viewed him as naïve for not expecting to be turned down based on race and class and assuming that he could simply propose to an Arab woman – as if he were her equal. Khadija was not the only participant to express these views.

Kaamil is originally from the Sudan and currently in medical school at a local university. He has lived in a few different states in the U.S. and regularly attends one of the local mosques for Friday prayers. He expressed some strong views about how the Quran has sometimes been used to justify racism among particular groups, primarily Arabs.

Everybody have a different understanding to a specific verse, you know? Or a specific narration. For example, like there is a narration, you were talking about race right? So, there is this narration that people understand differently - that the Prophet said like there

is no difference between Arabic [Arab] and non-Arabic [non-Arab]; White or Black, except by your own deeds. Because we all belong to Adam and Adam was from dust. So, people can use it like, we're all the same, only our deed that different us. And uh, some people say that's mean like, because there's another verse from the Quran that state that 'we were the best nation that's been sent to people to teach them how to participate.' People use that as we [Arabs] are superior.

Kaamil's point is a salient one. The religion of Islam is strongly embedded in Arab culture, the Prophet Muhammad was an Arab, and the Quran was revealed in Arabic. This can lead some to elevate Arab people, culture, or the Arabic language above others – though these views contradict other verses from the Quran that specifically forbid the elevation of one group over another based on race or tribe.

Mahmoud is from Sudan and has lived in the city for roughly 13 years. He also lived in Egypt for a long period of time. He has only lived in this state but has visited a few other states. He is active in the Sudanese community but tries to attend the mosque during Friday prayers when he is not working. Mahmoud made a number of statements about the Arab community that are in line with those views expressed by various other participants.

Arab people, we know about them. I grew up with them. They kind of have a racist little bit. They don't really care about the religion. They care just what? They care where I'm from, I'm from Sudan. Ah you're nothing or stuff like that. And I heard that a lot... I believe that based on race. Um, and then this is the first priority, the second one is class also. But the first one is race.

It is unfair to state that "Arabs," with the broad definition that the term can carry, all equally feel negatively toward those who are darker-skinned. This is particularly true given the complexion

of some individuals who identify as Arab, though one should also not assume that dark complexion would prevent anyone of engaging in acts that are related to colorism or discrimination. However, personal experiences of the interviewees have shaped their opinions and there is a regional, historical, and political context that must be considered regarding colorism.

The Somali community of the city often expresses concern about how individuals from Somalia are treated. Some say that racism and discrimination are common experiences for those from Somalia.

Hamza was relocated to the city as a refugee from Somalia. He graduated from a local university and owns a business. He has a relationship to the local Islamic school and has a position of leadership in Mosque A. When asked about perceptions of discrimination and racism within the Somali community, he said:

I have some brothers in the Somali community that don't go to that masjid because they told me a lot of incidents. They say whenever we go there, we feel treated differently. This is uncannily similar to what Mansour's mother told him about the mosque in a neighboring city. Hamza told the mosque leadership about the issue and also addressed the fact that many of those within his social circle stopped attending that mosque. He told the other leaders at the mosque:

"I have some Somali brothers who don't come to this masjid [Mosque A] and the reason being is because of you guys. They feel like they've been treated inferior than the Arabs. The Arabs are treated better, they have better service there [Mosque B]. They feel the Arabs can voice their voices here, but they can't."

"Oh, Brother, we don't..."

I'm like, "yes. It's not like I've been told. Forget the incident that I've been told. I've seen it with my eyes."

I told them it has to stop otherwise everybody is going to the other masjid because they feel like they belong there. They feel like they've been treated better. They feel like people are listening to them there. Anybody comes to you with a problem, you're like, "ok, we'll look into it," and you never go back.

Not only did Hamza discuss the fact that the community feels that they are treated differently, he also highlighted that when problems arise in the Black community, they are not dealt with. There is a perception that members of the Black community are thought of as unequal to others in the community or that they are not thought about at all.

Khadija expressed that she often felt that her presence was unwelcome or ignored in the local mosque, though throughout our interview she elaborated on her view that there is a pattern of such behavior in many places that she has lived.

The guiding principle should be that Muslims welcome each other with open arms...That should be the guiding principle, especially inside a mosque. And especially during Ramadan. And it should not be the case that [you say] "Assalamu Alaikum" and getting a response is an issue.

Two things can be ascertained from her comments: 1) there is an expectation regarding "Islamic" behavior and 2) that expectation is not necessarily met within Islamic institutions. Though it is possible that the fellow worshippers at the mosque are simply rude, she recognized differences in treatment between herself and others who were obviously Arab. She also noticed differences between herself and others who are darker in skin tone than she happens to be. Khadija is quite "light-skinned" in terms of complexion.

The way I look, sometimes, they'll cut me a break. Sometimes I'm mistaken for some sort of Arab or Yemeni or something. So, even though I was cognizant of it, I was very cognizant of the way they would not even interact with, deal with the Bantu community. And they weren't even hiding. They sat next to them and making the lines [for prayer] getting away from them.

During this portion of the interview, I wanted to clarify.

R: [Referring to her daughter who was translating] So, when she said that she's sometimes mistaken for Arab or other ethnicities, when she saw darker skinned, more obviously what we would say "Black" people - did she see it directed at them even more? Or...

K: Yeah, absolutely. No mistaking. Yeah, it made going to the masjid really, really difficult to see that they were disdainful. Almost like they didn't want to be contaminated.

Khadija's sense of rejection certainly changed her relationship to the Islamic institutions in the city.

Unfortunately, children were repeatedly mentioned by various participants as targets of practices that are discriminatory. Hamza discussed a number of occurrences related to unequal treatment of children at the masjid.

I sense this [preferential treatment] when I start teaching there [Mosque A]. They said, there's a game room where you go and play. They have little goals, pop-up goals... You know, the Arab kids will play, hit the walls. But as soon as two African kids jump in, the pop-up goals would be fallen. Or when we ask, or want to play, give us the pop-up goals they'll say, oh, the guy who has the keys, this and that. Because I'm [position of

leadership] I can have access all I need to ask is my fingerprint to be set to the key there. Because you open the door with your finger. But I don't want to do it. So, I know the guys who are there. So, one time they set the goals. They were playing. As soon as these African kids came in, "y'allah, y'allah, y'allah, y'allah, it's done." This is (pause) during Ramadan, one thing that I saw and I talked to the head there, [name of "head"]. The kids will run up and down, do whatever they want. One Somali kid does something, they will come to me, say, Brother, go and talk to Somali kids. Or when people are praying Taraweeh the kids will run back and forth, back and forth, yell. Nobody says anything. But one child who is not an Arab or something or whose father is not in charge there, they will come to you and say we need you to go and talk to those kids. So, for me, I tell them, you know what - I don't see why these other kids run here and you don't say anything. But one different kid from different clan or whatever, does something, you come to me and say I not their dad. You want to say something, address it with the microphone. And they're like, oh, brother we're sorry for you to feel that way. I'm like, no, I don't feel that way. I saw it that way. It's nothing called feeling here. I saw it. You know. I will tell you guys that these kids are the one misbehaving and you turn it to deaf ears. But when somebody else does something you come to me oh, you want me to go and yell to those kids. I cannot do it. They are not my kids. If you want me to yell at the kids I will yell to the entire group. All of them. Not one kid. I'm not signaling out anybody here. So, you guys, the way I see it, don't want your kids to be talked [to].

Hamza noticed the differences in the way the children were being treated but also the fact that when Somali or "African" children needed to be "talked to," they called upon him to be the one to do it. He felt that he was being given the task to single children out based on their race or

nationality. According to Brockenbrough (2015), there is a tendency for Black men to be positioned as disciplinarians of Black children. While his work focuses on the formal school setting, the institutional setting of the mosque seems to adhere to the same tendency in this case. Interestingly, while Hamza was able to be a disciplinarian, his role as an intellectual leader is more limited.

Love (2014) writes that the U.S. educational system “reproduces social inequalities by only recognizing and validating mainstream cultural capital, which perpetuates existing social patterns (Bourdieu 1977) (p. 296). I would argue that the mosque is also a space of learning and that the behaviors described by Hamza do the same thing in the mosque that Love (2014) believes happens in schools across the U.S. on a daily basis. Black children are singled out based on racist perceptions, labeled as “trouble-makers,” perpetuating the focus on Black children as somehow deficient, and then reproducing the racism prevalent in U.S. society. Yet, this goes even beyond simply reproducing the status quo that exists socially – it robs Black Muslim children of the one place where they likely assume they will be safe from the racism they face outside of the mosque. They essentially find that there is no place that serves as a “safe space” for them.

Hamza went on to express what happened when he corrected the behavior of an Arab child and the ensuing argument that occurred.

One time I was talking to this child and his dad came and said you can’t talk to my child like that.

I’m like, “oh really. So, if you don’t want me to talk to your child like that, tell your child to behave. He doesn’t behave. I’ll talk to him the same way I talk to the other kids. You want to beat me up, come and beat me up.”

This guy was so mad. So mad. I'm like, "this is the masjid, my friend. Unless you put your name on there and say this masjid belongs to me, I have the right to talk to him the way I want. Because when he does something wrong, I'll [talk] to him the same way I'll talk to the other kid."

And this guy didn't like it. He went to the head and they come to me.

I'm like, "Brothers, if you guys want to put the masjid on lock and say this masjid belongs to Arabs you can do it. But nobody can give me some crazy looks because I told his kid... his kid is doing something wrong, he's not going to get away with that. I'm not going to beat him, but I have the right to talk to him - I'll talk to him. He doesn't like it, let him not come to the masjid. Or you can put a sign that says Only Arabs. And like, brother, oh... No, I don't cut corners. I'll give you right in front of your face."

Hamza felt that he was expected to correct the Black children but to leave the non-Black children alone and to allow them to do as they pleased. He went on to reiterate that there is a sentiment in the African community, and the Somali community specifically, that they are treated differently. This perspective was confirmed by other participants as well.

Over two decades ago, Khadija's daughter Naima had a markedly negative experience related to her son and it greatly affected her relationship to the community. Naima has lived in the city for 25 years. She has been part of the community off and on during that time. She currently attends primarily during holiday events, though she describes her relationship to the Muslim community as "deeper" than it appears. She explained the experience that led to her distancing herself from the community, although she would be quick to add that she had familial obligations that also resulted in her being less involved than she would have liked.

When her oldest son was six years old, he attended the local Islamic school. While in attendance, he was called the n-word and she removed him from the school. In describing her reaction to the event, she said:

I think what was hurtful to me was when he was finally called the n-word, it was in that space... Yeah, yeah and it was a shock. I look back now that I am fifty-four and I should've handled it better. My memory is poor now but something happened at the school where the hours I think became such that we couldn't go there cause we needed, we were both either working or in school and we needed the hours to be what they had been and the hours were shortened somehow at the school and so we pulled him out regretfully. But I think what [we] might have taken away was 'wow, that was a really not so nice space for him. And I was living in an apartment complex and a Pakistani lady asked why we weren't at the school anymore and I told her and she was a little older than me and she chided me and she said, "the school doesn't belong to that family or that child who said that. What's wrong with you? You know, it's bigger than that. You don't deprive your child of religious or the Muslim experience or the masjid experience just because of that one incident." And I understood at the time that she was correct, right.

Naima essentially had two equally problematic options: 1) accept that her son would face racial slurs at school but allow him to continue in order to have him in an Islamic environment or 2) pull him out of the school in order to protect him and completely forgo the Islamic environment. She chose the latter and expressed guilt for having made that decision, though the alternative was not exceedingly positive. When I asked Naima why she never brought it to the attention of the administration, she essentially said that there was no point to do so and highlighted the fact that she is aware of the existence of racist attitudes.

Mostly because um...so I'm a Somali female raised in many different countries and Arab attitudes to African people or Black people, when they're bad - you know that fact, that racism exists, was not news to me. We'd lived in Egypt. We'd lived in Yemen. Um, um, I love the Arabic language, I love Arabic culture. I don't blame the people. I'm not saying - but the fact that there are racialized ideologies out there and that you could be impacted by that was nothing new to me. And I just think, I'll be honest with you, I think you are, what hurts is that when you don't expect it the places and spaces, I don't, you know if it happened on the streets of [city of research], alright. So as much as I'm acting all sophisticated, 'ah, these things happen,' clearly, we ran for the hills and never looked back.

From this statement, Naima highlights two distinct issues: 1) there is racism that is pervasive toward those of darker complexion in Arab countries and 2) Islamic spaces in the U.S. are seen as a place of refuge from the racialized ideologies outside of them – at least in the U.S. Naima was not the only Black ethnic individual to point both of these facts out. Numerous participants gave anecdotes about their experiences in countries such as Egypt and the way that the Islamic institution in the U.S. acts as a space for both escape from racism and for community engagement.

Naima's second explanation slightly contradicts her first about the hours of the school being the primary reason they pulled their son out, though it could have been a combination of factors. For Naima, racist experiences are so common that they are normal. This is similar to her mother's reaction when her nephew's proposal was rejected by the young woman from Kuwait. There is a "knowing" regarding racism and a sense of naivete if anyone expects something

different from community members. Also, it is clear that the experiences had by Hamza and others in the community are not new, given the fact that Naima's son is in his 20's.

When interviewing Naima's husband Mustafa, I asked him about this particular experience that they had regarding their son and he said the following:

R: So, your wife mentioned to me that one of the reasons you took your son out of the school had to deal with someone insulting him. Can you tell me about that?

M: Well, it's...there is this sort of in the community, it kind... say it's um... because you're not a native Arab speaker, or does not speak the language...just by the mere fact that you're not, kind of, in that community, that you are kind of, are less... kind of a lesser person in the sense that you're not really a true Muslim when it's otherwise. And the case is there are people [who] don't speak the language, don't... can read the Quran, but don't understand what it says because they know how to read it but not necessarily what it means. So, we had to kind of pull him back because we did not want him to kind of be with the stigma of - that he's a lesser person than anyone.

Mustafa avoided providing too much detail about the incident and he never mentioned the hours of the school having been a problem. However, the fact that he emphasized the need to ensure that his son would not grow up being made to feel inferior is telling. Like many Muslims, for this family, Islamic institutions are a place of security and belonging. As a result of the events at the school, the safe space of Islamic institutions and the community that supports them was, at least partially, removed from the family. Instead of the safety of the community, there arose a desire to protect their son from feeling as if he is less, whether based on race, ethnicity or language.

Naima added that such occurrences are particularly terrible because of the impression that Muslim families try to give their children about both Islam and the Muslim community.

You can just imagine whatever a Muslim family is saying to their children about whatever it is to be Muslim and then the child goes there and says, 'wow!' (laughs).

Naima went on to explain that being called a racial slur in a Muslim place of worship that is in a non-Muslim country feels different than being called such things in a majority Muslim country.

Okay, so, we're living in Yemen and there's a racial incident, maybe even at the masjid, right? So what am I going to say? The Muslims in the masjid were mean to me? I step out and it's Muslims on the street, it's Muslims at the school, it's Muslims in my neighborhood - do you know what I mean? It just doesn't - I think there's something about, there's something definitional, this is the place we all come to - this masjid. Right? Because I know that stuff is out there, 'wow! It's here too. Is nowhere safe?'

Again, the security that Muslim institutions provide for Muslims in non-Muslim majority countries cannot be overstated and it is especially impactful for those whose bodies and identities are minoritized in more than one way. Naima addressed this when discussing race in general as it pertains to the Muslim community and the deeper reasoning behind why she never asked anyone to address her son having been called the n-word at school.

N: We're in a country that's struggling with race. Why would we assume that, that we are immune as a Muslim community? Right? And for our children's sake if nothing else I think we've got to just develop language and be okay with that and not assume perfection and not front. You know what I mean? I, I just think it's crazy to be saying that there are no problems. What we should be saying is 'but we work on them.'

R: Right.

N: And I think that, to do, to have that conversation in the masjid, it's to help our children further figure out how to navigate this culture. As having people, when you add, if you were to add an immigrant identity to a Muslim identity, right? And in addition to that

you're Black - those are three things that they are navigating. So, I think the masjid could be a very cool place to help students think this through, but I think ignoring it is the most toxic thing we can do.

R: Do you think it has been slightly ignored?

N: Oh yeah! People don't want to deal with it at all. I never even bothered bringing it up. I just disappeared.

R: Yeah, that's right, your own experience.

N: Yeah, yeah, yeah that's to the degree that I didn't expect - I didn't even give them an option to fix things. I just assumed, 'Oh, like that is it? Oh well.'

The fact that Naima felt that it was useless to try and find some resolution is extremely troubling and it helped to push her and her family away from the community in many respects.

Naima's husband Mustafa has been involved in the community in a number of ways. He is less involved lately a result of the demands of his job. He attends Friday prayers when he can get time away from work and he attends holiday events. He is very clear in his belief that there is discrimination and prejudice in the Muslim community and that though Muslims tend to try and maintain a good relationship with non-Muslims, there is an element of neglect that happens between Muslim groups. He also highlighted a lack of leadership opportunities and limited resources as additional issues related to this form of neglect.

I think for a lot of people, for some members of the community it's important that we, you know, reach out to other communities who are, you know, non-Muslims as well as Muslims who are, you know, in certain parts of [city of research] who really need help. But also, there is, I think, for African - Muslims of African descent, there's sort of tension in the Muslim and racism - prejudice, say, from Arabs. So, if they don't have any kind of

representation in the community then you get excluded from the decision-making process. Because you have a stake in the community but, you know... and I think people are becoming more and more sort of, participating a lot more and understanding. But when you have to worry about, you know, day to day living and survival as a refugee, it's very difficult to kind of worry about these other... these other issues become sort of less of a concern. And also, you're dealing with issues even outside the community for racism, the way you dress... So, it's like, do I really need to deal with the thing on top of that? Within my community? So, I think there should be a lot more outreach into the community. But, you know, credit to [local mosque], you only have so much in resources. And everybody wants help, like yesterday. And that's another problem.

The implication that while Muslims are reaching out to the non-Muslim community, they might inadvertently be neglecting their own, is a powerful one. This likely relates to the phenotypicalities of community members. While those individuals who appear stereotypically Middle Eastern might have a vested interest in ensuring that they are not demonized as "terrorists," darker-skinned individuals often have additional types of racist experiences and discriminatory practices being heaped upon them. Therefore, where the attention should be placed is largely a matter of opinion and experience. Additionally, it is a matter of decision-making on the part of those in positions of leadership, making access to leadership and diverse leadership, all the more important.

To better understand the "prejudice" that Mustafa described, I spoke with their son Yahye. Yahye, is in his twenties and is a graduate of a local university. He described what he experiences as a Black man in U.S. society.

I used to work late nights when I was at [local university]. Be driving home and six or seven times in two weeks I would get pulled over. And they're like, illegal lane change. Or they'd be like oh, your light was on or whatever. And they'd be leaning in trying to smell [if I'm] smoking something, drinking something. Having their flashlights everywhere. It kind of just heightened the fact of 'you're not white.' Or 'you don't look...,' 'what are you doing driving at this hour?' And the first couple times it was kind of just shocking. But then after a while it just got like, 'ok. You do what you want.' And they'd be kind of surprised - the police, I noticed, would be surprised when I wasn't getting annoyed or frustrated because they ask these questions about where you headed? Where you coming from? What are you doing? Where's your license? Where's this, where's that. And I'm like "here you go." And be like you wait here - don't go anywhere. Ok. I mean, I even had one guy tell me put your hands out the window, I need to see your hands out the window. It seemed like they were kind of wanting me to give them a reaction. They kept flashing lights in my eyes and be like, make sure, blah, blah, blah. After five, ten, fifteen minutes, they can't find anything. Then they're like, fix it and go do what you need to do. When I tell people my skin tone, even white kids, they'd be like "oh, you shouldn't have been relaxed. You don't have anything." Oh, ok. Yea, my dad told me all the time you've got to protect yourself (chuckle). I tell them, sometimes you don't need to do that. Sometimes being calm helps the situation. Because they come with the mind state of 'he's going to do something.' So, if you do something then it's (loudly claps his hands together) - ok. It's done. We'll take you out, do what we need to do to justify - to make us feel safe. That heightened my difference - that I'm not the majority, I'm the minority.

The experience of racial profiling that he describes is a fact of life for Black individuals in the U.S. Black and Latino men are victims of both “criminalization and punitive social control” (Rios, 2011, p. 30). Rios (2011) explains that a racialized group is first criminalized to depict them as a threat and then they are policed through mechanisms of punitive social control (p. 30). This cycle becomes a “race-creating system” (p. 30) that helps to define groups from one another and identify those groups targeted for the label of “criminal” and those for privilege.

The fact that White friends, speaking from a point of privilege Yahye does not have, provide suggestions on how to behave in a situation they would not be forced to experience in the same way, is troubling. According to Yahye, these experiences have helped him to recognize his marginal place within society. All of this is unsettling but just as troubling is the fact that when racist experiences happen in the only space one thinks is safe – the mosque – then a person is made to feel as if there truly is nowhere to find solace.

The feeling of being ostracized from the security and belonging that the mosque is hoped to bring to worshippers is exemplified in the following anecdote, relayed by Muhammad. The incident occurred at Mosque A.

M: Many of the people from my community want nothing to do with Arabs because of their behavior. They feel left out, looked down upon, discriminated against. There was one time that there was a visiting imam during Ramadan and he was um, he was reading a hadith from a book and explaining that and at some point, there was, um, the imam, the hadith was about a prostitute and the imam never spoke English and was talking in Arabic. He was teaching in Arabic and he translated that word as Black. I swear to God.

R: The word Prostitute?

M: Yeah. The one who was translating, he did a good job and he did not convey the same—

R: But you understood?

M: Of course. And many, not just me. And then there was a big fight in the masjid.

R: Between who?

M: Between the Somalis and then there was a Sudanese guy [name of individual] and he was so angry.

R: When was this?

M: Seven years ago, like five years ago maybe. Then he called a meeting with the Somalis.

R: Why?

M: To apologize to the Somalis – which made it worse [laughs].

Muhammad expressed that these types of incidents lead to people isolating themselves. Yet, beyond pushing people away, there is a mourning involved with the decision to leave Islamic institutions in the city. Mustafa elaborated on the emotions felt when one is forced to live such experiences and make those decisions.

Sometimes you get kind of... it too much work. Do I need to worry about this as well?

Do I have to fight? Every day? And also dealing with issues of how Muslims are perceived or treated outside of the Mosque. I don't need to be fighting all these things.

The feeling of it all being “too much work” just leads people to walk away for their own self-preservation. The anecdotes that have been laid out in this section exhibit the ways in which some have experienced or witnessed colorism and discrimination. Yet, they also point to what Islamic institutions in the U.S. are a symbol of – security and belonging. In many cases, the

mosque is the place where many hope they can escape from the pressures they feel outside of the Muslim community.

In many interviews, participants expressed that racism and discrimination are most strongly felt through a lack of equality in social situations. As Khadija pointed out, some feel that their presence is deemed to have a "contaminating" effect. This is often experienced through grouping, divisions created as a result of language, and unfair stereotyping.

Inequality in Social Situations: "...It's very interesting to watch them treat Westerners better than dark skinned Muslims." – Khadija

Grouping and belonging.

Regarding the Islamic institutions of the city, nearly all research participants agreed that grouping regularly occurs and that it is often centered around one's ethnicity and/or nationality. Most participants agreed that this grouping is normal but also "off-putting," and many attendees expressed that they feel as if they do not belong. Juan discussed social grouping at the mosque:

When everybody comes out the mosque, everybody has their own huddle. It's not an integrated huddle. You have the Sudanese over here. You have Syrians over here. African Americans here – all clusters. Nobody never said nothing, but I see it.

Juan added that even if it is unintentional, the grouping creates an "uncomfortable environment."

Though acknowledged, not all participants could agree on the reasons for social grouping in Islamic institutions. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1985) links group affiliation and belonging to a person's sense of self and to self-esteem (Nguyen, 2017, p. 95). One is likely to elevate the groups to which they belong and minimize the value of other groups because it raises the self-esteem of the individual (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Yet, taking into consideration

the diversity within the Muslim community in the U.S., attendees of Islamic institutions must ask themselves – ‘to which group do I belong?’

Ozyurt (2010) points out that some mosques have the unspoken goal of “creating an environment that replicates mosques and cultural experiences in the home country” (p. 300). She further points out that the uncertainty of where "home" happens to be “strengthens perceived differences and creates further divisions between various ethnic groups, thus leading to a less cohesive, more segmented Muslim congregation” (p. 300). The social grouping and the power play that often occurs regarding where one locates “home” ultimately creates an in-group and out-group scenario and can provide a foundation for racism and discrimination (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). For many Muslims, in the U.S. context, it is difficult to know which aspects of identity should be elevated above others. In other words – is one a Muslim first, a member of their nation first, or a member of their ethnic community first?

Tahir immigrated from Senegal to attend university. His son goes to the religious weekend school at Mosque A. He is less involved in the inner workings of any of the religious institutions in the city, but he does attend Friday prayer and holiday events at the same masjid that his son attends weekend school. He commented on the social grouping that occurs in the community.

You know usually, you go with people that look like you. Even though we're all Muslims you know, we've got the different backgrounds.

Tahir views the social grouping as a natural phenomenon and related to the fact that the Islamic world is highly diverse. He feels that it does not necessarily bring hindrance or harmony but is a fact that should not be focused on.

Asif made statements in agreement with those of Tahir. However, he mentioned that much of this is the result of tribalism and related his view to his experiences in his home country of Somalia.

If you want to discuss family problems, if you wanted to raise money for the, someone was injured in the family, someone who needs help, then you will go to your family's mosque instead of - or your tribe's mosque, instead of a far-away mosque because you're more likely to get help from there than the other ones. I mean, it's kind of good and bad. Because when you...that old saying you take care of the family first before you take care of the community and then the circle gets bigger and bigger.

Inherent in his statement is a view that one's own group will care for them before those outside of the group.

Hamza has a similar view, though he sees some definite issues in the community regarding race.

We know we define ourselves as Muslims but we are divided into sub groups. Like Somali, they define themselves: Somali people but even then in Somali they sub-clans again. I think the reason people do this is because you feel safe. And there's also a sense of satisfaction. 'Cause when you are with someone that you know, you know you can tell them whatever you want. Rather than talking to somebody who you don't know or who you - won't understand you. Not only that but culturally when you are with someone who you share the same ancestors, same background, it's as if they're your brothers. So, you are family. So, I think the big reason, the main reason that I think people always divide or form a group is to feel, is to have a sense of belonging. Like you belong there, you can identify yourself as that group, you feel safe too. The other things is, there's

always a language barrier. So, when you have a group, that group can always represent you and when there's any issue you can have help in translation and stuff. I think the big thing is the sense of belonging. You belong there and you feel safe.

Hamza sees the security that comes with people of one's own origin and yet his mention of safety is slightly concerning because it is an indication of a sense of insecurity with those from other places. There is an implication within his comments that the only ones who can be depended upon are those from the same origin – as defined by the individual.

Hashem sees the grouping as an indication of much deeper problems in the community overall. Hashem is originally from Sudan and has been involved in both masjids in the city. He works in refugee resettlement and is very in-tune to the views of differing Muslim populations, particularly those from refugee backgrounds. He commented:

I'm aware of the tensions between groups within the communities and with the Islamic community. I'm aware also of the previous tension between the two mosques [Mosque A and Mosque B].

He went on to say that isolation could be a factor in grouping.

There is isolated groups like the Somali community. They're [the Somali community] is not contacting both of them [either mosque] – only on Eid salat but for the rest, each community is closed in itself.

When I asked why this was occurring, he responded that it was racial and had roots in the regions from which many people in the Islamic community hail, this aligns with the comments made by Khadija. Hashem continued:

There is something, there is roots, racial segregation, yeah, within the community itself and other communities for example, like Arab/non-Arab, White/Black, there is some, that

maybe the reason behind. For example, I'll give you an example within the Sudanese community. We have this issue back home. Generally, we are, I can say we Sudanese are mixed Arab and non-Arab tribes and we become Sudanese. But in the practical, practice you can notice that people from Arab ethnicity, they're being seen like in some classes or, and that is the cause of our war in Sudan, Arab/non-Arab, now, uh, central Western neighbor, the Baggara are a different tribe and ethnical background and unfortunately some of that concept has been brought here in the U.S.

He explained that the definition of Arab is not fixed in most parts of the Middle East and Africa and that he is considered Arab among those from the Sudan. It needs to be noted that Hashem is "dark-skinned" by U.S. standards and would likely be considered "Black" and not Arab by most observers in the U.S. Thomas (2014) discusses the fact that racial categories of Black and White in the U.S. simply do not logically apply to African populations in the U.S. (p. 8). Furthermore, he points out that in terms of color, Arabs can be White, Brown, or Black (p. 11). This does not mean that Arab identity is not contentious in the "Arab" world, if we can even clearly identify such a region, but the definition of Arab must be put into question.

I asked Hashem how his identity changes depending on who he is speaking with. He informed me that he introduces himself as Sudanese to anyone that is not Sudanese, including lighter skinned Arabs, but knows that within the Sudanese community he is considered Arab. Throughout our interview, he emphasized that color has begun to "trump" a good deal of other factors in terms of identity because in the U.S. – it always does.

Naima added to Hashem's point about the shifting definition of "Arab" and the way in which color has been emphasized by those outside of the region. She highlighted that the

definition of regions based on color is a "Western" concept and a foreign one to those from the Middle East and Africa.

N: I think the structure of racism and race, from an African into a Western, sort of movement - that race and these colors had to be constructed. So, when they look at Africa for them - clearly the color line is one way to sort people. And Africans as a general rule sort by nationality and tribe, not by color. And so, even though I had a sense of Sub-Saharan Africa, to me, it never meant Black or White, really. Because we saw a line in terms of geography, nation and state and tribe. Do you see what I mean? So, when it flat out went to Black Africa I was like, "wow, so you looked at that and you had to make a distinction, huh and confuse things even more, when it is what it is,"...For Africans to sort by color would be a new thing. Because you're really sorting by: where are you're from, what tribe are you, what language do you speak, where do you locate [yourself].

It should be noted that I use the term "Black Africa" in the exact way that it is being critiqued by Naima. It was only as a result of her comments that I questioned my own use of the term. "Black Africa" has been used among Black intellectuals and leaders such as Marcus Garvey and it was used by many of the writers of the *Négritude* movement of the 1940's and 1950's in order to promote pan-Africanism (Bolaffi et al. 2003, p. 28). While I do not want to strip Garvey or others of their obviously deep connection to Africa, for Naima and others, the term is often deemed to be divisive, and understandably so. As Naima pointed out, the term has roots in colonial attempts to divide Africa along a color line (Bolaffi et al. 2003, p. 28).

The emphasis on color helped colonial powers determine which groups were worthy of leadership and this allowed a hierarchy to be established (Matos & Ayton, 2018, p. 41). Most countries formerly under colonial control still grapple with the ramifications of the emphasis on

skin color and how it acted, and in some cases still acts, as a conduit for power. The shifting boundaries Naima discusses and the differences in the way in which people from different places think of and talk about the African continent are similar to what Hashem addressed in his earlier statements.

Fixed notions of "Arab," "African," Black, White, Brown – they have all been largely imposed and are not necessarily regional terms or ideas. Instead, the majority of these identifying terms are actually linked to colonialism. Thomas (2014) writes, "racial differences [during colonialism] were distinctively associated with the ownership of resources, differences in social status and access to power" (p. 22). Color differences reflected differences in both treatment and access to power in the colonial era.

Hashem feels that many of the issues in the community are related to aspects of culture from the countries that immigrant Muslims have immigrated from and to the prevalent colorism existent within those societies:

H: It is a racial issue and it reflects the conflict in the, in the country itself. For example, the Sudanese, as I told, the conflict now seems to have the trend to be racial Arab-non-Arab and within Arab themselves, the Sudanese Arab, there is a lot of uh, tribal issues, from which tribe are you. Even the Arab is not equal within, it is different tribes and within the same tribe it is not equal. There are clans from the same tribe and 'which clan are you?' 'Which family are you?' That will determine your position in the community.

R: Interesting. So, do you think that these same things are maybe happening in other countries and carrying over?

H: In other countries. For example, the Somali, we uh, outsider, we see the Somalis one, as Somali. But it is not one. It's different tribes. Different tribes and they call it rear. Rear

Hamer, rear this and rear that and it is also the racial issues between the Somalis play a big role in the conflict in Somali - Bantuland, Somaliland. If you don't know the history and you don't know the geography, you don't know about them – you will think the Somali are one and that is not.

R: And so when it comes to like, for example, Iraqis and Somalis or Syrians and Somalis, do you think that, do you think that it's just light versus dark-skinned?

H: Yeah.

R: Just light and dark-skin?

H: Yeah. Just like that. For example, we are in Sudan, you can find within one family different people with different skin color.

R: Skin tone.

H: Yeah. Skin tone. The light one will be the preferred one (laughing). So, this crazy but within the same family, it make a difference. So, across tribes and across communities, it plays a big role. Even now, Saudi Arabians, they have Black people. Uh, Yemen, they have Black people. Eh, even Iraqis, they have Black people. But what is their position in the hierarchy in the community? Always they will be down.

Muhsin expressed similar views about race and color in the Sudanese community.

Muhsin is an immigrant from Sudan in his mid to late 30's. He attends a local college in the city. He also discussed color in Sudan and how views from "back home" manage to remain pertinent even once community members are in the U.S.

M: We have a problem there in my country, in Sudan, we have a problem. A lot of people, they bring their problems, here in Sudan, in the United States also they started, they started discrimination and something like that. I think that's a big problem. If you

want to talk to them about this problem they never heard you, they never view you as good.

R: So, in the Sudanese community here, if you were to say, look guys we have this problem and we should talk about this and we should fix this...

M: You can't.

R: You can't?

M: You can't do that.

R: What do you think would happen if you did that? Would they deny it?

M: Yeah, they would deny it because this problem from long time in Sudan. When they came here, they, I think, they [could] have changed their mind but they don't want to do that.

Much of the colorism and discrimination described by Hashem and Muhsin lies with the colonial enterprise which countries like Sudan were subjected. Sudan has historically undergone a process of "Arabization" that resulted in an elevated status for those of lighter pigmentation (Sharkey, 2008). Sharkey (2008) and Jok (2007) both point out that the society was already quite stratified but that the British maintained and further exacerbated that stratification by supporting the education of those with lighter skin and giving them preferred occupations (p. 30). In contrast, those of darker complexion were not given the same opportunities (p. 30). In the post-colonial era, under the guise of national unity – Arabization ensued (Sharkey, 2008). Sharkey (2008) writes, "what Northern politicians regarded as policies of national unity, many Southern intellectuals regarded as cultural colonialism, precisely because they had no choice or voice in the matter" (p. 36). Jok (2007) goes further, writing, "in the south independence was regarded as a transition from European colonialism to Arab colonialism, which was perceived as an

extension of foreign rule under a different name: in remote regions of Sudan Arabs were just as foreign as the British” (p. 45). These conditions have contributed, if not outright caused, armed conflict and the death of thousands and Arab Sudanese identity is still the privileged identity in Sudan among many groups and individuals (Sharkey, 2008). The situation in Sudan exemplifies what Frantz Fanon (1963) calls the “racialization of thought” (p. 212) and Fanon (1963) commented that Africa was moving toward a culture of “African” or “Arab Moslem” (p. 215).

Though there are salient issues in Sudan when it comes to race and tribalism, Hashem added that a lot of the problems within the U.S. Muslim community are also related to U.S. racial problems. He highlights what has been pointed out in the literature – immigrant Muslims tend to adopt the racial belief system of the U.S.

H: The historical establishment of the communities in the United States, it’s supposed to be a multi [racial] community yeah? The segregation – White, Indian, Latino, African, Black African – it is a big and huge legacy. The new arrived communities, they didn’t benefit from that because, whether they are aware of it or miscommunication about it, it should learn them how to live together regardless of the racial color.

R: Are you saying that the communities that come here learn from –

H: The challenges which face this country and how come that the people now live in, not in actually harmony and equal rights.

R: So, people come here and they kind of adopt some of the racial attitudes that are already here?

H: Yeah.

Hashem recognizes that anti-Blackness is related to both regional understanding of race and tribe, possibly stemming from the legacy of colonialism, but that it is also part of U.S. racism.

Karim (2009) says, "once in the United States, immigrants must negotiate the U.S. racial order that privileges whiteness as superior and opposite to blackness" (p. 25). Karim (2009) further points out that as there is a "hierarchy of discrimination" in the U.S. and that immigrant Muslims quickly learn that they put their own success at risk by aligning with those more disenfranchised than themselves – members of the Black race (p. 26). In terms of the "hierarchy of discrimination," Black-ness puts one at the greatest level of risk.

Khadija recognizes that there are significant racial issues that stem from many of the regions from which immigrant Muslims migrated from to the U.S. As previously mentioned, she traveled and lived extensively throughout the Middle East and believes that there is an ingrained notion of colorism and therefore, division, that thrives in the region.

I've lived 25 years in Saudi Arabia. I lived two, three years in Egypt. I lived two, three years in Yemen. And Somali's, we're very familiar with the Arab community. In my experience, the Shami area(s) - Syria, Lebanon, even going to Palestine, there's a real issue around colorism. I mean as a general rule it's an issue with the Arabs and it's very interesting to watch them treat Westerners better than dark skinned Muslims.

Khadija goes on to say that she believes that much of this is the result of the Arab League and Pan-Arabism.

K: When independence came through and the formation of the Arab league - now this is me editorializing [translator and daughter of Khadija]. I think the conversation... so I was born in 1964 in a very political family. Where these things were discussed a lot. So, I think, you know as a newly independent nation you are joining the community of nations. And so one of the brotherhood groups that you joined and it was a thing then with pan-Arabism for Sudan and for Somalia was the organization of Arab states. The same way

that we joined the organization of African Union. So, within the African community it's a bit of a joke, which is "oh, yes, those are the Black Arabs." The ones that can join the OAU and the Organization of Arab States. So, the utility of that identity has withered over time. In 2018, it's next to non-existent. Now, we've just got these very transactional relationships. See what I mean? Because when Somalia fell apart and so many of us lived in the Middle East you had a much closer interaction that really opens your eyes. So, there is pan-Arabism under Gamal Abdul Nassar and then there is whatever we are as a community now.

R: So, this pan-Arabism would you say, would your mother say, it did not really apply to people who looked a certain way? Even if they considered themselves Arab.

K: Yeah, that has been one of the... that's a lesson learned. Colorism has been one of the lessons from the experience. Yes. Even though they know we're Arab [Khadija's tribe], because we're darker there is a distinction made. And now, we've learned our lesson. There's not much point in trading on those kinds of allegiances or relationships. And since we speak Somali and to speak Arabic is to have to learn Arabic, we are our own people anyway because that's how the group evolved in northern Somalia. People who settled or conquered northern Sudan were Arab. In the conquering of that region, yes, you are Arab, you learn Arabic, you are Arab. So, it was a different kind of experience. But they are African! With a lot of inter-marriage and a lot of light-skinned. So, the whole thing you see in the Sahil.

The confusion, or what Khadija referred to as the "joke" of "Black Arabs," was also elucidated upon by Hashem. He pointed out that language is a marker of identity and that even

though Arabic was his first language, his skin color leads to confusion for Arabic speakers from regions such as the Levant.

When I first meet with Syrians here and they realize that you speak Arabic, they wonder 'how come you speak Arabic? You're Black and you speak Arabic?' I say 'I am Sudanese and in Sudan that is our first - is standard language, Arabic and we are a mix of Arab and African.' They hardly understand that.

The shock that is expressed by some Arabic speakers related to Hashem's appearance and simultaneous ability to speak Arabic, shows that in many countries or communities, Arabic speakers and Arabs themselves are perceived to look only one way.

Naima brought up another element of social grouping and that is Islamophobia and its impact on identity. She pointed out that grouping is closely linked to a need for security and confirmation of one's belonging in America.

Often times you find that the Bantu kids call themselves Kenyan. Who, on top of every other identity wants to be Somali? So, I think there's this additional burden that we bear, because Somali, Somali identity went from totally unknown to terrorist, pirate, kids in Minnesota running off and joining Al-Shabaab. You know, and, and that's our truth. So as Somalis, we're uber sensitive now to hearing the word Somali in the news. It's never good. So, I'm a grown up, how are my kids supposed to handle this? They weren't in the Dadaab refugee camp and could speak Swahili and just adopt Kenya. So, so I think there's a way in being Somali and being Muslim is the same to them - it's all not being American and all of it is problematic.

Based on Naima's comment, the insecurity of being a Muslim in the U.S. is pushing many young people of African origin to identify with one aspect of their identity but not the other. This is no

doubt exacerbated if those young people feel that their presence is less than welcome in Islamic institutions. If nowhere is safe to be the multitude of marginalized identities that many young people in the community happen to be, picking the most non-threatening of those identities is a mechanism in dealing with ostracization.

Language.

When discussing grouping or division, it occurs for a number of reasons and one of these has to do with language. Many interviewees discussed language as a dividing factor among those of differing racial or ethnic backgrounds. For some, language differences are viewed as an element of the community and are not seen as a hindrance, but instead, a natural part of diversity. For others, the lack of ability to speak Arabic creates a schism between themselves and those who do speak the language, particularly when accommodations are not made for non-Arabic speakers. Finally, there are those, such as the Sudanese, who do speak Arabic, often as their first language, but are assumed not to know the language because of their skin color. Language has a significant impact on relations between individuals and certain ethnic communities in the wider Muslim community.

The argument for diversity: "Because I am a Muslim and you're a Muslim, it doesn't mean we understand each other." - Hamza

The range of diversity within the Muslim world is evident partially through the variety of languages spoken by Muslims. Many interviewees saw language differences as just one element of diversity and feel that grouping, or even division based on that, is natural.

Tahir felt that it is not something which should concern Muslims.

We've got different backgrounds. We've got like – you know some of those people over there they just speak Arabic. I don't speak Arabic. Even though I'm Muslim I don't speak Arabic. You know, I read it and I studied the Quran, you know, but it's different cultures.

Yusuf has a similar perspective as Tahir. Regarding grouping and language, he said:

Let's say I found somebody from my country - we speak the same language, we share the same culture, it's going to be easy for me to adapt to him more than I will with somebody else from another place, you know.

For Tahir and Yusuf, language is not so much related to distance between individuals and groups but is the reality of the diversity of the Muslim world. Yet, a number of others in the community see language as a point of discrimination, even if it is not intentional. Language becomes a signifier of belonging.

The language divide: "People will discriminate against you - like 'you're not Arab or you're not Muslim,' because you can't speak fluent Arabic." - Juan

The value of Arabic to the Islamic world cannot be overstated. The fact that the Quran was revealed in Arabic gives the language a unique status. However, the issues surrounding language that have been mentioned when speaking with interviewees are not solely about who speaks with whom outside of the mosque after Friday prayers. Rather, it is about the message conveyed when one language is used in mosque related activities and spaces and concessions are not made for those who do not speak the language.

Mustafa pointed out the following regarding language and how it makes non-Arabic speakers feel when everything is primarily in the Arabic language.

It creates tension that, you're not going to look into my concerns. I'm coming to the mosque, I don't speak the language, don't necessarily speak English, don't speak Arabic,

and I need to understand what is in a sermon, what is going on. And I need somebody who can speak my language to relay that information to me because it's just coming to a place and just praying and I go. So, I don't get the benefit of understanding what is going on. When they were in their home country there's somebody who would explain to them in the native language the specific khutba [sermon] is about, this, it's about poverty... So, if you don't get that, how do you question something that you didn't even understand.

In his view, language goes to the heart of who feels included or excluded based on access to knowledge in the mosque. He also expressed that this impacts the level of value that a person feels they have to the community and the level of their place within the ummah as a non-Arabic speaker.

It's a concern when you feel that you're not part of the community. That you're a lesser being because you're not really a Muslim because you don't speak the language or you don't necessarily know Arabic. They're better Muslims who, [do not know] neither of those, any of those, but who are truly a Muslim in terms of how they perform their duties as a Muslim to care about others, to care about each other.

Mustafa went on to say that the issues regarding language are often what push some young people away from the Islamic community – particularly if they are minoritized in more than one way.

Sometimes some kids are not comfortable being a Muslim or going there that they might expose themselves to unnecessary things that they don't really want to deal with. And it varies with different kids. Anyway, enough pressure outside the community... and once inside, a lot more, sort of, manifest inside if I don't speak the language. And because I don't speak the language I'm not perceived as a Muslim. So, you know what I'm just

going to do what I need to do. I know where I belong and what I feel about Islam and deal with it that way. For some of them it will just drive them away completely.

Nguyen's (2017) study of mosque-based social support and self-esteem among young Muslim-American adults, points out that negative interactions at the mosque, lead to lower self-esteem (p. 100). One reason for this is because such interactions "threaten positive evaluations of self and erode one's perceptions as being competent, efficacious, and having self-worth and self-esteem" (p. 100) (Lincoln 2000). Lincoln (2000) writes, "we must take a more balanced approach to investigating the relationship between social ties and mental health by including measures of both positive and negative social interactions" (p. 232). Furthermore, the author claims that there is a significant correlation between an individual's social network and their mental health (p. 242). Young Muslims, likely experiencing a multitude of struggles simultaneously, are expected to accept a variety of negative, often racially charged, experiences in their place of worship and still feel attached to both Islam as a faith and to Islamic institutions. The reality is that a lot of young people simply forgo their relationship to Islamic institutions and sometimes even their wider group affiliation with other Muslims as a result of their experiences.

Interestingly, Mustafa personally knows about this phenomenon from his own children. His children explained that their experiences with the city's Islamic institutions have been slightly negative because of the impact of language differences and a lack of accommodation for their language needs.

In agreement with Mustafa, Asif pointed out that language is problematic in the community because of exclusion and a lack of ability to learn from the sermons being given in Arabic, if one is a non-Arabic speaker.

When you have a community, they don't speak a lot of Arabic and you insist the sermon has to be in Arabic, it becomes a problem because yes, it's a sunnah to do it in Arabic, but you have to serve the community. Whatever the sermon is about, you hope that the community will get the message, but if they don't understand the message, what good is it? So, having an English translator or having a bilingual person doing the sermon is preferable than just someone who was good in one language but that has no knowledge of English.

In terms of actual experiences regarding language in Islamic institutions, the Islamic weekend school provides interesting examples. Yacquub is Mustafa and Naima's oldest son. After he was pulled from the full-time local Islamic school, both he and his brother still attended the weekend school at Mosque A, as did their sister and cousins. Yacquub described the weekend school as stressful.

It was a little tough because we didn't know Arabic. Me or my sister or my cousins. It made it really hard when we were learning - the Arabic classes, because everybody else knew it. Then we were going over the Quran and there are parts that I knew, but then it was really tough to get the surahs down. And they were moving really fast...They [the other students] were very comfortable speaking Arabic amongst each other inside of the Mosque. So, while they did know English, they were much more comfortable hanging out with themselves rather than with us. Because it was also split up with gender as well. So, like it was just me and my cousin and then my sister and Hafsa. So, me and [cousin] were just kind of like sticking with each other the entire time. Growing up it was a little bit tough. There was definitely... for me it wasn't too much based off race more than like

language for sure. And like for language it was really like me and [cousin] by ourselves.

Everybody else was together.

Yacquub explained that the mosque did not have clear levels for students of different language capabilities. He also explained that the lack of willingness to work with students who did not speak Arabic as their first language was a definite deterrent to attending.

I think, when it goes like the Mosque itself internally it's hard because I'm never there long enough to really see too much. I think my eyes are the most open when I was a kid going through. Like doing the Sunday school and being there. And there are times when I felt like, yeah, this is good, this is making sense. I can try to understand this. But, I think there was not so much effort put into getting those who felt left out to come back in. Me and my cousin, we were just like we had each other so that was it. We just go to Sunday school. I know we'd be really upset whenever we had to go on Sunday because we were just going to go, we don't understand what's going on. We don't know what's happening. It's not fun and it's not enjoyable. We're just going to sit there and wait for the time to pass before we come back. Or we're trying to read the Surahs, but we our reading is really slow and really bad so it's really embarrassing when we have to try it. We had to do endless hours of reading here beforehand to try to make sure that we get it. Then it stopped being something that was more of learning thing and just became a supreme chore. I'm already working so hard in my normal classes to try and keep up. I can't add learning two surahs on to this because I'm already really stressed out. That's what it has been for me at least. The different groups... I haven't been able to really see too much. Other than, all my friends who knew Arabic and then me and my cousin who didn't and we were just by ourselves.

Yacquub's cousin Hafsa attended the weekend school with he and his siblings. She is in her early twenties and is currently attending the local university. She described her relationship to the local mosque:

I generally kind of don't have a good relationship, like with the Islamic center here. But

I'm trying to learn Arabic. Like, I'm learning Arabic right now at school.

Her experiences at the Islamic weekend school have not deterred her from learning Arabic in university. However, after a lengthy discussion of her experiences in the weekend school, I asked her what changes she would make to it if she had the power to do so and she discussed how students who did not speak Arabic were dealt with.

H: I think the hours because I think it's too long. Last time I was - it was like all day when we were kids. Maybe some kids like that but I didn't like being there all day. Because I feel like when you have to go to madrasa they think that you already know some stuff. But I feel like for the kids who don't, they should be in a classroom where they're like... not separate, but they should be somewhere where they're like introduced to the religion first. Instead of being dropped and in a classroom and they don't know what's going on.

R: When you were going there and when you talk about kids not knowing things, was Arabic part of that?

H: Um... yeah. Well, like because... yeah. Because they taught you, but I think that they thought that you knew it already. But I don't think I did. So, I was just dropped in a class and I didn't know what was going on. But yeah, you just had to learn it.

R: Was it primarily Arabic speaking kids who went there.

H: Yeah.

R: Were you like a minority there?

H: Yeah. There was a few like African kids, but mostly I think they were Arabs.

R: How would you change that for kids now?

H: I would try and get everyone to be there. But I feel like now it's more diverse than it was when I was a kid. I feel like now... because I don't know how it looks on the weekends anymore. But I feel like now it's more diverse and there's more kids from different backgrounds that are there.

R: So maybe level the classes?

H: Yea. They had that but I was put by myself and I didn't like it. So, they took me to my cousins and my brother.

R: So, they leveled it and they had a beginning class...

H: But not like the beginning. The beginning class was like... I think they had a like a beginning, beginning class for the kids who don't know.

R: So, even the beginning class was kind of assuming a lot.

H: Yeah.

R: You were alone in that class.

H: Yeah, and I didn't like it. So, they took me to my brother and cousins.

Her experiences were in line with those of her cousin Yacquub. However, Yacquub added that when language was a barrier, he often "acted out."

Sometimes, I know, when I was really young, the only way I could feel like I was getting attention was to act out. But there was no other way to get people to try and hang out with me other than playing basketball or soccer. I was just really embarrassed and really angry a lot of the time. I'd be like, "Why are we here? Why are we doing this?" But I wouldn't

go tell my parents I don't want to go to Sunday school. They're like, "What?" I feel that disconnect was a little bit hard for my dad to understand. When I was saying, "It's just not fun. I don't like being there." I don't think he really understood it, but he does now.

Yacquub's comment is pertinent given the fact that a number of individuals brought up the way that the behavior of Black children is viewed in the mosque. If in fact there is any truth to the perceived stigma of Black children, or specifically Somali children, acting out while in the local Islamic institutions, perhaps it is more closely related to a sense of feeling as if they are unwelcome or do not belong, more than it is to parenting or culture, as might be assumed.

Yacquub also discussed the fact that even times that were meant to be exciting and fun at Mosque A were often simply a disappointment for him and his relatives who attended the weekend school.

When we were growing up there were definitely times where like the award ceremonies would come and it be like who knows the most surah's, who's able to do this, who's able to do that, who's accent was really great and stuff like that. And we would go and dress nice and sit down and just sit there. And we all knew we weren't going to get anything because nobody was there to help us out. I remember learning the surahs when we were going over them together was so hard because we were going so slow. The teacher would just lose patience. And a lot of times the teacher wouldn't know English that well either. So, it was like whatever she said at the time or Imam they had at the time and he would just be there. And it was most of the time not very helpful. Yea, we'd just go to the awards ceremony and we'd sit there and know we were not going to get anything.

He mentioned that much of this still impacts his relationship to the community and has helped to make him feel as if he is an "outsider."

I think if there was more intentionality to make me and my cousins and my sister feel a little bit better about - ok, you're taking this slow but we'll move with you, I would have felt a lot better. I think my relationship when I was really young was the best time for me to form a really intimate relationship with the Mosque and a really intimate relationship with the community. But because I was kind of left out, I never had it. So, my relationship today, I'm still an outsider.

Elaborating on his limited attendance at the Mosque A, Yacquub described how language creates barriers between himself and other attendees – even those who he went to Islamic weekend school with when he was a kid.

There are people now... like we've all grown up. And we all go to the University. And I'll see them and say ok, cool, we're amiable. Like, we understand that we exist and have history. But we can't really for more than like thirty seconds. There's nothing there. We never talked growing up so it would be disingenuous to try and talk now. We'll try, but it's just not there, you know. I know that most of time when I go to the Mosque it's just like handle the business. I go in, I pray, I get out. Or, you go in, you hear the khutba and then you come out. I'm never there... it's never been a place where I could just go, yea, like - just a place to relax or a place go to, see people, like catch up. Because even then people are just catching up in Arabic and I'm like "uhhhh... I feel really out of place."

When asked if the mosque serves as a place of community for him in any sense, he said:

Not for me. I know that it does for a lot of people. I know that, what it does and how works. I would like to be more active but I know that it's just very difficult for me to even see myself being more participatory. Just because my relationship with my faith is - it's always been hinged on... like I don't know Arabic and I don't know what these

words mean. For me, my relationship with Islam has been just like, what I do understand, the morals and what is right and what is wrong, living that. I'm very much like... that's what I'm connected to. But there's a lot of lessons... I know that there's a lot of intricate history and storytelling that I just don't understand, that I don't hear. So, yea, I think with more time, hopefully I will come around. But as it has been so far, it hasn't been a place of community for me, at least.

Though Yacquub is currently working on his PhD, he still tries to make Islam a significant part of his life. Yet, he also added:

I've always felt disconnected. I've always felt disconnected. I think for everyone else they have known Arabic the whole time. They've been able to read the Quran, just like understand what it means. Who recite really long surahs without necessarily having to memorize it. And for me, everything about Islam is work, like hard work. Like you have to work hard to memorize. You have to work hard to understand. You have to do very intense research to understand if you're even if you're interpreting it the way that you should be or not. And it just feels like I have to, for every step someone takes, I have to take five. So, I think that's the biggest disconnect between me and other generations or me and just friends who understand language growing up. And I know no matter how many times I say that it just hasn't hit so well.

Yacquub's feeling of being "disconnected" is unfortunate and clearly related to his needs not having been met in the mosque. His expression of social isolation and disappointment have contributed to the mosque being anything but a source of community and security.

Much of what Yacquub and Hafsa describe in terms of a lack of qualified teachers or leveled instruction for students at the weekend school likely relates to resources. As mentioned

in the literature review, even full-time Islamic schools have difficulty maintaining qualified staff and having the resources to properly compensate them. This is likely one of the factors that led to some of their experiences. Yet, the results are clear in what the participants expressed. At least for their family, Arabic or the lack of it, led to a feeling that they did not belong in local Islamic spaces.

Stereotyping: "They don't think we're serious." - Juan

Stereotyping of Black people in general, but African-Americans specifically, was mentioned time and again by interview participants. Interviewees discussed the fact that multiple aspects of their identity are often put into question by immigrant Muslims.

Juan mentioned that at the mosque there is an inclination for people to distinguish one another and where they are from, based on clothing.

They can identify with each other based upon clothing, kufi's - hats and different cultural identities, that us who are born in America, don't see unless you study their culture. As Juan pointed out, clothing is a signifier of place. Yet, Mansour went even further and explained that, in his experience, it is also indicates a perception about what a Muslim should look like.

Um, you know me being who I am, um, you know I'm Black (laughs) and also um, cause um I didn't really um look like a Muslim. I didn't dress all conservative, I kind of you know wore what I wore and I was um, I definitely didn't dress or look like anyone else in there. I have felt, I've gone to mosques in the past and I wouldn't say that I felt unwelcome but I did feel that my presence wasn't really appreciated, that I didn't really get the respect you would think these Muslims would give to other Muslims.

Mansour felt that the treatment he has sometimes experienced in Islamic institutions is because he did not present the cultural signifiers that signaled to others that he was a Muslim man or the *type* of Muslim man who should be in attendance at the mosque. His view that his clothing played a role in how he was treated is significant.

Mansour’s experiences lead to questions about what Islamic dress consists of and how one determines an individual’s level of religiosity based on attire. In addition, it is also related to how seriously one is taken if they are a convert and do not have “conservative” clothing to wear in Islamic spaces.

Juan openly discussed the fact that the “seriousness” of African-American converts is often put into question. He said that there is a feeling of being less than welcomed by other attendees and he related this partially to stereotypes about why African-American men might be attending the mosque.

J: There’s a lot of paranoia over guys only going to the mosque to meet Arab women.

R: Non-Arab guys?

J: [Shakes his head in agreement] The view that a lot of these guys are getting into Islam for women...I feel it a lot of times, when I go to the mosque and I’m talking with some other guys that’s from Sudan or Somalia or Yemen or wherever or, or Syrian, when women come by, you know, I see their, their change. There’s a change in their expression. There’s not really trust. They don’t trust that I’m going there for Allah, I’m going there to do Salah, I’m going there looking for a date...they don’t think we’re serious.

The observation that Juan makes is related to stereotypes about Black male sexuality. Slatton (2014) says, “White society punishes Black men whether or not they exhibit criminal or

hypersexual behavior. Simply being Black and male makes them an automatic threat" (pp. 33).

Slatton (2014) goes on to write that rape of White women by Black men was one of the most feared crimes during slavery and segregation and that, historically and today, Black men receive heavier penalties if convicted of raping a White woman than a woman of any other race (pp. 36).

What Juan has observed at the mosque are the effects of believing U.S. stereotypes about Black male sexuality. Additionally, his comment raises questions about who has authority over the immigrant Muslim woman and her body. Clearly, there is a view among some men at the mosque that it is their responsibility to police the boundaries of both African-American male sexuality and the sexuality of Muslim women. The views expressed by Juan are directly in line with the idea that moral character is somehow attached to race. African-American men cannot be trusted and that African-American converts to Islam are somehow not serious about their faith.

Juan also discussed the role of the Nation of Islam in how African-American Muslims are perceived and treated.

I think the African American Muslims are being ostracized because the Muslims from Africa and the Middle East, they look at them as being Farrakhan raised. They're like not really Muslims...

The idea that members of NOI are somehow not "really Muslim" creates division within Islamic spaces for African-American Muslims. Additionally, not all African-American Muslims are NOI and yet, they are assumed to be and they are often "ostracized" because of it. Juan went on:

When they see me, that's what they thought, I'm Nation of Islam because I'm from here. And I'm not, you know...I like a lot of things the Nation Islam do and some of the things they do...Farrakhan talks a lot about skin color and the whites and there was a lot of white Muslims and there a lot of Muslims who aren't all the way white but their mix and a lot of

things that Farrakhan says...so that pushes them away from the Nation of Islam people.

But a lot of people still like Farrakhan, you know, I guess because he was one of the voices of the “West” like they said.

Even during the interview, Juan seemed to be trying to justify liking a portion of what the NOI does. His overall comments show an unfortunate stigmatization that happens to those in the African-American community.

The stereotypes that have become internalized within the immigrant Muslim community about African-Americans create wide divisions that are often only dealt with through the establishment of ethnically and racially based institutions. African-American and Black ethnic Muslims are often limited in their ability to participate fully in the institutions of which they are theoretically a part.

Limited Opportunities for Leadership

This portion of my dissertation discusses leadership: access to leadership and the limits of leadership. Using the experiences of three participants, this section shows three different ways in which discrimination surrounding leadership has been dealt with. Although many of the individuals who participated in this research overall are in positions of leadership in the Islamic community in some form, all were quick to point out that one’s power has its limits and that they felt that those limits were often put into effect based on race. They also pointed out that they often had to remain particularly tenacious to gain a leadership position and that it took a significant amount of time for them to be selected – more time than it took non-Black community members.

Though a respected member of the community, when asked, Hamza expressed the feeling that his opinion is of no value to the other leaders of the mosque. When speaking about equality in leadership he said the following:

No. No. Nothing has been done. I don't attend all meetings and when I was asked, I told them the reason why. When I go there I feel like sometimes I want to talk, but I've been pushed aside. When I want to talk, somebody jumps in, talks, talks, talks, and the other person talks, talks, talks. I'm like I can't just come there and sit. They will tell me, "Brother, what's happening in Somali community."

I tell them "I don't know. How do you want me to know what's happening in the Somali community when I come here? I don't talk."

"Oh, Brother you can talk."

"You don't tell me you can't talk, but anytime I want to talk, somebody jumps in. He talks, he talks, he talks, and then I don't get the chance to talk. So, how do you want me to convey the message." Most of time I don't go to the meetings.

He went on to say that even when he does communicate with the other individuals in positions of leadership, he does not feel that his concerns or the concerns of his community are taken seriously. He gave the example of a man from Somalia who has HIV and whose needs he felt were "put off" by the leaders of the mosque.

There's an old man in this community that has HIV. I went to them - he's a Somali man. And I went to them, I told them, that man needs help. He's not getting any help from the government. He needs help and you guys are the community here. He doesn't have anybody here. He reached to a point that he wanted to kill himself...

I went to them and told them, "this guy doesn't have financial assistance. He need financial assistance."

And they're like, "how?"

I'm like, "he doesn't work. He needs to pay rent. He needs, for example, he needs money for laundry. He needs stuff."

And they're like, "ok, we'll look into it. Bring us his name..."

I'm like, "seriously?! I'm giving you his name right now, I have his information."

And they're like, "you have to come with him, bring him here."

So, they don't say no. But they move so slow to the point that you start getting...saying, "you know what, I'm not going to present anymore."

You feel like they'll help but no help is coming. So slow that eventually you quit. But I'm telling you at that masjid preferential [treatment] is happening, and I tell them so many times. "What you're doing is not good."

The reaction of the mosque leadership might be pointing to something more significant than just an unwillingness to hear Hamza. It could point to the way that HIV is viewed by many individuals in the Muslim community. Chiddy and Esack (2009) write:

When Muslims are actually living in America, the suggestion is often that it [HIV] happens in "White America," "homosexual America," or to the "African-Americans"- certainly not us. When it becomes evident that AIDS actually is prevalent in these Muslim communities or countries, refuge is sought by confining it to "core groups"- an imagined sub-strata of society who are not "really Muslim": "immoral people", sex workers, drug addicts, prisoners, homosexuals, immigrants, migrant laborers, etc. (p. 2).

Chiddy and Esack's (2009) comments point to stereotypes about a number of groups, including African-Americans. This points back to the view of the "immoral" African-American that is not a "real" Muslim – along with drug addicts, prisoners, etc. The inability of the mosque leaders to confront the difficulties experienced by this unnamed man in the Muslim community points to bigger issues of social justice and how the community responds to those who are so stereotyped and pushed to the margins that their issues are simply ignored. Many research participants described their disappointment with how matters related to social services are dealt with in the community and this is but one more example. While it could be speculation that this man's diagnosis led to him being ignored, one thing is undeniable, Hamza's comments exemplify the frustrating limits of his own leadership in the mosque.

While Hamza's experiences show the difficulties faced when in a position of leadership, Muhammad would add that even getting into a position is difficult if one is not of a particular ethnicity. Muhammad currently has an important role at the local Islamic school. He has been involved in the school for almost the entire ten years that he has lived in the city, Yet whenever a position has become available, he has applied and yet has only recently been selected. This is despite the fact that he has privately tutored Muslim children throughout the city in a variety of Islamic subjects – often the children of the same "gatekeepers" who never offered him a leadership position at the school.

M: I think the community finally were able to use their brains [laughs], I think. I have no other better way to say it, 'there is a guy, even though he's not Pakistani or Arab or White, but he's the best fit for the leadership for the school.'

R: Do you think it made a difference that you weren't Pakistani or Arab or White?

M: Yeah, of course. It makes a big difference. For one thing, I can, in addition, this could be my own judgment, I can be responsible for saying this, but there is a lot of racism, prejudice, colorism in the, like in the way people look at you or judge you. [Mosque A] is Arabs, predominately Arabs and dominated by Arabs. So, there is um, there is uh, a view that, if, if, you know the Arabs, there is a hierarchy in the way people, of let me put this, if you are Arab, you are, you are like the elite. If you are Arab, the Arabs have more status than any other race or any other group at [Mosque A]. Regardless your education, regardless your age, regardless anything else. The measurement is being Arab, being lighter-skinned and from an Arab country. Right. You are um, you have, they will look at you differently, right. Then when you go to [Mosque B], the measurement is social status. It is if you are a doctor. Of course, the hierarchy starts at the top if you are a doctor. You know, even though that exists as well, even though that exists in [Mosque A], [Mosque A] is more about race and are you Arab or not an Arab...they look down to other races, even from imams or those who claim to be a shaykh. There are so many remarks and so many comments. They, they directly point out that Arabs are the better race basically. You know, so, I believe if I were Arab or White, or associated with that high class, it would have made a lot of difference and I might have been hired by now because I have all the credentials and I've been in the school since I got here.

Muhammad speaks directly to the fact that race matters when one is attempting to be selected for a position in the local mosque(s). At one time, Muhammad was asked to write the curriculum for the weekend school at Mosque B and yet, he was denied the director/principal position for the weekend school. The position was given to a man of Arab ethnicity with what Muhammad

described as having "little to no experience in education." Muhammad discussed his reaction to being asked to write the curriculum and the subsequent conversation with leaders of the mosque.

When I arrived at the meeting they said, 'okay we are all waiting for you. Because you have experience, we need you to write the curriculum and we need to have a discussion about the classes and how to do that.' And my question to them was, 'why am I not the principal? Why is he the principal and I have to give my time?' And the answer to that is because he's Arab he got to be the principal. It doesn't matter if you have experience or if you have knowledge – it doesn't matter. You are Black. You are from Africa. You can't be the principal. The principal has to be Arab – but you can do the work. And I told them, 'I've been working behind the shadows for ten years and I'm not doing it anymore. I'm out of here.'

Muhammad's sense that he was "passed over" for positions for not being Arab is interesting given the fact that his first language is Arabic and that he is from the northern part of Sudan – a region closely associated with "Arab-ness." If his assertions are correct, this certainly exemplifies the limits of Arab identity and how rigidly it can be defined.

Juan also expressed that he feels that there is preferential treatment in terms of leadership and he further conveyed that it causes one to lose hope in being involved.

Well, it makes you feel as though you don't have nothing coming. If you see, if you see all of, let's say, um, guys from Afghanistan. They're getting the top-notch positions at the jobs or they're getting preferential treatment at the mosque.

Juan's experiences have led him to accept his role as participant, though he would likely want to be more active if there were an opportunity for him to do so. It should be noted that leadership positions in either mosque are not generally held by individuals from Afghanistan. Juan is

possibly conflating those from Afghanistan with Arabic speakers. Although not Black, Afghans are not Arab.

These three examples offer three different approaches to dealing with exclusion from leadership. Hamza has become so frustrated that he has stopped actively participating to the extent he would like. Muhammad has essentially waited for ten years as the school’s leadership has changed time and again and he was passed over for consideration – time and again. His tenacity and unwillingness to continue to be “passed over” eventually led to a position. Finally, Juan has simply given up on the idea that there is a place for him in leadership at any of the religious institutions in the city and has opted to be a participant instead. The belief that there is a lack of leadership opportunities contributes to a sense that the presence of those from particular communities are not valued and that they do not belong in local Islamic spaces, or that they are welcome only within the parameters meted out to them.

A Lack of Access to Resources

Resources are often an issue in Muslim communities, but the bigger problem is allocation of said resources. Karim (2009) writes, “African-American Muslims have charged immigrants with showing concern only for war, poverty, and political injustices occurring abroad...” (p. 35). I would take Karim’s (2009) argument one step further and say that it is Black populations in general, and not just African-Americans, who believe that immigrants are more concerned with overseas challenges. Furthermore, Black ethnics would likely identify the immigrant Muslims’ concern for what is happening abroad largely in reference to the Arabized. While African-American Muslims often express a desire to see more advocacy around social issues here in the U.S., many Black ethnics that were interviewed for this research pointed out that if there is going to be fundraising for overseas, why not include African countries?

As mentioned earlier, pilot study participant, Aisha, said that she noticed that a lot of fundraising is done for various Arab countries but not for those in Africa. She attributed this to the fact that "they [non-Black members of the mosque] don't really know what's happening in Africa." Aisha's statement is interesting given the potential connection that it has to stereotyping. It leaves one to question if what is being missed is that Africa is no more a monolithic continent of pirates and tribal militias engaged in violence amid freely running lions, than the Middle East is a monolithic region of belly dancers and turban clad militias with freely running camels.

For many, the distribution of resources is a direct reflection of what concerns are deemed to be important. For many of my research participants, it appears that the Black community, African-American or Black ethnic from immigrant roots, is not part of those concerns. Hamza's earlier points about leadership directly tie into the issue of resources in the Islamic community.

Hamza pointed out some of the most salient issues that recently occurred at the local Islamic school. The Islamic school has struggled financially for a number of years. Many families cannot afford to pay tuition, but they do receive a scholarship for attendance and the school gets that money. The majority of students tend come from Somali families. Hamza had issues with some changes that were made to the school and what he felt those changes were based upon.

At one time, the Somali community - all of them withdraw their kids. Because they come with a plan...they sat down and they said, you know what, [the school], all the kids going there are African kids. So, Arab kids, maybe only ten. So, they say, what's the benefit for us? You see? Honestly, they sat down and they talked about this. They said, you know what, these African kids that are going there, most of them are Somali kids. Their parents won't afford to pay if we raise the tuition. So, if they say, we don't need Somali kids here

everybody's going to say 'really?' So, instead of doing that they said - Wa'allahi I swear, the principal cried. When I told her my kids are not going to come here and she's just like, I'm stunned. She's like, when they were raising this institution, I explained to them, I told them, but she said they won't listen. So, everybody withdraw their kids. For example, my aunt, she had five kids going there. Her husband makes \$1,200 a month. So, five kids times \$500, that's \$2500. He's making \$1200... so how are you expecting him to pay? So, that means he has to take his kids out. So, everybody took their kids out. And [the school] was like, seven kids. I'm like, now happily you guys can enjoy your school. Then they had to bring [the principal at the time] and he had to call me and I explained to him. I told him, really, this community is - the Arab people are the heads here. The finances, they're doing everything. I know they have money, but I'm telling you - I tell him they will have to answer in front of Allah because they are not playing a fair game here. Because if you build this school, you say it's Islamic school, it has to serve the purpose for Islam. You can't just say we need Arab kids here. I understand that was actually done, but it's not going to happen again. He had to beg me to bring my kids back. I told him I would rather have my kids go to a public school and teach them at home the Islam.

From his perspective, the fact that the focus on finances was related to offering the Somali families too much of a "break" and with no benefit to Arabs, was highly racialized and offensive. He was not the only one to express outrage at such decisions.

Hashem has also been closely tied to both mosques and when asked if he felt there was preferential treatment given to some groups over other groups in terms of resources, he said that he believes that there is.

H: You hear about it. The Syrians are most beneficial from everything. Yeah.

R: Do you think that's true?

H: In some aspect, yes.

R: In some aspects? What aspects?

H: Well for example, um, I have, some people just complain to me that Syrians have financial support from the mosque and when they request the same benefit, they give them very, very little.

R: I see. Those people who expressed those views, did they feel that it was based on anything, did they feel that the Syrians we're getting that benefit because they were Syrian or did they feel that they're not getting that benefit because they're something else? Like African?

H: Yeah, yeah that is the issue (because they're something else).

R: Ah. Yeah I have also heard that. I see. And then, if some, like, how does that impact the relationship that you see between some of the different groups?

H: Actually, that works against collaboration between different groups. So, if you feel that you are not treated equally, so you will not go there, you will not participate there, and you will try to pull out. And that's what's happening now actually.

Mustafa's views were in agreement with that of the other participants. He went into great detail about why the allocation of resources has such an impact on community relations.

Lack of support is a major, major, major part of it [tension in the community]. Especially if people feel like, I need help here and you're worried about raising funds for people in other - you know, Somalia or Palestine or somewhere else. Not necessarily here where we need support and we need resources here.

Having worked closely with the Somali Bantu refugee community and the mosques, Mustafa has a unique understanding of both those in need and of those tasked with allocating the resources.

When you're in need you're just: "I need help. And this is the place that I should come to provide me help. This is the house of Allah. If I come here, I should get help. So, where is the help? And you're going to give it to some school or some project or buying some land?"

"But, it's for the future; community's growing; going to need these...you might not think so, but your children will benefit from that."

It's very difficult to convince people when they have other pressing issues, life and death and survival. But even within the community there's resources that are spent and how they're spent and that's one of the reasons we elect these boards. Once they're in there and decisions are made and if you're not involved at the front end and you come to the meetings, you voice your concern, by the time the decision is made, not too many people participated in the process.

When asked if he felt that there is an issue with allocation of resources, he responded:

I really don't have all the facts, but some of it are based on rumors. But then it comes, well, maybe it's not. Then how do you distinguish between what is a rumor and what is not without accusing somebody of un-Islamic [behavior]? Accuse somebody based on rumors? But I think if we put out something in terms of – for the community, this is how your money is spent. This is how the decisions are made and this is how it's going to be made in the future. This is what you need, a lot more transparency is required. It's a place of worship. Don't have anything to hide, just put it out there for anybody and everybody

to see hey, this is how your money is spent. Do you support this? If not make your voice heard.

Mustafa’s points are extremely salient. Transparency could help to alleviate some of the tensions in the community and could serve as a starting point for creating better social and community bonds between differing ethnic groups. It could also be an opportunity for more people to get involved in the inner workings of the mosque(s) – provided there are leadership opportunities available equally to everyone.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Implications

The sense of not belonging or being unwelcome in Islamic spaces was one that stood out significantly when conducting this research. There seemed to be a feeling among a number of participants that the presence of Black people may be tolerated, but is never truly desired, in many, if not most, Islamic institutions. This is particularly devastating, given the role that these institutions play in the life of so many Muslims. Muslims in the U.S. face a multitude of pressures, particularly if they are minoritized in more than one way. The mosque is thought to be a place of belonging and community. There is evidence to suggest that the mosque actually helps to facilitate acculturation in the United States (Bagby, 2009, p. 487; Dana et al., 2011). Yet, as my research shows, for many Black Muslims of both immigrant and indigenous backgrounds, this is oftentimes not the case.

Colorism may not be the exact phenomenon occurring in Islamic institutions but there is no doubt that my findings show an element of anti-Blackness. According to Dei (2017), Anti-Blackness can be described as the inferiorization of Black people that leads to unequal treatment and the justification of it (p. 67). Furthermore, Dei writes that it is related to the “subhumanity”

of Black people and “built on a manufactured notion of White superiority to the Black subject” (p. 67). While those attendees of the Islamic institutional settings researched in this study are in a racially liminal state themselves, it is not the state of marginalization perpetuated upon those of the Black race in the U.S. During our interview, Yacquub commented on anti-Blackness in particular.

The more I get involved in the understanding of like politics in general, I understand anti-Blackness is everywhere, everywhere. Even in the smallest locations. Even in the smallest communities as far as the entire world. That has definitely left me very upset this last year. This is what I really realized. I’m like dang, it’s everywhere. And it’s not just in terms of out there in the world, like in the south, but it’s in [city of research], it’s in the mosque, it’s on campus, it’s in different student organizations. The ability to just push us aside.

The feeling of being “pushed aside” *outside* of the mosque is difficult enough, but the extension of it *into* the mosque no doubt makes the burden even heavier. It could be said that the concept of a united transnational community of believers, the *ummah*, has evaded most Muslims, both in the city in which I live and perhaps, globally. Schmidt (2005) argues that the *ummah* is an “imagined” community of believers (Anderson 1983), and it must be separated into the *vision* of the *ummah* and the *ummah in practice* (p. 577). Schmidt (2005) further writes, “the concept of a “world religion” (such as Islam) implies that religion as concept and community is not necessarily confined by national borders but is capable of penetrating and accenting them” (p. 576). There is also an assumption of transcending racial and ethnic differences. The results of my research show that even in one city, the *ummatic* “vision” is strongly ingrained in the minds of most Muslims, but that there are significant challenges to establishing the solidarity needed to

put it into practice. Some research participants commented on their feelings about the concept of the *ummah* and the seeming inability of Muslims in the city to build a cohesive community.

Mansour said the following:

You know I just think that Muslims aren't as united as you would hope them to be, nor are they as united as they should be. You know especially in the country where uh we're minority, it is also kind of surprising that people are more passionate about uniting and being one *ummah* and um, you know, um...I think um, there's racism everywhere, um, I haven't experienced much racism from Arabs and I'm sure there's racism among Arabs. From what I understand that has historically been the case and from what I understand it's going on today outside our country uh, very clearly and um, of course that is all a shame... You know I think uh, part of it is race, part of it is community, and part of it is language and part of it is uh, a lack of a consistent and coherent effort to unite people and I'm not sure if I've ever really felt that, I'm not sure if I've ever seen like a true effort to bring Muslim communities together - maybe they have but I can't recall those efforts and yeah, that's how I get the sense that sometimes mosques are you know um, focused on being that mosque instead of focusing on the broader community and of course sometimes people are more focused on their lives and they come to mosque and pray and that's it and um they don't really do much to unify and go to community. So again, um, considering the fact that we are minority in this country and we are supposed to be you know true believers in God and have a higher purpose and so on and so forth, you would think that we would be more united and have a stronger front but...(trails off).

Brodeur (2002) contends that when members of Muslim communities in non-Islamic majority countries talk about unity, they are frequently trying to establish identity outside of the "non-

Islamic majority Other and older Islamic identities in majority Muslim countries" (p.) Yet, for Mansour, while some of this likely does relate to identity, it is also about solidarity in the face of oppression. The relationship between individuals who identify as Muslim should provide some form of unification for Mansour, but so should the minority experience in the U.S. Numrich (2012) contends that in the case of African-American Muslims, the rhetoric related to the *ummah* has "functioned primarily as a form of protest against American racism" (p. 465).

Yacquub expressed similar feelings as Mansour regarding the condition of the Islamic community in the city and a desire to see diversity used as an asset and not deemed to be a disadvantage.

I have no idea about how to make it happen, but I think there's already a really naturally diverse [city of research] Islamic community. I just don't know how much work is being done to notice that. And if it is being noticed what's being done to honor that and inspire more of that and really encourage it? I would hope that that's happening. In my experiences everywhere else, diversity isn't loved and it isn't supported in a way that we would hope. Hopefully they're doing better, but I wouldn't get my hopes up (Chuckle). Unfortunately, Mansour and Yacquub's comments show a great deal of disillusionment about community building efforts. For many Muslims, the solution to conflict seems to be to start an independent Islamic institution based on the ethnic and/or national origin of worshippers. Khadija made an interesting comment about that phenomenon and the desire to see more unity, rather than division.

When you go Eid and you see how broad we are and how diverse we are, that's something to be happy about. There's a huge difference between when I arrived in 2001 and today. How broad they are, how diverse they are, how rich they are and whatever,

you'd think their presence in the community would be stronger. But it's being dispersed in these places where everybody's going to separate, this is part of what I notice.

In Khadija's opinion, the separation only serves to further ingrain the divided nature of the community. Furthermore, her comment points to what so many participants noticed, that people tend to exhibit a certain amount of unity during religious holidays, but not for regular worship. For those who are marginalized, one can certainly understand the desire to establish something that works for their community year round, if the established situation does not.

In order to gain a better understanding of community needs from community members, I asked participants to describe what the Islamic institutions of the city could do to serve the Muslim population of the city better. Participant answers focused on leadership, experiences in the "educational setting," and community engagement and social services. There are wider changes that participants mentioned and those will be elucidated upon as well.

Leadership

Mosques in the U.S. tend to be extremely underfunded and understaffed. Soldo (2017) writes, "mosques have half of the income of congregations of other faiths, and a higher attendance rates than other religious organizations" (p. 4). Mosques are also often run through the use of volunteers and have a high staff turnover (p. 4). In addition to this, leaders tend to focus the finances on the physical structure of the mosque, rather than on the human capital inside of it (p. 4). All of this combines to create a situation wherein leadership can be a challenge.

Yet, leaders are extremely important to Islamic institutional functioning. Numrich (2012) points out that it is the leadership that serves a "brokering" function in representing the community to the public (p. 461). Furthermore, leaders greatly impact the environment of the

mosque and this includes appreciation for diversity – or not. Numrich (2012) writes, “when mosques or Islamic organizations do not accentuate the *ummah* ideal, we can assume that their leaders either have chosen not to do so or cannot garner enough institutional support to do so” (p. 462). Leaders determine much of what gets decided upon in the mosque. This is especially true because mosques, acting as congregations in the U.S., tend to have a structure wherein leaders have the majority of control and are composed of a few individuals (Wind and Lewis, 1994, p. 2).

When asked about what changes he thinks should occur in the Islamic institutions of the city, Muhammad expressed a lot of the feelings mirrored by other research participants:

The problem is that if these institutions are not looked at as a place for everyone, they won't be able to serve anyone...The problem with our Islamic institutions, if you talk with the Sudanese for example, like, they still say [speaking Arabic], the school of the Arabs [in reference to the local Islamic school]. There has to be more diversity, number one. There should be unity. It has to be observed and we have to eliminate the clusters. People have to come under the same description of we are all, we all represent Islam. Not that we are Arabs or elites...

It should start by choosing the right people to be in the right place. The problem is that there is no measures? Who are these people that are in the Islamic community and leading now? When it comes to leadership, everyone should release their, I don't know, there should be a website or in the masjid they should have their resume out with all their history, and what they've done. Then they should have their plans. What do you want to do? Why do you want to come here? Why do you want to be on the board? What's your plan? What's your program? And then there should be a group that looks at all of these

and chooses the right people... You need to establish quality and a certain environment so that everyone feels welcome and make people feel comfortable to be there and establish trust.

The Islamic institutions of the city can put policies in place that will eliminate some of the controversies of the past. Specifically, interviewees expressed a desire to see three primary changes with regard to mosque leadership: 1) a strategic plan that is shared with the community and transparency regarding finances, 2) fairer elections for leadership positions that include qualified candidates, and 3) representation from a diverse cadre of community leaders. Many people in the community feel as if they are forced to guess about how money is spent, stand witness to "elections" – referred to by one participant as "coups," and that they see an overall lack of diversity in leadership roles.

Policy. Non-profit strategic planning improves the success of organizations and helps organizations to remain transparent and sustainable (Gratton, 2018). In the absence of a strategic plan, one should be created and it should include a method for providing information about finances. All of this should be made available electronically via the institutional website. This is the transparency that is being sought by community members.

I will use many of Bagby's (2018) recommendations to address the election and leader selection concerns of the community members who participated in my research. Bagby (2018) used the "Needs Assessment of ISNA/NAIT Mosques" conducted in 2014 in order to ascertain the best structure for mosque leadership. Bagby (2018) recommends a "shared" model of leadership, which "divides the functions of the mosque between religious and educational matters which are under the imam, and then all other functions of the mosque are under the executive head" (Bagby, year, p. 48).

Bagby (2018) further recommends “the best model for mid-sized to large mosques is to have a board of trustees and an executive committee, because the best practice model for nonprofits is to have a board that does oversight and direction-setting, and an executive body that focuses exclusively on management” (p. 43). This type of structure also provides positions to fill and can then address one of the other prevailing concerns of community members – a lack of diversity in leadership. In addition, both board and executive officers should be elected (p. 50). This will avoid “founder’s syndrome,” wherein the founders of the institution feel so entitled to their post that they simply forgo holding any elections (p. 44). In most cases, the imam should be considered the leader of the mosque and the mosque should be primarily “imam centered” (p. 51-52). The imam works closest with the community and is the “primary face of the mosque” and so it is logical that the imam is considered the mosque head (p. 51). The idea of “sharing” leadership means that there is a wide array of positions and elections are held.

The majority of participants in my research expressed a desire to be involved in the Islamic institutions of the city, particularly in positions of leadership, but many have a strong belief that their participation is not welcome. Alorfi (2012) emphasizes that qualifications based on “personal connections,” wealth, or prestige are all prohibited from an Islamic perspective and should not be included in the candidate selection process for any position. In order to recruit a diverse array of community members for leadership positions, differing ethnic communities should be approached and there should be a certain amount of “networking” with the members of those communities. In the city in which this research was conducted, community members have strong feelings about the Islamic institutions, some more negative than others. Though speculation, I do not believe that any of the participants in my research study are so “sour” on the Islamic institutions of the city that they would not be willing to be involved in them – if they

felt they were approached with sincerity. The same can likely be said for other individuals in their respective ethnic communities.

Experiences in the "Educational" Setting

According to Giroux (2000), public pedagogy refers to the education that is outside the realm of formal educational settings. Instead, public pedagogy is related to the everyday interactions between people and the power dynamics related to those interactions (Giroux, 2000). For Giroux (2004) "the very processes of learning constitute the political mechanisms through which identities are shaped, desires mobilized, and experiences take on form and meaning within those collective conditions and larger forces that constitute the realm of the social" (79). Experiences shape one's identity and are, essentially, a form of education about the world in which one lives. This section is written with that in mind. Throughout this dissertation I have tried to make it clear that for many Muslims, the Islamic institution is one of the primary sources for identity formation.

The research for this dissertation shows substantial issues with regard to the more formal educational settings of the Islamic institutions in the city, and the informal setting as well. This section will briefly engage with both. To start, it must be acknowledged that many issues stem from the perceived elevation of Arabic above other languages, both in terms of value and in terms of usage. There is no question that Arabic is a vital and fundamental element of Islam. An additional reality is that the world's Muslim population is not comprised solely of Arabic speakers and neither is the population of the city in which this research was conducted. Language barriers were a major point of concern for many research participants.

Yacquub described feeling extremely marginalized as a non-Arabic speaker when he attended the weekend school at Mosque A. He made some important statements about engaging young people whose first language is not Arabic:

I feel like those who are in place to teach, ensure that they are teaching everybody and really working hard to make sure that those who are feeling left out because I know in the Mosque it's very - for me at least, I thought it was very obvious that I didn't understand what was going on. And it was very obvious that I felt very left out. But that wasn't caught on. Like hopefully that has been alleviated. If there are kids that are obviously being left out that there's someone there to catch them up to speed or at least hear them out and see what's going on...I feel like in everything, people who feel left out need to feel like there's an intention behind their inclusion. Not just inclusion for inclusion sake.

Not only did the language barrier prevent Yacquub from learning, he also felt that no one was invested in his learning. He got the sense that the teacher was working with him only because he happened to show up for the class and not because the teacher believed he could learn the material or that it was important for him to do so.

A lot of times I think in the Mosque I feel like if I was being included, it was just because it had to be done. There wasn't anybody who was really like, 'I'm invested in your ability to learn this. And I'm invested in your relationship with Allah. I want you to be part of this, I want you to do this.' So, we just sat by ourselves and talked to each other.

Yacquub's focus on teaching methodology is important, but just as important, is his mention of intentionality and letting students know that they matter – even if they cannot speak Arabic or are of non-Arab heritage.

Gonzalez et al. (2005) challenge educators to think beyond the walls of the classroom or the heritage of themselves, the *teacher*, and instead to focus on the community and the cultural heritage and familial wisdom that has been imparted to the *student*. Like Giroux (2000, 2004), Gonzalez et al. (2005) see education as a "social process," and one that should embrace the individual (ix). We will never know how differently Yacquub might describe his experiences if he had believed that his background, language, and learning were valued as much as any other child in the mosque. However, his experiences provide a word of caution about the internal workings of students when they feel de-valued, whether or not that de-valuation is done intentionally.

Yacquub added that, in his belief, verbal language may not be necessary and perhaps should sometimes even be avoided. He made suggestions about materials and resources within Islamic institutions based on his experience living in Doha.

When I was in Doha, we went to the Islamic Community Center...it was this beautiful building that had this really tall, spiraling just... spire that was in there and you could see it from all over the city. And I remember going in, I was able to look at the walls and there was history written down in English about different stories about each prophet and I was like, I learned more in that day, just casually [walking] around than I ever did in years growing up. So, that was really special for me. Like whereas if anything allows for passive learning to take place. Where you don't even have to speak. You don't even have to talk. You can just have history put all over the place for people just to find. I know that the last time we went to the Mosque it was a while back, maybe a month ago. And I left with six or seven pamphlets. I was just like, 'ok, this is good. I can read up on these.

Like, I can understand.' I know that if it's provided for me, I will go ahead and grab it.

But it [the local Islamic community] was like a knowledge desert in a sense...Uh-hm.

I think an Islamic institution, at least to start with, providing as many different avenues for individuals to learn and get involved in different ways. So, it isn't just like - I felt everybody had to be at this level and there was no way I was ever going to get there without a significant amount of help. So, because I couldn't get there, I was like, 'it's hopeless.' It was strange because I really do feel strongly about my faith. And I like defend it all the time to my friends and stuff like that. But, there's that hidden layer underneath of just like...am I doing this right? Am I doing this right?

Yea, I feel like, 1) having just history and the ability for people to learn all over the place is really helpful. And then 2) just providing, not just the learning techniques, but different levels for people to get involved. And when you're involved with people who need a lot of help, like don't take that as 'ughhh, why aren't you learning?' But really try to understand these kids and figure out what's going on there. Because nobody took the time with me, at least, to understand why I felt really left out.

Firstly, Yacquub's opinion that the local Islamic community was a "knowledge desert" is extremely upsetting. The institutions of the city include an Islamic school and various Islamic programs for young people. However, a physical structure of a school and a program in name does not necessarily mean that learning is taking place. It must be asked, to what extent are students learning and equally being included in the learning process?

Yacquub's focus on informal learning is a fundamental aspect of social justice. It is making education available for all community members. In the Islamic community in this city, there are individuals from a variety of educational backgrounds and with a wide array of

responsibilities that might preclude them from attending a formal educational setting, if there is anything provided for their age group. Many research participants admitted that they do not attend Friday prayer because their work schedules do not allow it. If the only source of knowledge for adults is during the Friday sermon at the mosque, learning for an adult community member may not happen. Yacquub's suggestions are pertinent when considering these facts. Inclusivity is not solely about one being actively included all the time, though inclusion is important, but it is also about creating spaces wherein a person can easily involve themselves through multiple pathways that are the most convenient for them.

Like Yacquub, Kaamil, whose first language is Arabic, also expressed a desire to see more people be able to overcome the language barrier. He suggested that the community use a method that was used in another state in which he had lived – translation.

The mosque in [a different state], the masjid had a translator. When you go in, they would give you the headphone and there is somebody in the back who is translate for everybody in the mosque.

This takes language savvy volunteers and money for equipment. Yet, it is a good suggestion that would allow community members to recognize that their needs were considered. Any attempt at inclusion would speak volumes in a community that is as divided as the one in the city of this research.

Policy. In educational settings, including those such as weekend schools, this research made it clear that there must be: 1) differentiated instruction and 2) someone available who can communicate with students who do not speak Arabic. This can be the teacher, a teacher's aide, or even a mentor for student(s). There must be assessments that measure learning and assistance for students who fall behind. Regular meetings about student performance and small group

instruction in the classroom setting should all be included in the educational program. In addition, professional development (PD) needs to be offered for teachers. This includes professional development regarding content and instruction, but also related to classroom biases and colorism.

Much of the literature related to colorism in schools tends to focus on the way in which skin tone impacts students' in-class experiences and educational attainment. However, McGee et al. (2016) examine the ways that education can be improved for students if their teachers are trained in critical race theory and have a better understanding of colorism. McGee et al. (2016) found that few teacher preparation programs address how skin color impacts educational processes for students and their teachers (p. 72). The authors advocate for teacher preparation programs that do not just recognize diversity or even race, but for programs that discuss colorism as a factor related to race (p. 71). This would lead to more knowledgeable teachers who could potentially help their students develop critical consciousness and resist “hurtful phenotype-associated ideologies and messages” (p. 76). Ultimately, when educators are knowledgeable about topics such as colorism, they are more likely to be sensitive to its impact and their own behavior in the classroom.

I previously mentioned the financial woes of Islamic schools and Islamic institutions, nationwide. I also highlighted the fact that Islamic institutions are often run by volunteers and have a high turnover rate. Yet, if training and professional development is offered, I believe it very likely that teachers, oftentimes volunteers in the more informal educational setting, will take advantage of the opportunity. This is especially likely to be the case if the leadership of the mosque makes it an obvious priority. Earlier, I mentioned that Soldo’s (2017) research shows that a good deal of the budget of many mosques goes to the mosque structure. I would argue that

the building is not nearly as important as the knowledge being imparted within in it and the multi-functional purposes that the mosque serves for attendees.

Community Engagement and Social Services

My research shows that there is a lot of concern surrounding community engagement and social services in the local Islamic community. Some community members feel that priorities are not where they should be within the Islamic institutions of the city. Nguyen et al. (2013) writes, "faith communities are important resources of social capital that provide the institutional and structural settings (e.g., social networks) for the exchange of religious social capital (e.g., social support)" (p. 537). In other words, faith-based organizations provide the worshipper a source of support for a variety of purposes, including a sense of shared community. Within the "faith community," there should be a perception that diversity is valued and that individuals in need are not a burden, but a blessing, despite their hardships. Also, diversity should include diversity of thoughts, as well as racial and ethnic diversity.

Mustafa discussed the need for equal "representation" within the community.

M: I think it's a [need for a] lot more representation.

R: Of who?

M: Of community members, different education background, different cultural backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds. Rich, poor, they need to have that kind of representation of how one does that in a (inaudible) process is a different - but the ideal would be to have everybody represented. And not overwhelm this one group of people. Say, like Arab dominated or Indian, Pakistani, whatever, or Somali dominated. But, it have to have that representation. And to do actually reach out to the communities that we live in...the way we're trying to deal with the outside community we should deal also

with the community within. We try and reach out to Jewish organizations, Catholic organizations, we should also do the same thing within. Where we reach out to communities inside the community as well as outside the community.

Inherent within Mustafa's statement is the irony that Muslims in the local community will "reach out" to non-Muslims, likely to improve the image of Muslims locally and globally, but that they will not offer the same consideration to other Muslims. For many participants, there is a sense that the Islamic institutions fall short in caring for their own community members. This should not necessarily be understood in financial terms. Rather, Mustafa and others highlighted the need for the same attempt at connections between different ethnic communities that is offered to different faith-based communities.

Hamza reiterated the views of Mustafa and offered an idea about how to engage different community members in conversation.

I think they need to reach out. How do they reach out? I think they need to (be) involved in the community. Because right now the only time they [leaders at the mosque] involve somebody, the rent, they fail to pay their rent, they [the person who needs help] have to go there [to the mosque]. I think they have to have certain people who actually - maybe this month we visit this community. Next month we visit this community. You don't have to visit everybody. But at least visit someone who know the community well and ask them what's happening. At least they can give you a picture.

Hamza's suggestion is excellent. A committee could be created that would "check-in" on other communities periodically throughout the year. If a unified Islamic institution is not the result, at least dialogue would be. This would serve as a reminder to the members of all communities that

they are part of the greater Islamic community in the city and that their belonging is acknowledged.

Much of what was suggested by participants ties into a desire to see greater levels of social services from local Islamic institutions. Mansour said the following regarding the ways in which Islamic institutions in the city could improve:

You know, I think there would be more community events, like more charitable events, like maybe cleaning up, uh this community or cleaning up this park, or uh, you know uh, serving food to the hungry. I think there would be more imams from other mosques coming to you know, this mosque or that mosque and yeah, I also think um, I imagine there's many Muslims who just don't attend the mosque.

I look at the numbers in there sometimes and I think 'there's thousands of other Muslims in this city and yet there's a dozen or so people here,' — yeah. So, I think the mosque would be more populated and there would be more energy in the mosque. I think there would be more positivity in the mosque...

Mansour's desire to see imams attending a variety of different institutions is evidence of his desire to see less institutional bifurcation. He also clearly sees the mosque as a space for service and not the kind of place where people would leave feeling as if their community was deemed to be "money-suckers."

Similarly, Kaamil expressed the view that true Islam is largely about service to the community.

Cook a meal and serve somebody instead of building a masjid. That's really better. We can pray in this one. We don't need, like, a masjid. It's like, about show, [rather] than

being really Muslim. Islam is starting to fade away. Prophet said the religion came as a stranger and will leave as stranger.

In Kaamil's view, the mosque should focus on service and not on elaborate buildings because it misses the true point of Islam. In defense of the local Islamic institutions, the Islamic institutions of the city are not social service organizations, per se. Yet, the role of the mosque has transformed into a congregational and community-based one in the U.S. and so the expectation is partially a natural one. Also, mosques have a worldwide reputation for serving a purpose that extends far beyond simply religious worship (Rashid, 2014, p. 1074). Nguyen et al. (2013) provides examples of what mosques throughout the nation tend to do in larger cities than the one in which this research was conducted, though some of these services are performed at the local Islamic institutions.

Mosques often engage in political and community activities, such as voter registration drives, writing or calling political leaders, hosting politicians, and interfaith dialogues. Community and social services provided directly by mosques include cash assistance for families and individuals, marital and family counseling, prison and jail programs, food pantry, soup kitchen, tutoring and literacy programs, thrift store, and clothes collection for the poor, among other services and programs (p. 538).

In addition to the services mentioned by Nguyen et al. (2013), there are even mosques in countries like Malaysia, where heroin has become the drug of choice among the majority Muslim population, that are running methadone clinics with great success (Rashid et al., 2014). The role that the mosque can play in the life of the worshipper is only limited by the creativity of the leaders of the mosque. Financial constraints are also impactful and can be significant. However, perhaps financial constraints are eased if there is greater active participation from a cadre of

community members. As previously stated, some of the services mentioned by Nguyen et al. (2013) are already being offered by the city's Islamic institutions. Yet, perhaps it is time for the local institutions to reexamine some of their programming and see how the community could be served in a more holistic manner.

Policy. Christerson and Emerson (2003) highlight that most volunteer organizations, including religiously oriented ones, are racially homogenous. Furthermore, the authors add, "to thrive, multiethnic congregations must devote much effort to developing cross-ethnic network among its congregants" (p. 167). Moreover, for those who are in the minority, a multi-ethnic congregation that is not sensitive to their needs provides them little solace and minority members actually gain more from being a member of a "uniethnic congregation" than a multi-ethnic one (p. 166). It should come as no surprise then that a number ethnically-based spaces of worship are being established in the city.

Majority members largely experience benefits (their needs are easily met by same race members, so the addition of "diversity" is experienced largely as an additional positive to the congregation), whereas minority members experience both costs and benefits (they venture across racial boundaries not just for enjoyment and novelty, but to gain meaning and belonging, which entails more effort and more risk...) (p. 167).

In other words, it is the minority members of any congregation who face the greatest personal risk when taking the chance on a multi-ethnic space. The majority will find their needs met, whether or not the people around them are similar to themselves racially and culturally, or different.

Given the situation, it makes sense to establish a diversity committee at the local Islamic Institutions in the city. The diversity I describe is not just diversity in terms of race and ethnicity,

but also in terms of thought as it, too, is an important element of diversity. The mosque in the U.S. tends to operate as a congregational space and, currently, not all members of the Islamic institutions of the city feel that they are included or welcome. This can be changed through inclusive practices.

Additionally, there should be dialogue about these and other related topics. Yacquub made some interesting comments about the need for dialogue.

I think we need to go in more and hit topics that haven't been hit before. Use that platform to challenge things, not just have stories of faith and have stories of what to do in these areas or how to raise your kids, or what does it mean to be right or what does it mean to be wrong. But talk about these intricate conversations that we haven't been talking about. Like talk about race, talk about gender. Talk about different sexuality even. That would be amazing...I think a lot of these religious institutions should be built with the process of like, you should be able to challenge this. You should be able to not just believe everything that has been given forward to you...

Yacquub brings up great points about the type of conversations that need to be had in Islamic institutions and the ways in which he wishes the institutions were structured. Rather than the unwelcoming "knowledge desert" of his childhood, Yacquub's hope is to be a member of an Islamic institution that is inclusive and welcoming of inquiry and critical-thinking.

For those participants of the younger generation, there is an obvious desire to see more focus on social issues and more equity in Islamic institutions. Yahye mentioned the need for an expanded women's area in Mosque A. However, his comments go deeper than just the desire to see a larger women's side. In reality, he also wants greater trust regarding the relationship between men and women.

I feel like in the Mosque the women's area is always packed and cramped. They tried to assuage that by cutting the big prayer room in half so they can have more space. But I almost feel like why not just have them all in the back where it's a lot bigger and us sit in the front and that's just the way it is. And that way it's more of an actual community and not so much 'you're here [motions to the left with one hand], you're here [motions to the right with the other hand], because we can't trust you to interact with each other' (Laughter). I'd like it to be more of an open along gender lines where there can be more prayer together situations.

Yahye's desire to see a more "open" space is indicative of his desire to see expanded general "openness" in relation to gender. His mention of community is interesting, given the fact that he is one of the participants of my research who is less involved in the institutions of the city and has therefore been partially removed from his community, at least in institutionalized religious terms.

In general, many of the younger participants want to see the status quo challenged. Many young Muslims in the U.S. struggle with their multi-layered identities and then are made to feel as if asking questions is not "appropriate" Islamic behavior. It was clear that some of the research participants are grappling with not only the way that Islamic institutions are run, but also with what is deemed to be important to discuss within those institutions. The unfortunate reality is that the opinions of many of the younger attendees in some Islamic institutions are not sought out. The institutions in this study could alter that tradition by not sticking to tradition, and instead, creating more opportunities for conversations about topics of interest to the younger people in the institutions.

In addition to the establishment of a diversity committee and an increase of dialogue about topics such as those covered in this dissertation, there should be a system for social services and how to deal with community needs. If some information is provided on the institutional website, such as figures about how money has been allocated, the questions related to funds will likely reduce.

Final Thoughts

The findings of my research exhibit that the theological foundations of Islam clearly clash with the socio-political realities. Yet, the Islamic institutions in the city of my research are not the only ones who have struggled with the topics covered in this dissertation. The Islamic Society of North America is an organization that provides a number of services for Muslims and Muslim institutions in the U.S. One of the services that they offer is masjid development workshops. These workshops include topics such as, “Creating the Welcoming, Inclusive, Dynamic Masjid” and “Envisioning a Women-Friendly Masjid” (ISNA’s Masjid Development Initiative, 2019). The workshops are being offered because they are deemed necessary by ISNA.

Many of the goals laid out by interview participants for an ideal Islamic institution are not necessarily cheap options. Having a translator for every language spoken in the city is probably not feasible. Focusing solely on social services would be applauded until one too many overcrowded Friday prayer services would lead attendees to question when a bigger mosque would be built. The research participants and I recognize that there are limitations to what the city’s institutions may be able to do. However, like the research participants, I recognize the responsibility of the institutions to try.

The local Islamic institutions cannot solve racism, fix classism, undo the impact of colonialism or force anyone to be more welcoming, kind or open-minded than they themselves

wish to be. However, the Islamic institutions of the city can attempt to be the safe space that they are so often hoped to be. Promotion of diversity, creating an environment that welcomes dialogue – those have no monetary cost. Institutions can work to ensure that language barriers are surmounted to the best of their ability, that community members feel they have an equal chance to be involved, and that attendees feel that every ethnic community is valued – perhaps not by the individual attendee, but at least at the institutional level. Transparency in terms of finances and elections can ease assumptions about allocation of funds and appointment of leaders.

James Baldwin famously said, “we can disagree and still love each other, unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.” Ideally, the mosque should be the space that provides a sense of humanity and reaffirms the right of existence for all individuals. The mosque can be a space for challenging the notions existent in society that force individuals to seek out a safe space. In fact, one could say that Islamic institutions have a responsibility to be that space.

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