ISLAMOPHOBIA & MUSLIMS' RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES IN THE MIDWEST—
PROPOSING CRITICAL MUSLIM THEORY
A MUSLIM AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

by

MOHAMAD RIDHUAN ABDULLAH

B.Ed. (TESL), University Technology of MARA, 2003
M.S., Kansas State University, 2009

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
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2013

Abstract

This study explored Islamophobia and Muslims' religious experiences in the Midwest. Its purpose was to propose a new theory named Critical Muslim Theory. The research methodology was autoethnography (me, the researcher) in concert with discovering in-depth experiences and narratives of nine Muslim participants (five Muslim females and four Muslim males) in dealing with Islamophobia. Religion became the centrality of Critical Muslim Theory in replacing race (as in Critical Race Theory) while centralizing other oppressions Muslims experience through intersections with religion and law, religion and gender, and religion and race. Critical Muslim Theory represents six basic tenets, namely: (a) Islamophobia is endemic and pervasive, (b) Critical Muslim Theory is critical towards how the dominant society views Islam and Muslims, (c) Islamophobia is a social construction, (d) Legal basis, (e) Intersectionality, and (f) Storytelling and counterstories reveal the oppression and pain of Muslims. An historical context was established for Muslims in the United States of America, although more research needs to be contributed to this area. Instances of interest convergence also were present, however, more research in this area is needed. One recommendation from this research suggests combating ignorance through education and establishing a pure relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims through dialogue for understanding. This study further proposes Muslim Double Consciousness as an area for future research. This topic was of interest due to proposing the theory, its further research and development, and the potential for Critical Muslim Theory to stand on its own as a methodology.

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<div style="text-align: right">

Mohamad Ridhuan Abdullah
Manhattan, Kansas
October 2013

</div>

Dedication

This research is dedicated to the memory of Salman Hamdani, who was among the first Muslim responders of 9/11—gone but not forgotten.

This research also is dedicated to the memory of Abeer Qassim Hamza Al Janabi, a Muslim female teenager from Iraq who was gang raped, murdered, and burnt to death by American soldiers in March 12, 2006.

CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

Introduction

My name is Abu Irfan Kalantani. I am a Malay Muslim male from Malaysia and am 33 years old. I come from a military family. All of my family members, Alhamdulillah, are Muslim. I am married and have two sons. I was born in Kuching, Sarawak and am the second oldest child of my parents. The rest of my seven siblings, an older brother, two younger brothers, and four younger sisters, were born in Kelantan. This marks a clear distinction between me and my siblings. I was born in a state where most of the largest indigenous populations are located. In comparison with Kelantan, Kuching, Sarawak is a Malay Muslim state. Due to this, I was made the source of jokes among my siblings. They said I am from among the indigenous tribes, not Malay like them. Astaghfirullah, this was racism. I didn't know it was racism because I was too small and naïve to understand the world at that time. Subhanallah, it has taken more than 27 years for me to unpack the past, coming to United States, learning from non-Muslims to realize this was racism. The jokes from my siblings continued; however, this changed later in life because whenever they made jokes about me, I instilled fear in them. I learned how to instill fear in others when I was a teenager. I will not share more about this part of my life since it is hurtful. It caused pain because I realize who I was at that time and is not who I am now.

My family speaks Kelantanese dialect in our daily life; however, through the present I love to speak formal Malay language in my daily interactions. My siblings didn't like it and even today, they make fun of it. But of course, it's the only sarcastic remark they can produce when they know they can't compete with me in terms of achievement. Later I realized this is my defense mechanism that I developed unconsciously by reading many storybooks when I was younger. Through reading storybooks in Malay language, I travelled to different worlds and times. I forgot the problems around me. I had my own world. I spent my entire recess hours in

the library. The library took me away to heaven, so to speak. Interestingly, I told my son, who is now in Malaysia, to stay in the library and spend time reading books to avoid being bullied because he speaks American English. I need to go home as soon as possible to provide support to my bilingual son so he won't be a monster like I used to be due to the problems I faced. I keep praying my son will not meet a monster in the library like I did because that messed up my life for many years. When I was ages 7-12, I had traumatic scary experiences with a real-life monster.

I am different physically from the rest of the family except my mom. She is a beautiful woman. I have light brown eyes and fair skin compared to my Malay siblings, who have dark brown eyes and dark skin. When I was small, my hair and body hair was not black but rather a mixture of light brown red hair. However, the hair color changed when I grew up. My scientist wife kept telling me that I have recessive genes from my ancestors. To my surprise, when I asked my mom, she told me that her grandfather was not Malay. He came from the Asian subcontinent. I kept seeking this information from her; however, she could not describe more than she knew. This is important information because later I learned upon my interaction with Arabs, how much pride and emphasis they place on their genealogy. They are proud of who they are and their origins. Some of them keep telling me that they are the descendants of the Prophet. I don't scoff at that idea; however, I find it funny when Allah mentioned in the Quran that the best human is the one that has the highest piety. Our prophet also mentions in many passages that the heart does matter. It is similar to when a Muslim claims that Islam used to create civilization and advances in science and technology. Without a doubt, that is true. Without a doubt as well, that is historical and talk is cheap. We can claim only what the world wants to see and that is how we live in our life.

Muslim History in the United States

The United States is not unfamiliar land to Muslims. According to historians, Muslims

were in the Americas before Christopher Columbus found the New World (Yucel, 2007). For

example, the Mandikas (Muslims), travelers from Mali, travelled to many parts of the United

States via the Mississippi River (Dirk, 2011). According to the written inscription of Christopher

Columbus' voyage during his exploration to the New World, he noticed the existence of a

mosque on the top of a mountain. In fact, some of the sailors with him were Muslim converts or

Crypto Muslims (Delmonte, 2010). Also, according to Arrington (1986), Estevanico, or Stephen

the Moor, was a Muslim slave who arrived at Tampa Bay with his master in 1528. After the fall

of the Islamic Empire in Spain, Muslims, together with Jews, came to the United States in

masses to escape the Inquisition by Spanish Christian Catholics, mainly residing in South

America. Additionally, numerous inscriptions of the Quran have been found in Cuba, Mexico,

Nevada, and Texas since some of the African American slaves were Muslims when they were

captured and were not illiterate. They wrote the Quran from their memorization (Austin, 1997).

Islam is not a stranger to the United States and is not supposed to be. After the formation

of the United States, the Treaties of Tripoli were enacted between the new United States

government with Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia to have a peace treaty wherein Article 11

says the United States government should not have any hostility or create a war towards

Mahomet's nation (Muslim nations) (Prothero, 2003). The United States' cavalry hired a

Muslim named Haj Ali in 1856 to raise and breed camels in Arizona and was named by locals as

"Hi Jolly" and his tomb can be found in Arizona (Berg, 2002). Also, there was an African

Muslim who fought in the Civil War named Max Hassan and the only book that could be saved

during the Civil War in Alabama was the translation of the Quran in English by George Sale,

dated 1853 (Shelby, 2007). In relation to the history mentioned above, Americans got to know Islam through Africans brought to the United States during the colonial period (Ferris, 1994, p. 210).

From 1885-1893, during the civil war between Christian Syrians and Muslim Palestinians, the first waves of Muslim immigrants came to the United States, specifically to Chicago. Most of them were farmers, laborers, and peddlers. Then came the second wave of Muslim immigrants during 1917-1945 when the Ottoman Empire lost control over the nation states that they used to govern. This issue gave an opportunity to Muslims under the Ottomans' rule to migrate to the United States of America (Husain & Vogelaar, 1994). The emergence of Russia also caused some Muslims from Central Asia to migrate to the United States since communism was against religion (Husain & Vogelaar, 1994). The third wave of Muslim immigrants was between 1945 and 1965 and they were mostly those who suffered repression in East European countries and the Soviet Union. Another major factor of emigration among the Arab Palestinians was the establishment of a Zionist Israel State where the Zionists occupied the Palestinians' lands and Muslims there had to seek refuge by immigrating to the United States (Husain & Vogelaar, 1994).

During 1930, Americans came to know about Islam from the Nation of Islam. Established by Wallace Fard Muhammad and then led by Louis Farrakhan Muhammad. It is a religious organization of African Americans famous for Afro-centric nationalist and radical worldviews towards White Americans (Gardell, 1994). It is important to note that the mainstream Sunni Muslims reject the Nation of Islam and consider them heretical and deviant. It is not surprising that the Nation of Islam is viewed as deviant by many Muslims because the movement focuses on "the rising of black people of Africa" and does not care if "it could discard

all its Islamic attributes—"its name, its prayer to Allah, its citations from Quran, everything Muslim, without substantial risk to appeal to the Black masses" (Curtis IV, 2002, p. 167). Malcolm X, prior to his pilgrimage to Mecca, used to be an avid follower of Elijah Mohamad; however, he was excommunicated upon returning from the visit. He believed that the Nation of Islam had misguided ideas introduced by Lois Farrakhan Muhammad and Elijah Muhammad. According to Ahmed (1991), the Nation of Islam leaders and Elijah Muhammad were influenced highly by the teaching of Noble Drew Ali, who organized the Moorish Science Temple and emphasized that Islam belongs to the Moors and Asiatics while Christianity is the religion of the Whites. In fact, the Nation of Islam believes that "Master Fard Muhammad is considered to be the manifestation of God in flesh" (Barnett, 2006, p. 877). It is important to note that the experience of African American Muslims is different from that of the Muslim immigrant being raised in a Muslim country because African American Muslims were established as reactionary to White hegemony in the United States by opposing the Jim Crow era (Akom, 2003).

In the 1950s, many Muslims came to the United States on student visas and decided to stay. According to Haddad (1991), most of them integrated into the middle class of American society. Muslims that came to the United States did not want to Islamize America; however, Muslims have religious needs that need to be fulfilled according to their religious observance (Haqqani, 2008). In 1953, the Federation of Islamic Associations of the United States and Canada was formed and this organization focused on developing spiritual, social, and cultural elements related to and associated with Islam to sustain religious identity. This development was according to the Islamic framework principles and at the same time, promoted better understanding of Muslims and the larger society (i.e., United States' society). After World War II, Muslim organizations grew, especially among students who came to the United States.

Among them are the Muslim Student Association, which does not act only to serve the Muslim community in terms of religious affairs but functions to create an ideal community that sees Islam as an ideology, a way of life, and a mission (Ahmed, 1991). It is not surprising that some of the Muslims in 1960 were avoiding Americanization. Muslims identified themselves as "Muslim First" because their ideological framework developed through their parents and Islam provides a broader political spectrum to be involved with Muslim communities rather than an Arab political spectrum (Naber, 2005). This means religion is the main part of Muslim identity over nationalities.

In the early 1950s to 1970s, the United States government wanted Islamic countries as their allies; however, the influence of secular Arab nationalism and Communism fostered intrinsic fear and hatred of Islam. Also, during the Iranian Revolution in 1970 and the hostage crisis, the United States government faced severe hostility from revolutionary Shiites and this was the beginning of the clash between Western civilization and the Muslim World (Gerges, 1997). During the early 1990s, the United States became involved in the Gulf War against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. These wars and political confrontations have had their effects on American Muslims, especially women. According to McCloud (1995):

> Some Americans vented their frustrations with the American hostage situation in Iran by accosting American Muslim women on the streets of the United States. They jostled some, others had their scarves torn from their heads and on the west coast, one Muslim woman was actually shot. During and after the Gulf War, Muslims were harassed physically in the streets. They were viewed with suspicion as participants in espionage and/or treason by colleagues, fellow workers and supervisors. (p. 55)

The tensions affected not just women; the general Muslim population in the United States was affected because during the tensions, numerous articles and books were published to justify the war and "contributed to the literal overkill of Iraq—the disproportionate destruction of its land and people—which was deemed necessary to eliminate the danger of Hussein" (Ghadban, 1992, p. 783).

During 2001, Muslims in the United States faced challenges when September 11 happened and killed more than 3000 Americans. It is a challenge because many conservatives and Christians believe the notion of the Clash of Civilizations by Samuel Huntington (1998) is true and there will be a clash between Western civilization and Muslims (Tamney, 2004). It is important to note that Muslims in the United States were victimized 20 years before the 9/11 tragedy, though the hate crimes increased dramatically in the months after the attack (Disha, Cavendish, & King, 2011)

Muslims in the United States Today

It is fair to say that prior to 9/11, hatred towards Muslims in the United States originated with the attack of Muslims towards Americans during the Iran hostage crisis in 1979 and literary sources depicting Islam and Muslims as bad or denying freedom of speech (Merry & Driessen, 2005). Muslims in America have faced a divergence of tolerance since September 11, 2001. For example, the number of Muslims harassed in airports has multiplied; Muslim civil liberties have been compromised as related to detention without trials, singling out selected nationalities in the USA for discriminatory treatment, illegal harassment, and unconstitutional treatment (Mazrui, 2004). Human rights groups contend that over the post 9/11 months, hundreds of cases of physical violence, harassment, and threats were directed against Arab Americans, South Asians, Sikhs, and other people perceived to be Arab (Lyons, 2003).

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According to Peek (2005), religion for Muslims can be used to strengthen and assert their identities in order to retain positive self-perception and correct public misconception. Participants in Peek's study began their religious identity as something subtle; however, they developed their religious identity dynamically upon oppression being implemented towards them. According to El Aswad (2006), before 9/11, Arab Detroit was viewed as the living example of the American Dream; however after 9/11, Arab Americans in Detroit faced unnecessary stress due to fear because they were perceived as the enemy within the United States. Arab Americans in general face various types of discrimination, stereotyping, senses of alienation, and identity crisis by relating them to terrorists and Muslims. A single dispute and disagreement could create a stigma towards the whole Muslim culture.

A Muslim in the United States is determined by the conduct of his/her actions based on four spheres of influence: (a) national origins, (b) racial identities (since the United States puts a high significant force into racial matters), (c) political influence according to the Muslim organization that Muslims join, and lastly (d) as an American Muslim (Mazrui, 1996). Arabs and Muslims in the United States suffer tensions because of the increasing harassment, especially towards immigrants by having homeland security develop policies that target them post-9/11. Prior to that, Islam received negativity from stereotypes and misconceptions from Western medieval and colonial hostility, and at the same time, mass media provided culturally-biased media coverage to Western viewers (Douglass & Dunn, 2003).

Mass Media and Muslims

After the Cold War, many Western strategists who were not knowledgeable about Islam viewed Islam as the next enemy (Salame, 1993). Media representation of Islam and Muslims during the 1970s was negative because of the Arab-Israeli War and the Iranian hostage crisis

(Douglass & Dunn, 2003). After 9/11, media representation of Islam and Muslims became worse due to the framing of 9/11 within the context of Islam—which made all Muslims suspects and Islam viewed as the cult of death. Underscoring this notion, titles in publications such as the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* had headlines such as " Yes, this is about Islam," "The Force of Islam," and "The deep intellectual roots of Islamic rage" (Abrahamian, 2003). This misrepresentation of Islam is not surprising because everything tends to be stereotyped and the consequence of stereotyping in the media is that Islam and Muslims will be grouped together, which makes racial bigotry normative (Shaheen, 1985). Misrepresentation of Islam in the media is led by Western hegemony, which is worried Islam is a potential global power who might replace their system (Safi, 1996).

Muslim Experience in North America

For Muslims, the United States is not a hospitable place because they have been the recipients of prejudice and stereotypes, especially after 9/11. To make things worse, less effort has been made to develop a positive image of Muslims and Islam in the media or through educational material, which has led to ignorance and misunderstanding towards Islam and Muslims (Ahmad & Szpara, 2003). According to Zine (2001), Muslim students in Canada have to face peer pressure, racism, and Islamophobia, and they were discriminated against based on their gender, race, and religious identity. This is related to American views of Muslims and Islam as Other because "American Muslim identity is both an immigrant and African American formation" (Karim, 2005, p. 497). Muslims in the United States are viewed as outsiders because after 9/11, the media coverage focused on issues like security, terrorism, and Western identity versus Muslim identity (Schumann, 2007). Even American Evangelicals played roles in creating Islam and Muslims as a problem by using three forms of polemics: the truth of Christianity

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against Islam, prophetic literature linking Islam as the protagonist for the end of times, and lastly, spiritual warfare to critique Islam (Cimino, 2005). In fact, the main motivation for removing Saddam Hussein was related to religious factors (Smidt, 2005).

Muslims Internationally

The events of 9/11 changed the perception of the British towards Islam from being a peaceful religion to being aggressive and encouraging violence (Rehman, 2007). As a consequence, the integration of Muslims into British society is questioned by the British because British Muslims are perceived as traitors to and burdens on the society by the dominant community, without giving consideration to foreign policy involving the British government towards Muslim countries (Brighton, 2007). Popular and political discourses through the media are used by politicians to highlight the failure of the British Muslims originally from South Asia as active citizens and directing themselves instead towards self-segregation (Philips, 2004). Lives of the Muslims are addressed by racism, gender relations, and class structures, making Muslim women victims of oppressive cultures (Claire, 1999). According to Phoenix (1997), British Muslim men are absent in literature despite their appearance as fundamentalist, and, ultimately, the Other. According to Richardson (2001), British Muslims in general are absent from the news, unless in a negative context.

In Australia, the situation for Muslims does not differ much compared to Britain. Muslims in Australia face discrimination and stereotypes through the media's portrayal of them as insignificantly Other and by dividing Muslims into terrorist camps and Westerners into civilized Christians (Kabir, 2006). According to Anne (2007), the media discourse in Australia implicates Australian Muslims as a homogenous monolith and secularly resistant — a stereotype incompatible with liberal democracy notions. For example, prior the Cronulla Riots in 2005, the

media inflamed the riots by portraying Australian Muslims as Muslims,[1] which produced

negative effects on other Muslims who resided in Sydney (Kabir, 2006). According to Poynting

(2006), the Cronulla Riots is a reflection of the "Howard government to reclaim control over the

Australian nation from asylum seekers and the Muslim/Middle Eastern 'enemy'" (p. 85).

According to Due & Riggs (2008), the crisis between Aussies and Muslims is related to

underlying racism, a charge denied by Australian Prime Minister John Howard.

In Belgium, Muslims face Anti-Muslimism due to intolerance towards immigrants and

the denial of their rights to practice religious freedom, such as the right to access food that is

prepared according to religious prescription in prisons, the right to protect physical integrity, for

example, when wearing a head scarf, and the right to celebrate religious festivities. It happens

due to negative coverage by the media and press (De Ley, 1998). The Forum for Equal Rights

and Interaction (FOGI) was established in 1995 to defend the social, cultural, and religious rights

of Muslims and demanded permanent consultative dialogue between the city administration of

Ghant in Belgium and the Muslim community, as well as other significant demands such as

reformed intercultural education, the right to wear a head scarf for Muslim students, school

holidays for religious observance, and the school canteen providing religious observance food

for Muslims. However, after two years, the situation did not improve (Kanmaz & Zenmi, 2005).

In France, Muslims who try to assimilate face distrust and discrimination from natives

and during 1980, the nativist French platform, led by Jean Marie Le Pen, stereotyped Arabs as

lazy, shifty, and recalcitrant (Giry, 2006). Islam is viewed as a social problem and a dangerous

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[1] Australian Muslims are not perceived as Australian but more as Other, different than the society, coming from nationalist discourses and cultural understanding of nationhood and national identity. It means Australian Muslims are not perceived as Australian just because they are Muslims. See Aly's (2007) Australian Muslim Responses to the Discourse on Terrorism in the Australian Popular Media.

class (Cesari, 2002). However, according to Boulange (2004), the hatred towards Islam and the Muslims in France is an effort to cover up the main issues of social inequities, unemployment, job insecurity, and privatization. According to Bleich (2000), although France is considered a colorblind state, there are tensions between the natives and the immigrants on the basis of skin color and the immigrants receive the lowest sympathy according to a survey taken among the French. The hijab controversy in France reveals French society's mentality towards Muslims, which is negative, and this affects policy making in that country (El Hamel, 2002).

Islam, Muslims, and Race

Islam can't be associated with race. Islam is a religion whose followers (Muslims) come from different ethnicities and backgrounds. In fact, Arabs constitute only 20% of the entire Muslim population. In China, there are 26 million Muslims and their ethnicities are from Han and Uyghur. Muslims are the second largest group in most of the Western countries. There are 4-6 million Muslims in the United States and they are the fastest growing population due to conversion, migration, birth rates, and legal residents. Muslims also are highly educated and integrated into the mainstream society in the United States in comparison with other immigrants or religious groups in European countries (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009).

Islam means peace, derived from the Arabic word "salam." However, Islam truly means submission to Allah as one true God, which makes Islam a monotheistic religion. According to the Quran, the Muslim holy book, Islam is the continuation of Abrahamic faith, which also was monotheist. Thus, Islam and Muslims are followers of Abraham[2] too. In fact, Muslims believe all of the messengers being sent to humankind are indeed messengers from Allah, including

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[2] Pbuh

Jesus[3] and Moses[4], and they bring the monotheistic message. According to the Quran, the messengers come to humankind to present the idea of Oneness of Allah. Muslim is a name for followers of Islam. Anyone can be a Muslim as long as he/she believes in the testimony of Oneness of Allah and Muhammad as the Messenger of Allah[5]. Becoming a Muslim means worshipping Allah only. Muslims do not worship Muhammad[6]; Muslims' religion is Islam not Muhammadan. Therefore, Islam does not belong only to Arabs.

Islam is not a religion of race because Muslims grew to believe that discriminatory exclusion based on race was fundamentally alien to the spirit of their faith and even the word race is translated by classical Arabs as genus (Hardy, 1999). In the Quran it is mentioned that the main criteria for humans in the eyes of Allah is piousness, and Muslims believe the measurement of piety belongs to Allah only. According to Mohamad (2010), since Islam is an important constituent in the everyday lives of Muslims, Islamic ethics and morality must be reflected in all walks of life of Muslims. Based on this notion, to put oneself as superior to or above others according to race is wrong. According to Prophet Muhammad[7], "Surely, there is no advantage (preference) for an Arab over an Aajami (Non-Arab), nor a Non-Arab over an Arab, nor a White over a Black, except by piousness and good deeds" (Mottahedeh, 1976, p. 164; Srikrishna, 2010, p. 139). In fact, Bilal Rabbah, the closest companion of Prophet Muhammad[8] is a black slave man from Negus who was later freed, given glad tiding to be in Paradise. Also, according to Shirazi, most of the scholars in the early age of Islam were from ex-slaves and he said:

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[3] Pbuh
[4] Pbuh
[5] Pbuh
[6] Pbuh
[7] Pbuh
[8] Pbuh

Legal knowledge in all countries passed to the mawali (ex-slave of non-Arab origin).

The lawyer of Mecca was 'Ata,' that of Yemen Tawus, that of the Yamama, Yahya b.

Abi Kathir, that of Syria Makhul, that of Khurasan, 'Ata al Khurasani. The only

exception is Medina: God gave to this city a man from Quraysh, an undisputed lawyer,

Sa'id b. Al Musayyab. (Motzki, 1999, p. 293)

My Stories

"You can't board the plane. You don't get the clearance, sir." The stewardess told me

calmly.

"May I know why is that?" I was surprised by her first response when I handed her my

visa and passport.

"I don't know sir, but you are not allowed to board the plane. We didn't get the approval

from California International Airport. I think it's because of your name. Your name is not even

in the list of our passengers."

I am not a terrorist. I am accompanying my wife to the United States. I am not even in the

army. I never received any kind of military training. I don't even know how to hold an AK47.

What about my wife and my son? You expect me to let them go there alone? The United States

Embassy in Kuala Lumpur already gave me the F2 visa, dependant on my wife, the F1 visa

holder. Now, what's the problem? I don't expect this to happen after I shaved my beard, cutting

my hair short. What else do they want? I am not even a trained soldier. I am not Marwan Al

Shehhi,[9] the master mind of 9/11.[10] I didn't go to a Hamburg cell to get radicalized. I told the

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[9] Marwan Al Shehhi is one of the master minds of 9/11. The ideology is that he and Bin Laden came from the ideology of Khawarij, a faction of a Muslim group who committed the ruling of takfir; the ideology that declaring Muslims are out of Islam due to the sins that they committed. For further understanding of this issue, readers are invited to read Oliver's (2003), *The Wahabi Myth: Dispelling Prevalent Fallacies and the fictitious links with Bin Laden.*

American who interviewed me at the United States embassy in Kuala Lumpur that I never

participated in any military training because that was one of their questions on the form that we

have to complete. I am a Muslim and I don't lie. I am not a Bin Laden!

These were the initial responses I had in my mind. My worry became a reality. No fly list!
This is the first step of my arduous journey to assist my wife in getting knowledge to build our
nation. This was not a secret operation to blow up Americans or their buildings and I am not a
terrorist. I don't have any intention to fly a plane and hit another tall building. I am going to
Kansas. There is no way you can see a building as tall as the World Trade Center. Kansas is a
land of tornadoes.

My wife calmed me down, "Let's have a sit first and wait for a while, ask them to check

again," she whispered to my ear.

"Miss Jane, could you check or contact them again? We got the visa from their embassy

and this is impossible if they don't allow my husband to go together with me and my son."

We managed to board the plane. I am the last passenger. The flight was from Singapore.

Imagine the conspicuous eyes that stared at me while I held my son and carried the bag. Those

were American eyes that were on board with me. I thought I looked harmless enough with a

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[10] I believe the tragedy of 9/11 is a crime against humanity. I am not responsible for this. I don't
support this terrorist act against the innocent. At the same time, I am against the war on various
Muslim countries and killing the innocent by drones. In the Koran, there is a verse related to the
preservation of souls: مَن قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ
جَمِيعًا and the verse means: "Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the
land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved
mankind entirely." In the Koran, there is also a verse that obligated Muslims to be respectful to
the Jews and Christians ; وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ ۖ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ
إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَـٰهُنَا وَإِلَـٰهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ which means, "And do not argue with the People of
the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them,
and say, "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God
and your God is one; and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him." See Koran (5:32) and
(29:46).

toddler with me. How can a monster carry a toddler? How could a monster carry 60 lbs. of luggage to ease the burden of a wife? Use your logic.

January 28th 2008

Dear my diary:

Here I am, after so many hours travelling, we reached the United States. The journey was long and tiring, with Irfan, who is one year and a half. We were scolded by passengers because Irfan did not stop crying. I was perplexed by the responses because five rows in front of our aisle, a 10 year-old kid kept making noise with his Gameboy. I remember this kid jeered at my wife by calling my wife Ninja.[11]

Irfan used to run, roam freely. A happy normal toddler. Same like the rest of you Americans might have a grandchild around that age. Know no fear. Embrace everything. Jumping, running, smiling, and laughing when he is happy. Crying when he is hungry. I wish I could have an on/off button for Irfan's crying and smiling. Irfan is Irfan, I mean, a child is a child. How could I control that? He is not a toy. But I guess you Americans, you see my son not as your grandchild or your son or your niece. Maybe he is a Muslim kid that should have a button since his parents know how to detonate a bomb very well. Hahaha funny. Perhaps like a bomb. Bomb has a button eh? You can either detonate by pushing or not pushing the button.

But please understand, it was a long journey. From KLIA (Kuala Lumpur International Airport) to LA took 18 hours. We stopped at Taiwan International Airport for one and a half

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[11] For Muslim women who wear a hijab (headscarf, veiled), a racist individual calls them ninja. For a Muslim man who wears turban or kufi, he will be called rag head. I have never heard anyone called a nun although a nun wears a scarf like Muslim women.

hours. From LA to Texas, it took another two and a half hours. From Texas to Kansas City it took another hour. I don't yet add the waiting time or transit time from one airport to another airport. These Americans, they never understand. Everything is centralized around their world.[12] They are easy to make judgment. I forgot to add the long hours of safety screening since my wife is an obvious Muslim because of her name and her appearance. I am lucky. It is all about them— Americans. Only they felt tired and need rest. They must be comfortable. They must have proper flight hours and when they are travelling, comfort is a must for them. But can't I get the same privilege? I pay the same ticket fares. I am a human. In fact, I felt more tired than you do. I was travelling for so many hours more than you. But who cares? I am another filthy immigrant who came to study.

I guess I have to be patient. I remember Blackwood, Hopkins, and Reicher (2012) discussed an important issue about British Muslims' experiences concerning the denial and the misrecognition of valued identities such as being British, being respectable, and being Muslims. They agree that thousands of airport passengers can be stopped and interrogated, however, for Muslim passengers it can be seen as painful questions about how they were seen and positioned by others. And the remarks of Others towards Muslims are actually the act of blaming. Muslim travelers must be worried about everything, from their behaviors, appearances while Americans or British do not have to worry about that. This is a privilege for Americans. Muslims on the other hand do not have the privilege. I shave my beard whenever I want to fly. I don't even talk to strangers especially if that stranger who might need help looks like a Muslim with a long

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[12] Americans have a high commitment to individualism and because of that some are unable to develop respect for others. Due to this, they have a difficult time to establish dialogue whereas in dialogue, everyone is viewed as person, rather than as a thing or an object. This inability to engage in dialogue causes them to develop narcissistic behavior. See Cissna & Anderson's (1994) *Communication and the Ground of Dialogue.*

beard for the sake of avoiding the hanky panky of security officers by accusing me of abetting the person who looks like a terrorist. But Americans/Europeans in general do not realize this privilege because of the inability to produce reflections, which is the main criteria for racist individuals. The same experience that happened to me, happened to American Muslims (Dr. Omar Shahin and the six Imams). I remember reading the humiliation faced by Dr.Omar Shahin and another six Imams who were handcuffed because of the allegations from the flight passenger hearing them chanting the word "Allah Allah Allah." In reality, they did everything they could to avoid suspicions, wearing Western clothes and speaking only English. They were not sitting together in order to avoid any unwarranted attention. They also notified one of the security officers about the conference that they planned to attend (Bennet & Philips, 2006). I don't think a group of terrorists would do this to attract attention. What I am saying is that they were not terrorists but the suspicions are high because they are Muslims and they look like Muslims, if you know what I mean.

Reading this kind of news is normalcy to me. I did not have to go far. I should expect this. I don't have to complain. I just have to submit. Other American Muslims were pulled by security officers at LA International Airport because they were wearing thawb or ankle length garments. Their bags were opened and the officers saw a religious book. I wasn't far from them. I learnt the trick. I carried my son on my shoulders. At the same time I carried our entire heavy luggage. I guess that strategy really worked. They think a Muslim oppresses woman. I carry my son. I am not an oppressor. Or they think I must be liberal. So we don't have to pull him out from the security gate because he is not an orthodox. He helped his wife. My second strategy is that I addressed everyone I met during this journey as 'Sir'. I believed they would like it. Yes, they did. Even when the airport cleaner picked up the coins, I said thank you 'sir'. Every one of them.

Everyone gets a titled 'Sir" or "Madame" from me on that day, especially if they are White and they are American. It reminds me how much British loved it when Malay called them 'Sir'. "You, Malay are colonized by us." We are your master. The strategy worked for me. Aren't all of these things that I had to do exemplified because you have the privileges, and you don't have to do all of these things for the sake of avoiding hanky panky when travelling and I had to keep thinking all of these things just to 'enjoy' a safe journey? Is this fair and equal? At the end, I am not a terrorist!

Okay diary. My wife is calling me. I need to go. See you later.

"You don't think you can move freely?" Zahra asked me.

"You already know the answer," I replied, watching her small hands cutting the zucchini into small pieces. I love watching her hands cutting those pieces. It's amazing. Her hands in Malaysia equal millions of dollars, a female heart surgeon's hand but reduced to clerical work in the United States and at the same time a part-time student. She is wearing a niqab, a symbol of freedom from submission of advertisement and pressure of modernity. Not everyone can have expensive jewelry; they are kept in a safe place and protected. Muslim women are more than jewelry. But freedom comes with the American standard of whoring. She is covered so she can't work. Does she have to abide by the standard and bare her naked breasts? Definitely, a whore on the porn website gets money. Sorry, she is not following your standard.

"I don't know, that's why I ask? And could you help me cutting this carrot?" Her hands were still busy cutting the zucchini. I took a knife and said, "I thought this is your turn to cook, once in a week." I smiled at her.

"Please, I know you. You will not let me cook because you believe this is your responsibility. You refuse to help me though I am willing to do that, and I enjoy cooking very much. Is it because of the taste? What's the reason?" She was looking at me.

"I don't want you to cook because you are busy. I am busy too but I can find time. Plus my colleagues keep telling me a Muslim guy usually lets his wife do all the house chores and the husband will not do anything. I remember once I brought your famous Yemeni Asida to them—Americans. After finishing your delicious Asida in less than 10 minutes, they praised your cuisine, but then I realized it is a way to reveal who's cooking this food. I replied that you cooked for me. Until today they keep making that fuss that I torture you to cook, though I know you are a pharmacy student and busy with your studies."

"Oh come on Imran, your colleague just kidding with you. You know that is not true. You only let me cook once in a week only." Zahra smiled and pinched my cheek.

"Well, it is not a joke anymore if it keeps repeating every time they see me eating. I close my office door if I brought food from home so that I can eat peacefully. Yesterday, they saw me eating at the Student Union. They approached me. I thought they were going to sit together with me. I was alone. But a hope is only a hope." Zahra knew I was talking something serious. Her hands that held the knife stopped cutting the zucchini.

"What did your friend say?" Zahra asked me.

"They thought you were sick and were at the hospital because I had to eat at the Subway. I guess a Muslim man is lazy in their assumption. A Muslim man is weak in their perception. We need help. To that extent they think that's why Muslim women cover themselves because we need help due to our insatiable desire.

Zahra was perplexed listening to my response and replied, "Really? That's funny my dear. I cover because I choose to cover. I never thought of that before. It's a commandment from Allah."

"I guess I answered your question. I am not free to move. Perhaps they see me here and there, walking but it is with assumption. This is not freedom anymore. If I walk into their neighborhood at night, I will end up in a backseat with my hands cuffed!"

"It is okay Imran, you don't have to be sad. Your food is ready soon. While you are waiting for the food, could you prepare the table?" Zahra was putting every ingredient in the pot. It wouldn't take long.

"No, I am not sad. I am used to this. I can't expect anything much. I don't bother to tell these incidents because no one cares. I don't want to play a race card to triumph my story but sometimes I can't help it. That's why we are having this conversation. You are asking me if I can move freely or not. But why do you still not get any decent job? You were even thinking to change your name and nationality. You remember once when you called at the same office and they noticed your accent, they said no vacancy available. Twenty minutes later, I called and because my Kansas accent isn't so obvious and I sound like an American, I got to attend the interview three days later. Basically the privilege doesn't belong to us. Privilege belongs to them."

One Sunday morning

It was the beginning of a spring. I look forward to this nice weather. I am happy in fact because this is Sunday. I will go fishing today. It is a nice activity. No one will bother me except

the eagerness to fish White Bass. Sunday is a release day. A lady from a church with a small girl aged around 8 was at my door. They dressed nicely.

A church lady: "Is it difficult for you to understand this simple concept?"

Imran: "This concept is absurd to me. How can you promote love when you come knocking on my door on Sunday morning with this small girl and promote Iraqi Freedom? What freedom are you talking about?"

A church lady: "Our freedom. Our Star Spangled Banner. This little girl can sing for you if you want to hear it. She has nice voice. By the way, do you hate our democracy? We want to liberate you from the tyranny."

Imran: "Yeah, you are so right. From our tyranny to your tyranny."

A church lady: "Saddam Hussein is a tyrant. Even Iraqis wanted to get rid of him. Do you support this tyrant?"

Imran: "No, I don't support him. However, do you know that the Saddam Hussein tyranny after the Gulf War I will end soon? They are already starting to Islamize their own nation. They already start to be destroyed from within. The Sunni Iraqi Muslim in the Ba'th Party face humiliating defeat to the United States in Desert Storm in 1991. Ba'thist ideology was discredited after Desert Storm and they are incapable of dealing with discontent and uprisings (Hashim, 2012, p. 150). I do believe the Arab Spring would happen first in that country if the United States did not bring war to Iraq. Now you accuse me of supporting this tyrant, but you are worse than Saddam Hussein."

A church lady: "You are funny?"

Imran: "Call me whatever that you want. I still remember the sanctions in early 1992-1993. I was twelve. There was an Iraqi guy in Malaysia working with my uncle. He ran away

from his country because of this sanction. He could not live there anymore. He is an immigrant. He worked his ass off to support his life. On top of that he had to send money monthly to his family. He left his two kids for the sake of supporting them. Can you imagine how lonely he is? I am not talking about a white collar businessman or an opportunity in the corporate world. I see sometimes he cried when he ate. His hands were rough and I could see he rarely smiled."

A church lady: "That happens to everyone? It's normal to migrate to another country to have a good life. Even Americans do that. Your Iraqi guy doesn't know how to manage his money, that's all."

Imran: "Oh really! But does the imaginary American you have in your mind now face the aftermath effects of Gulf War? I guess he knows how to save money very well since all of his focus is only to work. I don't think he was traumatized. On the weekend he could have fun at bar, getting laid, or playing games."

A church lady: "Okay enough, not all Americans are like that."

Imran: "I am not saying all Americans are like that. I was just giving you a simple example and the differences between your imaginary American friend and my uncle's Iraqi friend who has to work. Why are you getting all hyped and sensitive about this example?"

A church lady: "Okay I am sorry; enlighten me please."

Imran: "Your imaginary friends do not have to face the aftermath of the embargo. After the Persian Gulf War, there are increasing cases of morbidity and malnutrition among Iraqi children. I didn't create this story. It is a fact that the Gulf War and trade sanctions caused a threefold increase in mortality among Iraqi children less than five years of age. Between January and August 1991, more than 46,900 children are estimated to have died (Ascherio,Chase, Cote, Dehaes, Hoskins, Passey, Qaderi,, Shuqaidef, Smith, & Zaidi, 1992). And now you are standing

here to promote peace, justice, and freedom? What peace, justice, and freedom are you talking about? I don't know how you sleep at night. I don't know what's on your mind when you bring this small girl come knocking at my door this morning? Do you think by bringing this kid you can clear up your conscience? Why are they being punished?"

A church lady: "What conscience are you talking about? I love kids; I want her to be exposed to our intention to bring people to the way of God. Do you have a problem with that?"

Imran: "Really? How could you love your kids but then you ignore our kids? Are your kids more equal than others? Do you know that the International Study Team in 2003, a non-government organization based in Canada, provided a thorough study related to the impact of war on the Iraqi kids?"

A church lady: "No, I never read that. Illuminate me please."

Imran: "There are 16 million Iraqi children. Eight million of them are dependent on rations from the government. When the war happened post 9/11, the system that provided food for them became dysfunctional. Food shortages and malnutrition were everywhere. This is one of the examples. In terms of their psychological conditions, they are worse. Forty percent of the interviewees think that their lives do not matter anymore. This was due living under the pressure of having economic sanctions. Basically, they are under psychological stress, starvation, death in the event of war (International Study Team, 2003). And your tyranny is something else— something that is unacceptable to humans. Your tyranny is a Roman tyranny.[13] You made us

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[13] Chapter 4, Tyranny is Tyranny, in Zinn's, *A People's History of the United States* (2005) (Retrieved from: http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/zinntyr4.html) is interesting. He wrote: "The war had brought glory for the generals, death to the privates, wealth for the merchants, unemployment for the poor. There were 25,000 people living in New York (there had been 7,000 in 1720) when the French and Indian War ended. A newspaper editor wrote about the growing 'Number of Beggers and wandering Poor' in the streets of the city. Letters in the papers questioned the distribution of wealth: 'How often have our Streets been covered with Thousands

your slaves. I don't hate your democracy but your democracy is used to justify your invasion on the weak nation. Your democracy reminds me of *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, "some are equal but others are more equal" (Orwell, 1945, p. 76).

A church lady: "Your discourses don't make sense to me."

Imran: "It doesn't make sense to you because you see us as terrorists. We are the barbaric. We need the education from you. You deemed us barbaric because you believe our religion supports war and 9/11."

A church lady: "No, this is accusation. I don't say that."

Imran: "Then, what the hell are you doing here knocking on my door on Sunday morning and preaching your church stuff that supports Iraqi Freedom? Am I too stupid to the extent you have to come and educate me? You believe Muslims are powered by fascism. Because of these silly reasons, it is okay to colonize Muslim lands. It is okay to destroy our generation. But I can't fight back or argue, or be angry for the invasion that happens to Muslim land because my discourse is uneducated. It seems I am the one that upholds and understands the barbaric law. Have you ever even wanted to know the reason behind our religious ruling and justification for our religion? You don't feel you have to because the universe is centralized around you. This is the reason why you think you are more equal. So it is okay to invade us because of the White men's burden. You think you are okay but you are not okay. We are the nation that needs help."

A church lady: "I don't say we are colonizing you. From where do you get this wild imagination?"

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of Barrels of Flour for trade, while our near Neighbors can hardly procure enough to make a Dumplin to satisfy hunger?'" So, O Americans! What good came from the Iraq War? Your 'valiant' sons are lost to the freedom fighters while American defense contractors made money out of it through contracts.

Imran: "You are from church right? I bet you are familiar with hymns and prose, songs and music, poems and other literary skills."

A church lady: "Yeah without a doubt. We read the Bible; we sing a lot. We have English classes for International students. We offer help; medicine, driving practice so that your wife can get a driving license. How is all of this related to your wild imagination about us colonizing you?"

Imran: "Are you familiar with Rudyard Kipling's (1894) book?"

A church lady: "Which one?"

Imran: "Tell me what you know."

A church lady: "I know *The Jungle Book* (Kipling, 1894). I read it to the kids. We use *Jungle Book* for a church activity for the kids. Sometimes we have a play out of the book."

Imran: "I read that before. However I want to focus on his poem, "The White Man's Burden" (Kipling, 1899).

A church lady: "Interesting, I didn't know that he was a poet also. The poem's title intrigued me."

Imran: "Really? It is a racist poem. Yeah, it is, at least from my perspective, but I don't know yours."

A church lady: "Try me"

Imran: "Let me read it for you;

<div align="center">

Take up the White Man's Burden

Send forth the best ye breed

Go send your sons to exile

To serve your captives' need

</div>

To wait in heavy harness

On fluttered folk and wild—

Your new-<u>caught, sullen peoples,</u>

<u>Half devil and half child</u> (emphasis added, Kipling, 1899)

A church lady: "Oh my god! I don't believe it, but come on Imran, it is only one poem."

Imran: "Wow, you are still in denial. It is not just one poem; I can find you much **'<u>interesting literature</u>'** about **'<u>you people</u>', '<u>saving us</u>'**! I start to think I am wasting my time explaining this to you. First of all, based on his poem, Kipling (1899) said to 'send the best breed.' What about my breed? Not good enough? Non-human breed? I guess that's true. No wonder Kipling addressed us as 'half devil and half child'. It isn't surprising after all, right?"

A church lady: "It can be anything; you know that poem has a lot of metaphor and similes."

Imran: "You are funny because you are still in denial. What can I do because you can't see it? You just don't have the eyes that we do. You just can't see it."

A church lady: "Why did you come to our country?"

Imran: "I will leave your country once you leave Muslim country. I want nothing of your army bases around the Caspian Sea. Can you do that for me now? If you can do that now, I will leave your country *<u>right now</u>*. That answer to your question: either I hate democracy or not? Should not I be here if I hate democracy? Should not you be alive by now if I hate you? How could I treat you with respect and invite you for a dialogue though I know I have a right not to entertain you on this Sunday morning."

A church lady: "You confused me with your accusation. Are you angry?"

Imran: "I am not angry and that's why we are still having this conversation. I am not angry but I know by accusing me of being angry is a racist notion to quiet me. I perceive this as Habermas' concept of secret violence (1973); you accused me of being angry because this is like tacit restrictions and exclusions of certain topics from public discourse. If I am portrayed as an angry Muslim, you and other racist individuals will have control over topics that society wishes to avoid in the past by silencing me now, hoping by silencing me that they will be forgotten. Islamophobia is one of them. If I am being perceived and accusatory and angry, I am at fault from your perspective. However, I see this as to disappear disturbing episodes of my past and present" (Akcam, 2012, p. xxvi).

A church lady: "You don't get what I meant. I am saying you need to elaborate your ideas but all I see is accusatory remarks about us."

Imran: "Come on, didn't I just elaborate it to you? The things I mentioned to you are my reality. They happened to me; they happened to my wife; and they happened to my kids. I didn't create them for fun. I am busy and I don't benefit anything if I create them. I can't sell them. None of them will be at the cinema. This is my perspective. But as usual, I understand if you misunderstand my stories, or try to deviate my attention or my focus to something that is not necessary."

Wait Until Your Son is in 3rd Grade

It's nearly Christmas of 2010, and it is winter. They said this year winter was bad compared with the previous year. I don't know about that. But I said every winter was bad. Winter looks gloomy. People get moody. I tend to be mellow and slow. That's not the whole

issue of winter. This winter 2010 is painful and the pain is excruciating. I told myself this would not be long. Maybe by 2-3 winter seasons I will be done. I will be left alone by these people. And no more winter. I might miss the snow but I can always go to Australia. Winter happens during July in the Southern hemisphere. It's a totally different winter than in America. I still love the snow. I still love the winter. I only hate winter when it comes in December.

The colleagues were talking. Most of them talked about the football game. I understand nothing of a football game. I understand football as soccer. In Malaysia, soccer is free. There is no expensive ticket like football here. I watched for free. My son, who doesn't know anything about football, started to like the game. When I asked him what he knows about football, he associates football with one of his friends. I associate football with beer. Football season means a time for me to clean up the lawn. There is no fence in front of our lawn. Fences make bad neighbors. That's what Robert Frost's *Mending Wall* (1914) said. In this sense, I don't believe him. A fence will help me not to clean up someone else's vomit after the football game. But I guess I should believe what Robert Frost said, fences make good neighbors. But they vomit on my lawn, in front of my door. They drink and they vomit. Once I lost my barbeque set burner. That one was a present from a friend. Tailgaters must have grabbed my barbeque set. I don't expect much from these people.

I am not isolated. I am only isolated among these people. I stay in the International Court where I can see various black hair colors. Sometimes we don't understand the languages of our neighbors but that is not a problem. Last summer I gave my Chinese neighbors five White Bass and three Stripers. I did not give them catfish. Catfish is challenging for them, I assume, especially to clean. I just don't want to trouble them. I don't want to lose this neighbor. You are

blessed if you have a good neighbor. My neighbours are not blonde. The green eyes and the

blonde hairs don't live in a 'ghetto of boxes.'

My neighbor's eyes are not green. They don't call our home, International Court, a ghetto

of boxes. They said a Muslim like me immigrates here and begs like beggar. That's why we live

in this ghetto. However, my neighbor lives in that house too. Also, I am not isolated like Bin

Laden in the Tora Bora caves. So don't assume and make a simile; the beard and the long unruly

hair belong to two different souls and goals. The past is deep. Just remember that.

Figure 1.0 International Court ghetto housing   **Vs**   Figure 1.2 Non ghetto housing

Figure 1.3 Osama Bin Laden   **Vs.**   Figure 1.4 A peaceful bearded
                                                        Muslim man

Anyway, right now I was sitting very near to a table, quite secluded from everyone.

Yeah, now I am isolated. Don't argue. This is my story. I don't know why I am attending this

party. They have a winter party. That's what they called it. It is a lie. It is not a winter party. It is a Christmas party. I chose an empty seat and was hoping my friend from Venezuela would sit next to me. She is brown. She talks to me. We share many things. The conversation with her was endless. She misses her mom. She wants to see her mom but she needs to stay here, like me, to get a degree. We dream to improve our life. Get good pay. After all, it is a degree from America. That's funny and ironic, isn't it? After I get the degree I assume I will get a good life, but who knows. It is only a hope. In fact, I was waiting for her so that I could ask about her mom. Where is she?

Then came a lady. I know her. A big bad Wolf. That's what a wise Black Owl called her. A wise Black owl told me in my dream to be careful. You can't declare a war but you need to play the game. Wolf is clever. She can sense a smell of fear and blood. Wolf howls to frighten you. Wolf benefits by working to help each other within their own clan. They have a hierarchy. A big bad wolf talks and roses come out. That is what I notice about her clan. Black Owl said they ain't the roses. They are poisonous blood. They look good at the beginning but the red poisonous roses can kill you at the end. Kayla Kaitlyn Katherine told me the big bad wolf benefits most in the higher educational institution, at the expense of the wise Black Owl clan.

A big bad Wolf sat next to me. She smiles but I see a grin. Her crooked teeth came out.

A big bad Wolf: "Well Imran, how are you today?"

Calm Imran: "I am okay. Thanks."

A big bad Wolf: "Are you enjoying this party? How's your son at school?"

Wow, the big bad wolf changes. She asked about my son. Maybe after all she is not bad. That is what I was thinking. She smiles at me. I am happy. I should trust her. But am I going to make the same mistake like Red Riding Hood. She trusted the wolf. Wait a minute. She trusted

the wolf because Red Riding Hood's grandma was dead— eaten by the wolf. Anyway, I am ready to tell about my son—his development, his thinking, his behaviors.

Calm Imran: "He is good. He is a fine young man. He enjoys school. Time surely goes fast. Last time I remember he was my baby."

A big bad Wolf: "How is he celebrating Christmas?"

Imran: "Well, we don't celebrate Christmas. I teach him that."

A big bad Wolf: "Well, wait till he is in 1st grade. Well, we see."

I smiled only. It was a bitter smile. Speechless. Enough is enough. A few months ago was a lady from the church. Now, another lady from a church. The only difference is that she is my professor. Enough is enough.

Sad Imran: "I attend because I don't want to look awkward. Can you imagine if I am the only one who doesn't attend. Do you think I should stay?"

A big bad Wolf: "Well Imran, do you enjoy celebrating Christmas?"

Calm Imran: "I am a Muslim; I don't celebrate Christmas."

A big bad Wolf: "If you don't celebrate Christmas, you celebrate nothing."

Imran: "I enjoy the holiday though."

A big bad Wolf: "Sleeping is not a way to enjoy the holiday. We sleep every night. I told you, you celebrate nothing. I wonder how Muslims enjoy holiday. I pity you. But don't get angry if I said this. You seem have nowhere to go."

Imran: "Always the assumption isn't it?"

A big bad Wolf: "I bet you hate our Christmas."

Imran: "What makes you think so?"

A big bad Wolf: "First you have nowhere to go. This is winter and it's very cold. You don't have a family here. Christmas is the time when the kids get a lot of presents. I prepare great dishes for my family. I am a great cook. Christmas is the time when I feel blessed and thankful to God."

Imran: "This is where we differ. For a practicing Muslim, Christmas is a religious festival though it is commercialized. It is not just a time for social gathering. Muslims do not celebrate Christmas because we see Christmas as a religious celebration for Christians. We do not celebrate Christmas when it comes to maintaining our consciousness that there is a difference between Islam and Christianity. However not all Muslims believe like I believe. There are wide and diverse different opinions of the Muslims in the United States about how they view and understand the Christmas celebration."

A big bad Wolf: "Isn't it too stressed out? Why do you want to put yourself into all this trouble? Just enjoy and celebrate with us."

Imran: "It is not just an enjoyment and neglecting the fun part of being human by celebrating with you. It is about identity. We maintain our identity and we don't want to wash down the fact that Muslims understand that Jesus[14] is not the son of God and is just a prophet sent by God. You take our beliefs as something that are taken lightly."

A big bad Wolf: "Oh come on, it is just a festival."

Imran: "This is what you don't understand. This is what amazes me. You can just say to me to take things easy and you feel nothing about it. I don't say 'take it easy' to Christians in my country neither do I lure them into unnecessary conversation pertaining to their faith. This reason is so simple due to a command in Islam about Muslims who like to debate with the People of the

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[14] Pbuh

Book (Christians and Jews) to do it in the best manner possible. For the other religions we are not even allowed to curse their gods because we don't want Allah to be cursed back by them. Secondly, I see Christmas is not just a festival and I can't take things easy because we define Islam as a 'deen' and deen means a system. It is a dynamic system. It is a way of life. We understand it as a system of life. It is complete. Islam itself is a totality. But for you, religion can be commercialized. Christmas is a good example of it. Halloween is another thing. I don't celebrate Halloween because it comes from pagan belief about the dead come back to life and ask for sweets. I don't believe that. It wastes money to buy the costume and I only use it for one night. Sweets are not good for teeth and you know how expensive dental costs can be in the United States. I don't want kids to believe about the dead scouring for sweets coming back to life on one particular night and affecting our life. That's totally absurd and what's next? A ghost from the closet? Islam teaches us to use rationality and intellect rather than based on something that is fictitious."

A big bad Wolf: "You are so *complex.*"

Imran: "Complex? I heard unique. It is okay to be <u>*unique*</u>. But I wonder why is it so difficult for you to accept that we want to maintain our identity as Muslims? You can celebrate Christmas if you want. I have no problem with that. It is written in Quran that "For you is your religion, and for me is my religion." Why is it so easy for me to accept you can practice whatever religion you want? Why is it so difficult for you to accept that I am like you, have certain beliefs that I think you should respect too?"

A big bad Wolf: "Do you think I have problem with your religion?"

Imran: "Yeah, big time."

A big bad Wolf: "This is another accusation . . . Imran. I teach and understand *Ethnicity Centric-101*. I ensure my students feel safe in my classroom."

Imran: "You don't realize it do you? It is because you are saturated with your TEVAL scores."

A big bad Wolf: "Yeah, my TEVALS prove everything. I believe I am good. Who are you to accuse me of such thing!"

Imran: "Yeah it is just *another story* eh? I am *playing a race card* eh?"

A big bad Wolf: "You prove nothing with your accusation. I am still waiting."

Imran: "You remember you teach *Ethnicity Centric-101* in the classroom and I am the only Muslim in your class?"

A big bad Wolf: "Yeah, it was Spring 2006."

Imran: "On one occasion you told us about respecting different religions in the classroom setting. I agree with that, however, you interject that how beautiful it is if diversity in church can be applied in the classroom setting."

A big bad Wolf: "I can't remember saying that."

Imran: "Well, I remember. You said how beautiful it is if in the African American church, the photo of Jesus[15] is Black, in South America, the Jesus[16] will look like a Hispanic male. You said that."

A big bad Wolf: "Yeah, it is diversity. I like that idea."

Imran: "And then after that you asked me how beautiful it is that every religion can apply to that concept, and then you asked me *'isn't it Imran?'* First of all, you are putting me on the

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[15] Pbuh
[16] Pbuh

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spot. You know pretty well that Muslims don't believe Jesus[17] as a God or Deity. Even if Jesus[18] was a God how could you portray Jesus[19] in a form of human that symbolizes weaknesses? How could a God manifest in human form when the form can be decayed?"

A big bad Wolf: "Imran, I love you as I do all my students. I do love every one of my students. What's wrong with that? And my students love me. And why are you telling me now? Why didn't you argue about this when it happened?"

Imran: "I think your love is specific to the White blonde American girls in your classroom. Yeah, I admitted that they love you. Does that love transfer to me? I don't think so. What if you ask Yeppeoyo? She is agnostic. She went to see me one time telling me how she had been discriminated against just because she is not Christian! She used to tell me how interesting it is, a University surrounded by hundreds of churches but yet, she couldn't feel the love. Isn't it time to really analyze it for the sake of love or for the sake proselytizing? Or just to satiate your subconscious mind that Yeppeoyo will be in Hellfire due to the fact that she doesn't want to accept salvation?"

A big bad Wolf: "Why didn't she tell me about this?"

Imran: "First of all, English is not my first language. English is not her first language as well. Secondly, it takes a lot of thinking time to process the information. You taught me that in the ESL classes. Always give bilingual students thinking time to process the information before they respond. Thirdly, in Islam, a teacher is highly venerated. It is not my habit to argue with my teacher in public. If a correction is to be made, it should be one on one, a dialogue. Since the beginning of our civilization, we are told to obey and respect our teacher. We believe 'the

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[17] Pbuh
[18] Pbuh
[19] Pbuh

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teacher was after all the living embodiment of knowledge; he cherished truth in his heart'
(Robinson, 1993, p. 238). Also, in my religion, respecting a teacher is a must because without
him/her, you will be nothing. It is a blessing that he/she is willing to share what he/she knows
with you, and this applies to you too. One of the Muslim scholars used to say, 'Know that … one
does not acquire learning nor profit from it, unless one holds in esteem knowledge and those who
possess it. One [must also] glorify and venerate the teacher' (Az Zarnuji, 1947, p. 32). Fifth, we
thought it would be suicide to challenge you and tell you what we felt. The consequence of
exposing our inner dimension can be measured in either two, good or bad. However, before
acceptance of our criticism can be fully transparent and transpire in your attitude and beliefs, you
will be in denial."

A big bad Wolf: "You mean the denial stage in White Identity Development?"

Imran: "Yeah, you will deny knowing the criticism comes from your students."

A big bad Wolf: "Why didn't you tell me this earlier?"

Imran: "Because I didn't think you were ready for this enlightenment. I remember when
they asked me why Muslims don't eat pork. I just kept quiet and simply answered because I am a
Muslim and we obey the commandment of Allah in the Quran. Seriously, that kind of question
caught me on the spot and I couldn't think of a response straight away and you did nothing and
just kept quiet about it. The student was making a perplexed and weird face when you asked me
that question and only God knows I wished to answer that we Muslims are more Christian than
you because we follow Jesus in a real sense of really following Jesus. But it did not come out of
my mouth because I was not there for debate or creating chaos. If anyone wanted to know about
religion in detail, it is common sense to establish a dialogue, which usually will need some other
proper time and place. This is microagression against me because the power is imbalanced. The

power centralized only to American students and you because you value an extroverted culture and incessantly keep talking."

A big bad Wolf: "I am sorry that I was insensitive about it."

Imran: "Apology accepted but do you know that my son was hungry at school because he realized school lunches contain pork just because the school administrator did not inform him in advance or was unaware about the need to inform Muslim students so that accommodation can be made (Carter & Hindi, 1999)? My wife had to make the arrangement and my son is not the first Muslim kid in that school. What am I saying is that he is *invisible,* eh? I can accept your apology because I can think rationally but why put such a burden on a kid? He is just six years old. Isn't school a system that should not be a hostile place for the Americans' First Amendment; the right to practice your own religion? Or the First Amendment applies to White Americans only? Also, the funny thing is that you were teaching *Ethnicity Centric-101* in the classroom but at the same time you did not practice what you preach. Multicultural education should not be hostile, at least in my own conception. It should be universal. However, you don't realize you Whitewashed the multicultural teaching by imposing your worldviews on the students."

A big bad Wolf: "I don't get it. How did I impose my worldviews on yours? I was asking a question at that moment. I am suggesting my opinion about the way diversity worked in the church."

Imran: "So this is the first and biggest mistake that you made. You taught multicultural education but you are not culturally competent. You imposed the many faces of Jesus[20] across different cultures as your God by asking and suggesting to me how good it was. You are culturally incompetent because your cognitive, affective, and behavioral characteristics are

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[20] Pbuh

limited to only one worldview, which sadly is yours, not my culture or my worldviews (McAllister & Irvine, 2000, p. 4). Why do you suggest the way diversity worked in the church by asking me?"

A big bad Wolf: "Err. I don't know. I don't think your religion is tolerant towards others."

Imran: "Islam according to Bin Laden? You really should take a mirror and mirror your statement to yourself but you just can't see eh? I feel I want to read a poem now: A Mending Wall (Frost, 1914) written by Robert Frost. Every time I try to build a bridge, I feel there is a Wall now."

A big bad Wolf: "You confuse me a lot in this debate."

Imran: "You see it as a debate while I see it as a dialogue. Let me read this poem little by little. My American professor during my undergraduate year taught me this poem. He is Adam Abdul Karim from Narniakistan. He mended the Wall between me and Americans when I decided to go to Afghanistan to make them understand the injustice the Americans did to Afghan tribesmen or women. I was joking when I said that to him but he treated my joke seriously and did not see it as something beneficial to me. As a result, he started to lend me his Zen philosophical book perhaps to help me find solace in my life."

A big bad Wolf: "Huh . . . another American is helping you with your psychosis? I am proud to be American."

Imran: "You are funny because of your assumptions about everything, eh? He is married to a Malay professor. His kids are bicultural due to the marriage. He respects my thoughts. The Black Owl used to tell me Whites change their perspectives and develop their identity when they have a relationship with persons of color. By the way, let me read the poem eh?"

Mending Wall

<u>Something</u> there is that doesn't love a wall,

That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,

And spills the upper boulders in the sun,

And makes gaps even two can pass abreast. (emphasis added, Frost, 1914)

A big bad Wolf: "Who is that something?"

Imran: "I told you earlier. You need to have a mirror. Let me continue, eh?"

The _work of hunters_ is another thing:

I have come after them and made repair

Where they have left not one stone on a stone,

But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,

To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,

No one has seen them made or heard them made,

But at spring mending-time we find them there. (emphasis added, Frost, 1914)

A big bad Wolf: "Who is the hunter?"

Imran: "A wolf is a good hunter."

A big bad Wolf: "But this poem talked about humans."

Imran: "Can't a human be a wolf? A wolf when he/she meets a group of sheep will kill every sheep in front of their eyes just to satiate his/her animal instinct."

A big bad Wolf: "But a wolf is not a human. They don't have a mind to rationalize their actions."

Imran: "Good point. May I continue with the poem? I can recite a poem about Bury Me at Wounded Knee to justify how humans can be a pack of wolves. Wait, I have a better story! A

story about a fetus came to my dream and how she doesn't want to see the world or her mom. I bet these two stories can justify that this hunter in the poem is a <u>wolf</u>."

A big bad Wolf: "You really have a **psychosis**!"

Imran: "Aha, I beg your pardon? You don't want to hear the poem to the end? I have a psychosis? I understand. I will stop talking. By the way, Yeah, I am a **dreamer**! But I dream with my eyes open, you know! Hahahaha, this fetus came in my dream. She doesn't want to see her mom though she is not born yet. She told me she will be ugly. She will be malformed. Her mom was exposed to depleted uranium during the Battle of Fallujah. The Americans sprayed depleted uranium bullets and bombs on the Muslims there. Are we still the terrorist eh? Oh yeah, I remember, that's what the fetus asked me, is her mom a terrorist? Then the fetus cried because she felt badly about herself. She is depressed though she knows her mom loves her."

A big bad Wolf: "Err . . . Do you hate our freedom?"

Imran: "Come on, you are a professor in the College of Education. You even have an office on level 44 of this building! Is this the best question you can produce? I expect this kind of question from an undergraduate student in my class, but not from you."

A big bad Wolf: "What's wrong with this question?"

Imran: "If Muslims have a problem with your freedom, I wonder why the rest of the 1.6 billion Muslims residing on this earth do not attack places like the Red Light District in Amsterdam or Las Vegas Sin City? In fact, some of the Muslims visit these places. I personally know one or two of my friends visit these places every spring break. Do you see from time to time Muslims in America bringing a grenade or AK47 to kill people there? I am talking about Muslims like me, who value life and education, who believe we can build a bridge and understand each other. By the way, there must be a reason why the radical Muslims flew an

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airplane and destroyed the WTC on 9/11. Are you going to generalize every single Muslim to terrorism just because 19 Saudi extremists flew your airplanes into WTC building? Don't you know that there were some Muslims who died, and these Muslims were among the first responders to the 9/11 emergency calls?[21] And your media showed we jumped for joy due to this tragedy? This is not true! Most of our scholars declare, even until now that any terrorist activity directed towards the innocent is not justified in Islam? For your information, these 19 Saudi extremists' thinking do not represent the whole Muslim nations. I am not giving these questions to justify their terrorist acts but I want to see how naïve your perception was to equate "the hatred towards your freedom." I am not responsible for their acts. It is also too naïve to symbolize Islam with terrorism because of this reason."

Some people inside the room were watching us. I don't care anymore. I just don't care. The past is deep. I know they won't hire me anymore. I know this. I just know.

Background

Vilifying Islam, Muslims, and those of Middle Eastern descent has occurred for centuries, at least since 1896 (Shaheen, 2003), and it continues now in the United States and Europe. Attacks on Islam have not changed for centuries; these attacks include name calling and wild accusations about acts of worship ('ibadah), and they stem from lack of understanding Islamic philosophy by westerners. The hatreds are related to anything related to Islam. For example, Geert Wilders in March 2008 produced his anti-Islam movie titled *Fitna*. This movie used selected verses from the Quran to justify that Muslims and Islam are violent. Additionally,

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[21] Little did Americans know there were some Muslims who died during 9/11 and they were among the first responders to the tragedy. Talat Hamdani was questioned by police because her son, Salman Hamdani, a young cadet, didn't respond to the call, accusing he was involved in the terror plot. In reality, Hamdani among the first responders, died while helping and his name was left off the NYPD's official 9/11 memorial. See Sacirbey's (2013) Salman Hamdani's Mother fights for Memorial Justice after NYPD Cadet was killed on 9/11.

Pamela Geller, promotes the Islamophobia movement in the United States by providing support to Dutch politician, Geert Wilders, and she also is behind anti-Islam public advertisements in cities nationwide (Bazian, 2012). An anti-Islam group in the United States funded an anti-Muslim and immigrant politician in Holland by funding police protection and paying legal costs to an event that used freedom of speech to tarnish the image of Prophet Muhammad[22] (Deutsch & Hosenball, 2012). Also, there are a growing number of cases in academia of individuals who use their intellectual capability to defame Muslims and who have joined the feeding frenzy against Islam and Muslims in the media (El Sayed, 2010). According to Iftikhar (2010), Islam is viewed as cult of death or religion of terror by Islamophobes when in reality, three billion USD per year is contributed by the United States of America for foreign assistance to Zionist illegal occupiers. In 2003, they received 140 billion USD total direct aid and every illegal Zionist occupier received a direct subsidy of 500 USD per year (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006). Sadly, the Islamophobes who inflame hatred towards Islam and Muslims are ardent supporters for the Zionist State of Israel. However, any Muslim individuals who tried to protest the illegal occupation and genocide of Palestinians since 1948 through today at the hand of Zionist perpetrators are considered terrorists and violent. This is reflected in the case of Irvine 11 where the Muslim Student Association of the University of California was suspended (Schurr, 2011). Concerted efforts by Islamophobes to vilify Islam must be understood by Westerners because without an understanding of the root of the Islamophobia, the efforts of multicultural education in addressing civic equality by tolerating ethnic differences will be unfulfilled (Gutman, 2004).

What is the reason behind consistent attacks on Islam and Muslims? Is it the failure of multicultural education in instigating us to investigate and understand Islam that causes society

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[22] Peace be upon him (Pbuh)

to denigrate Islamic practice and Muslims? Are we neglecting and denying the right of Muslims as a minority in the United States to practice their religion peacefully? Is it the inability to explicate and understand Islam as a dynamic way of life? Or, is it that the play of racism and ignorance by some Americans is compounded in order to establish Islam as a constant enemy? Macedo (2008) provides a provocative perspective, saying that though it is the "21st century, one of the most pressing challenges facing educators in the United States is the specter of an 'ethnic and cultural war' due to racism" (p. 1). Regardless of the questions, our failure to understand and see the bigger picture of Islamophobia is devastating because it will undermine citizenship education, social justice, equality, equity, and freedom will be ignored. Ultimately, racism and hatred will continue.

Islamophobes advance their efforts to vilify Islam by portraying Islam as diametrically opposed to Western values and as being fundamentally different from the West. Islamophobes do not embrace the concept of living together in the global village. Islam and Muslims are seen as though they have no shared concepts and moral values with Western traditions and the othering is embedded with stereotypes and prejudice (Zine, 2004). Islam and Muslims are described with irrational derogatory remarks (Sajid, 2006). This is reflected by the former Republican Representative Presidential candidate, Herman Cain, who tried to vilify Muslims by associating them with the "others" (Sewer, 2011). Though some disagree that such denigration and vilification can be categorized as "racism," Modood (2006) believes that by denying Muslims are not the subject of racism because they are a religious group is unacceptable. It is unacceptable because racism involves prejudice and power. Prejudice and power are involved in the attacks toward Islam and Muslims as I presented in the examples above. Thus, Islamophobia

is beyond racism because of the continuous efforts and methods by some Americans to depict the inferiority of Islam and everything associated with it.

Islamophobia is rampant in the United States; yet, it is not taken seriously.[23] Before 9/11, stereotypes, hatred, and prejudices of Muslims or those perceived to be linked with Islam were taken lightly by the United States public.[24] After 9/11, "across the globe, Muslims have faced individual and systemic acts of discrimination and violence after 9/11 as a form of retaliation for the collective guilt ascribed to the followers of Islam and anyone who resembled them" (Zine, 2004, p.111). American ignorance of other religions is demonstrated through a 2010 Pew Poll. Respondents to the poll acknowledged they "do not know much" or "know nothing at all" about other religions. At the same time, 30% admitted unfavorable views about Islam (Thorn, 2010). Logically, how can we love or hate something if our knowledge is partial and created through biased media? This bias is purported by Samuel Huntington (1998) who predicted 'a clash of civilizations' between the Western World and Islam. The United States media portrays false assumptions and ignorance of Americans through double standard reporting that is clearly one-sided and typically goes against Muslims' perspective. Hedges (2008) argues that this is because the United States media and every level of society in the United States strives to create an enemy

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[23]This is my conclusion (based on research) in acknowledging how media prior and post 9/11 produces a homogenous view of Islam as alien and dangerous to Western society. Sadly, the misinformation by these media is absorbed without being critical of the information and the act of being not critical is irresponsible. See Watt (2008), Challenging Islamophobia Through Visual Media Studies: Inquiring Into a Photograph of Muslim Women on the Cover of Canada's National News Magazine.

[24] How do you expect Americans will take/know other religions (Islam) seriously when they don't even know Christianity very well? An Indian American was killed in an Arizona gas station because the perpetrator believed he was a Muslim due to the turban that he wore. This is not simply bigotry but ignorance. See Prothero (2008), *Religious Literacy: What Every American needs to know* (pp. 1-3).

within the United States. The War against Terrorism creates a false pretext towards Muslims, thus making them victimized easily by the Patriot Act (Klein, 2008).

Islamophobia happens outside of the U.S., too. A significant rise of cases related to Islamophobia can be seen happening in the United Kingdom (Saeed, 2011) and Denmark (Schwarz & Cauchon, 2012). In Denmark, for example, under the pretext of free speech, the Muslims' prophet was insulted through caricatures in Denmark's newspapers. Muslims all over the world protested the cartoons, which then created a strong opposition reaction by non-Muslims by perceiving the actions of Muslims as barbaric and associating non-Muslim perceptions with Islamophobia (Bilefsky, 2006). Media, again, used this opportunity to portray Islam as a violent culture without considering or understanding the reaction or significance of Muslims' love for Prophet Muhammad. [25] In France, the banning of the hijab continues, although it contradicts notions of human rights, i.e., religious freedom. In addition, the initial report of the recent shooting incident in Norway involving Anders Breivik suggested that a Muslim Jihad group was involved (Mala & Goodman, 2011). In reality, the perpetrator was inspired by radical Christians in the United States (Shane, 2011). This example demonstrates a biased perception of the media towards Muslims in general, which is the same reality linked to Muslims in relation to the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 (Naureckas, 1995).

This research focuses on Islamophobia in the United States and uses Critical Race Theory as its guiding theoretical framework. I use interviews and narratives from participants to convey their personal experiences and stories, in concert with my own stories and reflections to represent Muslims' experiences in the Midwestern United States.

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[25] Pbuh

Statement of the Research Problem

The focus of this research is to develop an understanding of Islamophobia in the Midwest beginning with Critical Race Theory (CRT) tenets as a foundation, which I then develop as Critical Muslim Theory. The overarching purpose of this research is to address the issues of Islam and racism and how these intersect. Islamophobia research conducted in Europe is limited to a more general discussion about xenophobia and my research seeks to understand the root of the more specific fear of Islam as it relates to and is informed by CRT and institutional racism. There are numerous studies about racial prejudice and discrimination but little research focuses on religious discrimination, especially that experienced by Muslims (Sheridan, 2004). Historical prejudices about Islam exist due to historical accounts of the Crusades and skewed Western interpretations that contribute to institutional Islamophobia. Further, this research seeks to identify and reveal the real issues related to Islamophobia in the Midwest that Muslims experience on a daily basis, just as CRT identifies racism as embedded in United States society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This research seeks to establish the need for and reality of Islamophobia as normative because institutional racism is normative in United States society.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this autoethnography is to propose Critical Muslim Theory (CMT) based on my experiences and those of nine Muslims in the Midwest. This research explored how Islamophobia and Muslims' religious experiences relate to each other to develop CMT in its initial stage from the relationship.[26] Nine research participants' narratives and interviews were analyzed and interpreted in concert with my own experiences and stories. From the analysis of

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[26] Religion is the important constituent for humanity. It includes the vision of reality, acquiescence of Ultimate reality and the fulfillment of commandments, because of this religion according to the Muslim is the very essence and core of culture. See Al Faruqi's (1986) Meta-Religion: Towards A Critical World Theology.

the narratives, emerging themes were identified to develop CMT. This theory's purpose is to explain interrelationships and intersections between Islamophobia and Muslims' religious experiences in the Midwest. Critical Muslim Theory is developed purposely to communicate understanding that Muslims have "valid Voices" against Islamophobia and to share their counterstories.

Research Question

The overarching research question is: How does Islamophobia affect the lives of Muslims in the Midwest?

Research Methodology

My research is designed to understand the phenomenon of Islamophobia in order to develop CMT. I explored contributing factors related to Islamophobia (e.g., religion, gender) and determined their influence on Islamophobia in the Midwest. Based on this, I propose a new theory, Critical Muslim Theory (CMT), which allows recognition of Islamophobic experiences under a cohesive framework instead of explaining it from the lens of racism, thus maintaining the essence of and focus on Islam by not diluting its magnitude and impact through another theoretical lens. The same dilution occurs when prejudice, bias, and stereotypes are classified separately with different definitions and explanations that minimize the overall resulting effect of racism (Taylor, 2012). Through developing Critical Muslim Theory, the religious dimension is at the forefront. Furthermore, as I construct meaning from experiences of my research participants and me to produce reflection (Mezirow, 1990), I realize that how and what I do with my meaning construction matters (Fransella & Neimeyer, 2005).

The participants were selected purposively. Ten Muslims —five men and five women— over 20 years of age and living in the Midwest, were invited to participate in my research, in

addition to me. They were chosen through various methods, such as when I listened to stories while I attended the Muslim community program and while reading from newspapers related to cases pertaining to Islamophobia. I contacted them directly and via email to request their participation. However, one African American Muslim participant decided not to continue with this study because he felt that this research was to interrogate his new conversion from Christianity to Islam. My research participants were selected by April 2013 after receiving IRB approval from the University. Face-to-face interviews were conducted from early May 2013 through September 2013, followed by analysis. After informing participants about the purpose of the research and that they were free to withdraw at any time without repercussion, they were provided with two copies of the letter of consent to sign—one for them to keep and one for my files. Each participant was interviewed twice, for at least one hour per interview and the interviews were audio-taped. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to ensure anonymity. Member checks were conducted with each participant after the interviews were transcribed. My major professor served as my peer debriefer.

Brief Description of Each Participant

I am a 33-year-old Muslim Malaysian male (Malay citizenship), married, with two sons. I have been a Muslim my entire life. I came to this Midwestern town five years ago with my family where my wife completed her PhD degree and I completed my MS degree. I am working currently to complete my PhD degree. I completed my BS degree in Malaysia.

Ayesha is a 40-year-old Muslim Egyptian American female (USA citizenship), married, with two sons. She has been a Muslim her entire life. She completed high school in Egypt and lived in New York prior to moving to this Midwestern town. I asked Ayesha to participate because she is my wife's friend and I am a friend of her husband.

Niqabi is a 22-year-old Muslim Saudi female (Saudi Arabian citizenship) and is single. She has been a Muslim her entire life. She has a MS degree and moved from Saudi Arabia to this Midwestern town. Niqabi is my wife's friend and through their friendship, I asked my wife to invite her to participate.

Midwest Muslimah is a 34-year-old Muslim Black American female (USA citizenship) who is married with four children. She converted to Islam approximately 18 years ago. She has a BS degree and lives in this Midwestern town. Midwest Muslimah is my wife's best friend. I invited her to participate through my wife.

Injil is a 24-year-old Muslim White American female (USA citizenship) who converted to Islam approximately six years ago. She is married with one son. She has a PhD and moved from Illinois to this Midwestern town. Injil is a friend and neighbor of Midwest Muslimah. Midwest Muslimah told my wife about Injil and I then approached Injil and invited her to participate in the research.

Z is a 22-year-old Muslim White female (USA citizenship) who is engaged. She converted to Islam approximately two years ago. She moved from Wyoming to this Midwestern town and has a degree in nursing. Z is a friend of Midwest Muslimah. I approached her through my friend's Facebook page to invite her to participate. Our interviews were conducted via Skype.

Omar is a 34-year-old Muslim African American male (USA citizenship) who is married with four children. He converted to Islam approximately 18 years ago. He has a BS degree and moved from Arkansas to this Midwestern town. Omar is my friend from the Muslim Center and I asked him to participate.

Pseudonymous is a 56-year-old Muslim White male (USA citizenship) who is married with five children. He converted to Islam approximately 22 years ago. He has a BS degree and

moved from Arkansas to this Midwestern town. I met Pseudonymous when I moved to this Midwestern location and he is married to a Malay woman. I interviewed him through Skype.

Uncle is a 40-year-old Muslim male originally from Bangladesh (USA citizenship). He is married and has a MBA. He has been Muslim his entire life. He moved from Bangladesh to this Midwestern town. Uncle is my friend from the Muslim Center. I invited him to participate in the study.

Abu Kutub is a 44-year-old Muslim White male (USA citizenship) who is married with two children. He converted to Islam approximately 10 years ago. He has an Associate degree from a community college and lives in this Midwestern town. Abu Kutub is my friend from the Muslim Center and I invited him to participate. His interviews were conducted through Skype.

Autoethnography Methodology

This is an autoethnography research study. In Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5, I include my own stories and experiences with Islamophobia that were the impetus for this research and to develop Critical Muslim Theory. I used semi-structured interviews with my participants. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a location selected by the participants to ensure his/her comfort. Two participants' interviews were conducted in a coffee shop. Three participants' interviews were done via Skype. Three participants' interviews were conducted in the Muslim Center and one participant's interview was conducted in her home with my wife present.

Data analysis was done via the interview transcripts and patterns of experiences were identified from the transcribed interviews (Aronson, 1994). None of the participants shared any artifacts so there were no artifacts available for analysis. Similar patterns of experiences were grouped to identify emerging themes. My focus was to locate and detect themes that represent the factors, causes, and effects of Islamophobia experienced by me and my research participants.

The themes were coded with the tenets of Critical Race Theory in mind while remaining watchful for distinct emerging themes representing CMT (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with the intention of then using them as a guide to develop the tenets of Critical Muslim Theory. Reflections and themes are supported by research and literature.

I chose autoethnography as my research methodology because this research is highly personal to me. As a Muslim, I experience Islamophobia, and so does my wife, though these experiences might be subtle compared to others. However, story "can serve to issue knowledge about neglected, but significant areas, of the human realm" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 2). The experiences construct my identity. My identity is related to my perspectives. Definitely my perspectives can be argued because they come from my experiences, however, story is "more than simply a rhetorical device for expressing sentiments" and " a central focus for conducting research in the field" (Carter, 1993, p. 5).[27] Autoethnography gives the opportunity to interact with the readers to assist understanding because autotehnography comes with biography and personal stories. Readers will understand the real issue if enough context and schemata are provided. According to Taber, (2010), "autoethnography often focuses on connecting the self to the social, but the emphasis is typically on the self" (p. 9). Without context, a danger is that readers might not grasp the authentic understanding and create accusations, or become emotional or consider the content political because the stories are strange and unfamiliar to them. I situate these arguments as a replication of "male created, dominated, and replicated 'truth'" to "transgress academic and disciplinary expectations about 'acceptable research topics, and violate

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[27] Grand Narrative can be hegemonic because it is supposed to explain epistemology and ontology as Universal Truth and available in dominant power structure discourse when stories represent multiple perspectives and the underprivileged. See Boje, Luhman, & Baack (1999), *Stories and Encounters between Storytelling Organizations*, and Browning's (2000), *Lyotard and the End of Grand Narratives.*

norms about how research is 'supposed' to be conducted" (Kimpson, 2005, p. 73).

Autoethnography should be evaluated not from modernity's black and white dichotomous

conception of truth but rather from reflection to determine if the story has emotional and

intellectual impact on the readers (Richardson, 1995).

Definition of Terms

Allah: Allah is the One and Only God in Islam. It comes from the Arabic word "Ilah." It

can be traced to the Semitic word "Eli" or "El." Allah is used for Arabs, Muslims, and Christian

Arabs to describe God (Britannica Encyclopedia).

Assimilation: Ethnic groups accept, conform, and merge into the dominant social

institution, to the extent that they surrender their values and symbols (Gordon, 1964).

Deen: Muslims' way of life; based on Tawhid (Unity of Allah) and Sunnah of the

Prophet Mohammad[28], which are open and vast to interpretation depending to Muslims'

adherence to particular sects, jurisprudence, and culture.

Emic: Analysis of cultural phenomena from the perspective of one who participates in

the culture being studied.

Ibadah: For Muslims, "Ibadah" means acts of worship or service. Everything that is

related to ritual or nonritual acts is done with the intention of doing good in the name of Allah

and for Allah only. Ibadah encompasses rituals, beliefs, good interactions with Muslims and

non-Muslims (Khan, 2003).

Institutional Racism: Overt or covert policies, conduct, or actions of any institution that

leads to discrimination and unequal treatment that then leads to disparity in access, opportunities,

and services to racial minorities because of their color, culture, and ethnic origins (Murji, 2007).

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[28] Pbuh

Islam: Literally, Islam means peace, coming from the root word "salam" in Arabic. Another literal meaning of Islam is surrender or submit. The literal definition of Islam is submission to the will of Allah in peace (Zepp Jr., 1992).

Islamophobia: Fear towards Islam and Muslims (Marranci, 2004).

Manifest Destiny: A belief that it is God's will that the United States government extend its power across the continent and over all Native American tribes (Spring, 2009).

Melting Pot: Assimilation ideals of immigrants in which immigrants adopt the dominant culture and abandon their own by sharing a common culture-common attitude, values of lifestyle (Bisin & Verdier, 2000).

Multicultural education: Anti-racist education that focuses on content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction process, empowering school cultures, and social structures (Banks, 1993).

Muslim: Followers of Islam who believe in the Oneness of Allah, the Prophets, the Angels, the Day of Resurrection, Destiny, and The Books revealed by Allah — Psalms to David[29], Torah to Moses[30], Gospel to Jesus[31], and Koran to Muhammad[32]. They also practice praying five times a day, fasting when the prescribed month comes, alms giving, and going to Mecca once in a lifetime for those who have the capability to do so.

New World Order: The United States hegemony over the world by means of political intervention, economy manipulation, and military invasion (Plouffe, Jr.,1997).

Patriot Act: Anti-terrorism law that gives the United States government vast power to arrest, spy, interrogate, and apply electronic surveillance to "suspected terrorists" (Kerr, 2002).

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[29] Pbuh
[30] Pbuh
[31] Pbuh
[32] Pbuh

Pbuh: Peace be upon him. For a Muslim, every time a name of the Prophet from Adam to Mohamad is mentioned, Muslims utter "peace be upon him" as a respect and salutation. Muslims believe every prophet comes from Allah and brings the same message of Unity of God.

Shiite: Supporters of a branch of Islam that believe in Ali, the fourth caliph of Islam, and that Ali's progenies should become the leaders of Muslims instead of Sunni.

Sunna: Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad[33] and the earliest generation of his companions.

Sunni: Supporters of a branch of Islam that believe the first four caliphs of Muhammad[34]'s successors are legitimate.

Tea Party: Conservative, American political movement that focuses on Judeo Christian values, associating themselves with a literal interpretation of the United States' original Constitution (Zernike & Thee-Brenan, 2010).

Xenophobia: A natural fear of strangers, especially immigrants, because of the differences of skin color (Bourne, 2001).

Delimitations of the Study

This study is limited to my research participants' narratives and what I extrapolate from them in concert with my own experiences and observations. The selection of participants is both purposive and based on convenience in terms of location. Secondly, the scope of this study is limited to the Muslim population in the Midwest. This study does not seek to address or solve polemics between Islam and other religions. This study focuses on the culture of the research participants, which are diverse and unique. Also, my own reflection connects my research

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[33] Pbuh
[34] Pbuh

experiences with my own experiences as a Muslim in the Midwest since this study is an autoethnography.

Limitations of the Study

This research is an autoethnographic study based on my own experiences and those of a limited number of participants in a predominantly White community in the Midwest. A purposive and convenience sample was used for my research population and the results are not generalizable to other Muslim populations.[35] My research participants are varied; they are different ages, varieties of ethnicity, backgrounds, and educational experiences. None of them have been interviewed previously for any research. This study, as an autoethnography, produces numerous reflections based on my research participants' experiences and how I understand and experience the world. These limit the generalizations this study offers. It means this study could not be situated in Muslim communities in Europe because their society is different than American society in the Midwest of the United States of America. This study could not apply to the Muslim community in Kuala Lumpur because Islam is the official religion in Malaysia. Lastly, this research used Critical Race Theory as the foundation to develop Critical Muslim Theory from the emerging themes. Critical Race Theory is a limitation because it situates race and racism at the center of the analysis, however, the concept of intersectionality is powerful and has the potential to inform CMT. Furthermore, CRT's foundation integrates various methodologies and fields such as history (Marable, 2000), sociology (Brown, Carnoy, Currie, Duster, Oppenheimer, Shultz, & Wellman, 2003), and critical legal studies (Bell, 2004). This is

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[35] Sunni and Shiite communities: I don't differentiate between these two sects and make exception to who is the real Muslim. As long as they uttered, understand, and practice the testimony of Faith according to Islamic principle, they are Muslim regardless of their race, skin color, or political beliefs. It is not my job to excommunicate anyone out of the fold of Islam as Bin Laden's ilk does.

in contradiction to Islam, which builds its own philosophy and ideology based on the Quran and

Sunna (Al Attas, 2005).[36] I see CRT as a limitation because Marxism, pragmatism, and post-

structuralism are inherently secular in their orientation. On the other hand, Islam is a way of life,

and,

> Its system of thought projecting its vision of reality and truth and the system of value
>
> derived from it are not merely derived from cultural and philosophical elements aided by
>
> science, but one whose original source is revelation (Quran), confirmed by religion,
>
> affirmed by intellectual and intuitive principle. (Attas, 2005, p. 13)

This means that CRT limits the role of religion from my conception of the meaning of religion.

Religion is not the same as race. Race is a social construction, which is an ideology that is

created to classify humans in the human mind, which then justifies humans to denigrate other

humans because of skin color. However, Islam is not a social construction because

> All the essentials of the religion; the name, the faith and practice, the rituals, the creed
>
> and system of belief were given by revelation and interpreted and demonstrated by the
>
> Prophet in his words and model actors, not from cultural tradition which necessarily must
>
> flow in the stream of historicism. (Attas, 2005, pp. 13-14)

Significance of the Study

This study is the first of its kind to the best of my knowledge. In particular, I propose a

new theoretical framework known as Critical Muslim Theory. Its creation draws from Critical

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[36] I understand Islamic philosophy and ideology is totally different than Western philosophy because the "worldview of Islam is not based upon philosophical speculation formulated mainly from observation of the data of sensible experience, of what is visible to the eyes, nor is it restricted to kawn, which is the world of sensible experience, the world of created things" (Attas, 2005, p. 1). I keep asking two critical questions of agnostics to show the failure of reason/perceptions to understand the world: (a) why after 3000 years, the monkey is still a monkey; would not be able to talk or be human, and after 3000 years, and still does not evolve or grow a tail? (b) How is the sky resurrected without pillars?

Race Theory by proposing a theoretical framework supported by autoethnographic studies and

participants' narratives (counterstories) depicting Islamophobia. Critical Muslim Theory seeks

to inspire understanding about how religion, race, gender, and social justice intersect with each

other and, at the same time, portray injustices towards Islam and Muslims in the Midwest.

Further, Critical Muslim Theory explains the main factor of Islamophobia and how it is

manifested in the Midwest. Lastly, Critical Muslim Theory can be used as a framework and

theory base by progressives to combat irrational fears and understand how Islamophobia blocks

our progress towards a just society.

Researcher's Perspective

Islamophobia is created intentionally to categorize Muslims as 'others'.[37] The notion of

'others' represents racism symbolically as the core mentality to the society that subscribes to it.

This is the reason that some White American males spit on my wife to show hatred and contempt

even though Midwestern University students are supposed to reflect high character and morals.

Also, it is normalcy for some White Americans to call my wife a terrorist in public spaces

because she wears a hijab. She is NOT a ninja assassin or suicide bomber but she wears a hijab

as an act of devotion to Allah and as modesty and chastity. It is normalcy among White

Americans to affiliate me as a Muslim man who bullies his wife because they assume my wife

cooks all the time. The only thing that they (White American males and females) do not know is

how both of us are students and we divide our household's responsibilities according to

capabilities. In this case, I go to the farm to slaughter and process the meat with my own knives

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[37] This is common sense based on the role of the media and Islamophobes to create resentment towards Islam and Muslims. The hatred doesn't come out of nowhere; the biased perspectives are derived from reports, mass media, other experts, professionals. The hatred then can be transferred to the masses through media and Islamophobes themselves by creating popular resentment. See Teun A. Van Dijk's (1993), Political discourse and racism: Describing others in Western parliaments.

and tools because if I use a White American farmer's meat processor, it will incur more charges for us, thus I avoid that to save money. I also do laundry and cook during weekends, and additionally, my salary goes to my family because I believe as a Muslim man who has a family it is incumbent for me to provide shelter, clothes, food, and medicine from my own money without taking anything from my wife. However, these positive aspects are blurred from the perspective of White Americans' minds because of their ingrained stereotypes; they see me as a bearded Muslim man who is a reincarnation of Bin Laden. White Americans' knowledge is constructed often by the media, which most of the time, represent Islam and Muslims negatively to fulfil the Grand Narrative that Muslims can't participate in United States' mainstream society. The Grand Narrative I mention is related to Huntington's *Clash of Civilization* (1993) that portrays Islam as a constant enemy of the United States.

I believe there is a concerted effort to vilify Muslims as the new enemy of the United States. I believe Muslims are being portrayed as the new Nazi replacing the real Hitler Nazi that elicits fear to delineate participation in United States' society. According to Stubbs (2004), there is evidence that suggests Muslims (or those who look like or are perceived as Muslims) are being "subjected to the same type of treatment in America that has been historically reserved for people of darker colors like Blacks, Latino/as, Asians, and Native Americans" (p.115). For example:

> In the aftermath of September 11, the United States government essentially resorted to racial and linguistic profiling to exclude many Muslims from immigrating to this country, the government has not however, taken any discernible steps to end foreign reinforcements to neo-Nazi ranks by racially or linguistically profiling immigrants from

countries with growing neo-Nazi organizations like the United Kingdom, Canada,

Germany, Russia and the Czech Republic. (Stubbs, 2004, p.126)

The same efforts can be found in United Kingdom and Europe.[38] These efforts are connected to

movements related to essentialism to establish that Islam cannot co-exist peacefully with

Western civilization. Interestingly, these concerted efforts have the same *modus operandi*.

Methods to vilify Muslims include symbols, name calling, fear, and hatred without examining

the roots of the problem.

Lastly, I was not sure if the participants would be forthcoming about their experiences

since they may be aware of the implication of revealing too much information: incarceration

under the Patriot Act of 2004. I have assumptions that my study is unique because I use Critical

Race Theory as the foundation to explain and interpret my research participants' narratives.

Critical Race Theory provides a critical lens and framework through which I see racism and

injustice happen to people of color in general. At the same time, Critical Race Theory can be

used to see the connections and relationships with other theoretical frameworks that highlight

social justice. Critical Race Theory provides intersections to see the connections between my

research themes and dimensions such as the intersections of racism and power, power and

religion, religion, gender, and politics, and at the same time assists my theory development of

CMT. This furthers my conviction that racism is a powerful reality that can change people's lives

and can appear in many forms. I believe racism will never leave American society because of

the complexities of the issue itself.

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[38] In the U.K and Europe, the vilification of Islam and Muslims is done by far right groups, which are English Defense League, Welsh Defense League, Scottish Defense League, March for England, United British Alliance, British Citizens Against Islam Extremists and Stop the Islamification of Europe. See Garland & Treadwell's article (2010), No Surrender to the Taliban: Football Hooliganism, Islamophobia and the Rise of the English Defense League.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 of this study introduced the concept of Islamophobia and its development in the United States. I establish my case, which is that Islamophobia is rampant in the United States, and generated my research question to support my proposed new theory: Critical Muslim Theory. Chapter 2 develops the literature review that details racism in the United States, Critical Race Theory, and research studies that address Islamophobia. I elaborate on other theories and how they evolved from Critical Race Theory. Lastly, I address Islamophobia cases in the United States and Europe. Chapter 3 details autoethnography as the methodology for my research. Chapter 4 contains findings from the interviews and participants. In this chapter I present how my autoethnography and the narratives of my participants produce multiple consciousness in understanding me and Islamophobia. Chapter 5 presents the discussion of my findings, the development of Critical Muslim Theory, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2—REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This autoethnography research uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the basis for the development of my proposed new theory, Critical Muslim Theory. I use Critical Race Theory's central tenets as a starting point to address Muslims' plights in the United States of America. This involves exploration of the history of Islam and Muslims from the perspective of a Critical Race theorist who sees how race and its intersections are used to subjugate minorities. Critical Asian Race Theory, Critical Latino Race Theory, Tribal Critical Race Theory, and Critical Race Feminism are featured as examples of new theory development originating from Critical Race Theory.

Overview of Racism in the United States

There are many types of racism, for example, institutional racism, cultural racism, and individual racism (Jones, 1972). According to McIntosh (1992), institutional racism happens when any organization applies rules, standards, or practices that can lead to disadvantage for people of color. Individual racism happens when a person harbors biased or prejudiced beliefs, or actions to portray inferiority or differences toward a person who is different from him/her. Usually, individual racism happens without conscious awareness or intention (Henkel, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2006). According to Valls, (2009), Jorge Garcia (1996) believes that racism is most fundamentally to do with one's feelings, affect, and will to the extent we could not "attempt to identify a single psychological or emotional state with racism, but rather as based on any number of possible manifestations of negative affect and the desire or 'will'" (p. 476). Based on this, racism is not necessarily born from hatred or malevolence (Valls, 2009, p. 476). Cultural or group racism occurs when a particular group marginalizes another group negatively. According to Grosfoguel (1999), cultural racism is a new form of racism, which is different than racism

based on skin color because it deals with ethnic absolutism where the word racism is not even used. Cultural racism portrays an essentialist sense to denigrate others who are different than the dominant group to show the notion of superiority over the inferior group and this somehow is related to racism based on skin color. However, it differs when poverty, labor market opportunity, and marginalization are related to the habits of minorities as inferior. All of these kinds of racism can be overt and covert, intentional and unintentional (Miller & Garran, 2008).

Also, racism is related to religious intolerance. In Europe, for example, Spanish Inquisition forces started the idea of Jews having impure blood during their long battle to destroy the Muslim Empire in Spain. After succeeding, they kicked out the Jews and Muslims before starting their exploration to Africa and the Americas (Miller & Garran, 2008). Later on, scientific notions were used to justify racism: this was a "pseudo-scientific division of all humans into distinct categories based on skin color, each having particular associated character traits, and it is the inherent 'inferiority' of particular 'racial' groups which has historically served as justification for their subjugation" (Wren, 2001, p. 142). In the United States, this subjugation is supported by eugenicists that believed most human ills were hereditary and, thus, did whatever they could to prevent biracial marriage through anti-miscegenation and anti-immigration laws (Lombardo, 1988). In fact, the Rockefeller Foundation was involved in funding scientific racism by giving $125,000 to the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute fur Anthropologie in Germany for mapping the racial characteristics of the German nation (Schafft, 2002). Hitler then used this research to justify the killing of the Jews in Germany and Europe.

Racism happens when skin color becomes a criterion for judging another person when biology is determined as a social force, combined with disempowering other people who are different from whatever the perceived norm is (Gosden, 2006). DuBois (1903) explains in *The*

Souls of the Black Folks that the problem of the 20th century is related to the color-line and racism will still be the main 21st century feature of United States' society. According to Rosado (1996), racism is a social problem that cannot be eliminated from United States society.

Racism exists in the United States in various fields and elements and is called institutionalized racism. There will be always a justification to support institutionalized racism because racism is saturated in United States society. For example, in the field of archaeology, they fail to address race and racism in order to maintain in its field a tacit political conservatism though race perception is a major contributor to social inequality (Orser, Jr., 1998). Marginalization happens in the nursing field where multicultural nurses, who have a different reality, are "acutely and chronically aware and at the same time have to spend energy and time to combat racism in the profession and health care" (Barbee, 1994, p. 347). Furthermore, crime in the United States is related to race and ethnicity where people of color are associated and cited as offenders more in the media, and, interestingly, the same thing happens in the United States criminal justice system that punishes more members of ethnic minorities (Green, Staerkle, & Sears, 2006).

Racism leads to adverse effects regarding social mobility and socioeconomic status for African Americans and minorities in general by contributing to segregation in which these factors lead to racial disparities in health (Collins & Williams, 1999). Racism is proven to exist in the field of education when most students' teachers, who are among the well-educated adults, are supposed to teach about race and racism in schools after they graduate, yet they have difficulty identifying contemporary White men and women who fight against racism (Howard, 1999; Tatum, 1994). These are a few examples showing how deeply ingrained racism is in the United States.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an anti-racist movement that focuses on challenging the dominant voices of the majority in United States society (Yosso, Villalpando, Delgado Bernal, & Solorzano, 2001). The focus is not just challenging the majority voices but to expand studies' discourses and perspectives among race, racism, and power by understanding and critiquing how these factors penetrate many aspects in our life. Critical Race Theory started from a critique towards Critical Legal Studies (CLS) because law can't outlaw racial discrimination but can only solidify the social structure of Whites (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). For example, scholars from CRT and CLS use the method of legal analysis because they realize that the law serves only the interests of powerful groups. Also, CRT scholars believe that civil rights discourse does not effectively address the experiences of people of color (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Tate, 1997). Critical Race Theory started its movement 10 years after the beginning of Civil Rights era when progress was stalled (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Also, CRT ideas can be used to understand issues related to controversies over curriculum and history, affirmative action, and high stakes testing. Critical Race Theory goes beyond our social situation and how racial lines influence lives and at the same time to improve these ills (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Critical Race Theory, for example, theorizes race and uses it as an analytic tool to understand inequality and at the same time uses multicultural education as a means of reform and remediation (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995).

CRT and Interest Convergence

In reality, law is manipulated when interest convergence can be agreed upon. *Brown vs. Board of Education 1954* is interpreted by Critical Race Theory as a manipulative for Whites to deny accusations that the United States devalued human freedom according to race. According to Bell (1989), the United States Supreme Court approved desegregation through *Brown v Board*

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of Education 1954 due to intense political pressure to show to the world that the United States was not a racist country and was far superior to the communist regimes (p. 108). Furthermore, by passing the desegregation law, Whites enjoyed economic benefits but Black students, teachers, administrators, and communities were victims. Black teachers and administrators lost their jobs and their schools, which were the center of many Black communities. Yet White students remained comfortable in their schools, while Black students had to struggle to become comfortable with the curriculum, texts, and teaching approaches that were designed for middle class White children (Bell, 1989). The principle of interest convergence can be summarized as

> The interest of Blacks (and other minorities) in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interest of Whites. However, the Fourteenth Amendment, standing alone, will not authorize a judicial remedy providing effective racial equality for Blacks where the remedy sought threatens the superior societal status of middle and upper class Whites. (Bell, 1980, p. 523)

Interestingly, CRT and interest convergence can be illuminating in our understanding of injustice in many areas to provide methods for social and political change; educational reforms, prison reform, animal rights, domestic violence, concentrated poverty, and even the war on terror (Driver, 2011, p. 154).

CRT and Legal Constructs

Critical Race Theory (CRT) challenges perspectives of law and social sciences because legal constructs tend to be biased towards the dominant group in United States society (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). Critical Race Theory questioned CLS because it did not address adequately issues related to racial discrimination because of legal foundations such as legal reasoning, enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law

(Crenshaw, 1995). Critical Race Theory does not believe the law can address racism because it can't produce social transformation when race and racism are not incorporated in its analysis. The traditional legal system itself is a culprit in legitimizing oppressive social structures (Yosso, 2006, p. 169). According to CRT, the court tends to purport its political ideology by obscuring the active role of sustaining White racial power (Cole, 2009, p. 60). According to Bell:

> It is at least clear that the mere presence of large numbers of Black defendants in the criminal court ensures that any unfairness, whether based on race or class; will measurably burden Blacks… Blacks suffer disproportionately more arrests and prosecutions, heavier sentences, longer probation and fewer paroles. This phenomenon tends to perpetuate the generally held, but infrequently expressed; view that racial injustice in the courtroom is caused, not by society, but by criminal propensities of Blacks. And it is the realization that society is not even willing to acknowledge this bias of the criminal justice system that leads Blacks— lawyers and defendants — to face the judicial system not with thoughts of destruction but with despair. (1965, p. 106)

According to Burns (1973), racism still exists in the American justice system when Blacks (and all minorities) are subjected to racist attitudes and at the same time confronted by a system that is unfair and often against them. Basically, the American legal system cannot escape from racism. This can be portrayed when "the interpretation of their (Black) situation is given over the persons from outside the group centrally involved. They can't tell their own story without having it screened through White interpreters," which can actually lead to misunderstanding and misrepresentation (Burns, 1973, p. 16). The subjugation of Blacks during slavery happened intentionally because slavery contributed to the economy and "satisfying the status craving of the poor Whites" and the law can't achieve equality through how neutral it is

because the law has functioned for the privileged White class in our society and racism in law has created a natural psychosis (Crockett, Jr., 1969, p. 224).

CRT Challenges Oppressive Systems and Eliminates Oppression

Critical Race Theory (CRT) can be used to challenge educational systems that fail people of color. Racism happens in schools because "our society does not appreciate the value of critical thinking and social commitments" thus, school itself does not generate its own meaning or evaluation of classroom experiences but rather succumbs to maintain the order of the status quo by denigrating and marginalizing people of color (Giroux, 1997, p. 25). The seeming low performance of African American students in public schools happens not because they are cognitively incapable but because school is a political system with deeply ingrained institutional and structural racism (Ladson-Billing, & Tate IV, 1995). It is a shallow assumption that the public school system can ensure everyone will have the same opportunity to succeed. On the contrary, there will be always "inadequate educational conditions that limit equal access and opportunities" for students of color (Yosso, 2006, p. 4). Critical Race Theory in education fights against mainstream narratives, which stereotype students of color and anything related to them as negative (Yosso, 2006, p. 9). There is always a tendency to put them in negative spotlight because the culture of students of color is not accepted due to value differences with the White majority. Through the framework of CRT, counterstorytelling can be used to examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly shape social structures, practices, and discourses, and at the same time, humanize empirical research to examine theoretical data (Yosso, 2006, pp. 4-5). The function of counterstories is not to generalize the experience of one student of color to all people of color but to illuminate patterns of inequality and racism that happen in school or elsewhere (Yosso, 2006, p. 12). It reveals the perspectives of people of color

that have been long silenced (Yosso, 2006, p. 13). It reveals that the knowledge and experiences of people of color are rich in concept and theoretical content, provided that they are analyzed cautiously (Yosso, 2006, p. 15).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) works to end the oppression of minorities, on the grounds of who they are, because oppression can be defined as outright racism. Critical Race Theory supports Affirmative Action programs, rejecting accusations that such programs victimize Whites in reverse racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Critical Race Theory maintains that Affirmative Action should be viewed as reparations for people of color and other historically marginalized groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). People of color are denied housing, jobs, and education. Rather than seeing this as a result of failed Civil Rights progress, many Whites blame the victim, believing people of color are lazy and defeatist (Delgado, 1990). The negative perspective of seeing people of color as coming from a culture of poverty happens because "culture is randomly and regularly used to explain everything" and we see "poverty" as an excuse as to why success does not belong to people of color (Ladson Billings, 2004, p. 104.) For example, school reform in the United States does not work well because teachers, who are embedded with deficit thinking, address the problems as originating within students, families, and communities (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). Critical Race Theory eliminates oppression because it deals with "the study of power," and is used to address issues such as control, decision making, influence, and how it affects special interest groups (Lopez, 2003). Critical Race Theory addresses hidden racism because "racism has been reduced to broad generalization, to individual construction by believing colorblindness can reduce racism, rather than something that is systemic" (Lopez, 2003). Colorblind policies are embedded in racism and the entrenchment of White Privilege, which led to Latino students' underachievement. In California, this happened

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through 'fortification of monolingualism and monoculturalism against a brown cultural and linguistic invasion" (Villenas & Dehyle, 1999, p. 414).

Voices of People of Color—Counterstories

The insight and methodology inherent in CRT gives people of color a voice to speak against racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). According to Bourdieu & Passeron (1977), only the knowledge of the upper and middle classes is considered capital in a hierarchical society, and this knowledge comes through as privileged in academic settings. McIntosh (1992) realized that she was taught to see White culture as the ideal, as the standard. She recounts "when I am told about our national heritage or about 'civilization,' I am shown that people of my color [White] made it what it is" (p. 2). In reality, Whites' life experiences are limited because of monocultural settings (Cole, 2009, p. 49). The notion of Voice in CRT challenges the dominant metanarrative, which effectively certifies discrimination and accepts a quantitative rather than a qualitative perspective (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). Voices that challenge the metanarrative, known as counterstories, are used to overturn the reality as it is perceived. In fact, reality is created by the majority as the sole natural perspective (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006).

Racism is Normalcy in the United States

Racism is so deeply ingrained in United States culture and society that it is subconsciously rooted and we don't even realize. To that end, CRT focuses further on combating racism as ordinary business or normalcy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This unconscious racism leads to Whites becoming naturalized to their own racism, resulting in rampant inequity for people of color. This naturalized setting is a characteristic of White privilege, where Whites enjoy the myriad of social advantages, benefits, and courtesies that come with being a member of the dominant race since they construct the norm (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Historical racism

and White privilege would seem antithetical to the Constitution's declaration that man is born free; however, because Blacks were considered property, they weren't seen as part of this declaration of freedom. In truth, the notion that "man is born free" was only a myth because the preservation of the economic establishment depended upon the free and cheap labor of African American slaves. The whole community of Whites, the wealthy and less wealthy, supported the creation of Whiteness as property because they benefitted from the economic advantage provided by African American slaves (Bell, 1989). The development of Whiteness as property becomes obvious when minorities who conform to White norms or who pass as White are rewarded. For example, the United States economic achievement during 1945 was because of an apartheid system; however, when the economic dominance faded during 1970 and 1980, a backlash towards African Americans happened because of their economic and political gains (Cable & Mix, 2003). Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995) or White privilege is rampant in the field of education where Whites enjoy privileges often denied to minorities, such as accommodation in instruction provided in rural schools, which are populated highly by Whites, in contrast to a school comprised predominantly of minorities in urban areas. In fact, schools in White areas receive more funding compared to schools in urban neighborhoods (Kozol, 1992, 2005).

CRT's Systematic Approach to Racism

Critical Race Theory (CRT) illuminates antiracist education to have a clear and systematic approach to racism in education. According to Gillborn (2006), antiracism does not work well to achieve its own objective because it is trapped into "accepting status quo and frequently encoded deficit perspectives of black children, their parents and communities" (p. 242). Antiracism in Great Britain before 1999 is portrayed as "a dangerous and extreme political ideology" and was associated with socialism (Gillborn, 2006, p. 244). By using CRT, schools

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can accept that institutional racism exists and that it needs to be addressed with full partnership of minority ethnic communities (Gillborn, 2006, p. 247). Thus, if CRT is implemented into antiracist education, assimilation and corrective colorblindness will not be perceived as normal and antiracism is not just mere rhetoric anymore. As such, CRT provides the need for a radical element in an antiracist framework rather than being reformist because the antiracist movement is not focusing solely on improving the situation through equality but touching "the fundamental shape, scale and purpose of the system" (Gillborn, 2006, p. 249). Being equal is never enough for CRT activists.

CRT and Intersectionality

Critical Race Theory (CRT) informs us that racism can be understood by looking into how race and other forms of oppression intersect. For example, CRT focuses on race and racism, however, other types of oppression can be understood because CRT views gender and class discrimination as other forms of subordination (Crenshaw, 1993). Intersectionality is an analytic dimension of CRT through which "we can understand social inequity" (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995, p. 48). This is important because racism is not limited to denigration due to skin color only but includes class oppression as one of the main components (Barnes, 1990). According to Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality is needed because racism and sexism are grounded in a set of experiences that represent complex phenomenon, and this complex phenomenon can't be marginalized into a simple analysis. For example, Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) focuses on important issues and "the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism and other forms of oppression" but is focused highly for Hispanic/Latino/Latina communities (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 108).

Descriptions of the theories that originated from Critical Race Theory follow. These theories were developed by various scholars of color to address the issues of racism more specifically for their ethnic groups. As discussed, race, racism, socioeconomic status, and gender intersect with each other to create oppression and the dominant racial ideology can be combated by challenging and deconstructing dominant racial ideology, a commitment to social justice, acknowledgement and the validation of the knowledge and perspective of people of color through counterstories and interdisciplinary perspectives for understanding race and racism (McDowell & Jeris, 2004).

Asian Critical Race Theory

Asian Critical Race Theory looks at how White privilege hides in the generalizations about Asians and Asian Americans though the complexities of these ethnicities are obvious. Their histories are subjugated and hidden and are not given precedence because they do not matter to the dominant group (Chang, 1993). There is a need for Asian Critical Race Theory to be on par with any other theory for social justice because Asian Americans usually are camouflaged by the binary perspective of the issues surrounding White and Black legal jurisprudence and arising disagreement between African Americans and Asian Americans (Wu, 1995). Furthermore, the focus of Asian Critical Race Theory is to understand and explore "the legal and societal implications of White supremacy on Asians and Asians Americans as well as enhancing understanding of minority groups that are Asian" (Wing, 2001, p. 1393). Also, African Americans see Asian Americans as an ethnic group that benefits from Affirmative Action. However, the varieties of ethnicities within Asian heritage in the United States require treatment rather than assimilation and generalization. Having said this, the model minority myth can't be used to deny them Affirmative Action because "Asians are manipulated by

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conservatives to attack preferential policies, when those conservatives really are interested only in maintaining white privilege" (Wing, 2001, p. 1400).

Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit)

Latino Critical Race Theory is concerned with issues related to Latino/Latina pan ethnicity, including issues such as language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality (Mutua, 1998). Latino Critical Race Theory focuses on making manifest antiessentialist and subordination by refusing to succumb to the binary White and Black relationship in the United States but at the same time it understands that subordination of the Hispanic community is through the process of colonization and imperial capitalism and can be understood through histories (Valdez, 1999). In the legal field, LatCrit is related to the law of immigration and penetrates into the function of language to create subjugation towards the Latino/Latina community by using the term "alien" to predetermine a conclusion through meaning embedded in policy. If CRT understands intersections as a means of blurring the main issue, LatCrit believes that immigration law is used to protect the immigration law itself since the identity is protected legally but the law itself has intersections and is racialized intensely (Garcia, 2003).

Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribCrit)

According to Brayboy (2005), though Tribal Critical Race Theory is based upon Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory, TribCrit focuses on racism and colonialism in educational settings of affected indigenous students. This theory examines the unique history of indigenous people from the historical, political, legal, and racial status to contextualize their research in order to show endemic consequences of systemic racism and colonialism in every layer of indigenous society today. Indigenous people have faced the violation of treaties, occupation of

their land, assimilation of their language, and cultural genocide through colonialism, which used power and influence (Writer, 2008). Based on this notion, it doesn't differ from racism because prejudice functions through power. In fact, racism is endemic to indigenous people because of the centrality of racism that uses race to subjugate people in order to maintain and control power. Indigenous people are viewed as less than human because of their way of life based upon the Truth defined by colonials.

Critical Race Feminism (CRF)

Critical Race Feminism (CRF) is an outgrowth of CRT and CLS focusing on the experiences of women of color (feminist) as unique and legitimate entities in contrast to racial issues (Berry, 2010). According to Few (2007), CRF becomes center stage because "ethnic legal women scholars feel excluded by male and White feminist legal scholars" (p. 456). It is normalcy to essentialize women of color in many fields, thus needing CRF as "a theoretical framework that combats racial and gender oppression from multiple standpoints" because it can provide "legal and academic stratagem for studying and eradicating race, class and gender oppression" (Evan-Winters & Esposito, 2010, p. 19). Also, CRF functions to move injustices towards women beyond the White and Black binary and at the same time, provides space for women of color scholars/feminists, and White scholars/feminists to engage in critical race analysis (Hua, 2003).

Islamophobia Legal Cases

There are many definitions for Islamophobia, however, there is no widely accepted definition of Islamophobia that permits systemic comparative and causal analysis (Bleich, 2011, p. 1581). In this section, I examine definitions of Islamophobia and the legal cases related to it. According to Van Driel (2004), Islamphobia is "an irrational distrust, fear or rejection of the

Muslim religion and those who are (perceived as) Muslims" (p. ix). Munoz (2010) states that Islamophobia happens when perceptions are blinded by prejudice and stereotypes that internalize reductionist and monolithic images of Islam vs Other. Rana (2010) believes that Islamophobia is related to the social construction of race in the United States. This is agreed further by Gotanda (2011) because Islam and Muslims in the United States are racialized into a raced body by inscribing terrorists into brown bodies, secondly, by racial categorization that leads to discrimination towards people of Middle Eastern descent; and thirdly, as ascribed subordination that ascribes "good Muslims" as a parallel to the "Model Minority." Also, Islamophobia in the United States can be related to the impact of social inequality towards identity, which is related to race relations as Byng (2008) said:

> Even though Muslim is a religious label and not a racial one, since 9/11 Muslim American identity has been restructured to reflect the systemic inequality that is associated with racial minorities. It is reorganized along essentialist, structural and experimental dimensions of inequality. (p. 662)

> Allen (2010) defines Islamophobia by explicating how Islamophobia can relate to racism: an ideology, similar in theory, function and purpose to racism and other similar phenomena, that sustains and perpetuates negatively evaluated meaning about Muslims and Islam in the contemporary setting in similar ways to that which it has historically, although not necessarily as a continuum, subsequently pertaining, influencing and impacting upon social action, interaction, response and so on, shaping and determining understanding, perceptions and attitudes in the social consensus—the shared languages and conceptual maps—that inform and construct thinking about Muslims and Islam as Other. (p. 180)

Whatever the definition for Islamophobia, it internalizes that Muslims need therapeutic

and punitive interventions (Munoz, 2010). For example, the notion of radicalization appears

after 9/11 among Americans towards Muslims and Muslim communities are targeted. According

to Kundnani (2004), the concept of radicalization has led to the construction of Muslim

populations as a suspect community, which then can lead to civil rights abuses. Arab and

American Muslims were targeted as a suspect population, and were subjected to deportation,

extraordinary rendition, surveillance, random searches, hate crimes, acts of vandalism, etc.,

regardless of their citizenship status (Bilici, 2011). Steinbeck (2011) reveals that the

repercussion of the Islamophobic notion moves into another level of dangerous actions towards

anyone that represents or looks like a Muslim:

> In May 2010, for example, a bomb exploded at an Islamic center in Jacksonville, Fla. In
>
> August, a man slashed the neck and face of a New York taxi driver after finding out he
>
> was a Muslim. Four days later, someone set fire to construction equipment at the future
>
> site of an Islamic center in Murfreesboro, Tenn. This March, a radical Christian pastor
>
> burned a Koran in Gainesville, Fla., leading to deadly riots in Afghanistan that left at
>
> least 20 people dead. (p. 1)

According to Human Rights Watch (2002), Muslim Americans are the most targeted

group for discrimination, and this makes them the most frequently targeted group, exceeding

other minorities in United States' history. Islam's rating among the United States public sank

from 40% to 30% according to the Islamophobia Report 2010 by the Council on American-

Islamic Relations (CAIR). Also, one-third of the United States public believes that Islam's

followers should not be running for President of the United States, and 28% of voters believe

Muslims should not be eligible to sit on the United States Supreme Court. Forty-five percent of

Americans agree that Islam is at odds with American values. These figures should not be a surprise because according to Said (1997), it is normative to perceive Islam as a threat to American society. During the 2008 national election period, the United States electoral campaign was smeared by accusing President Barack Obama of being a Muslim in order to debilitate his campaign to the top as the first United States President from people of color. Even the idea of the 'the clash of civilizations' can be a focal point for Islamophobia by alarming the public about the clash between Islam vs. Western civilization. Through this idea, everything that is associated with Islam and Muslim is mirrored as "backwardness and intolerance," sexist, violent, and incapable of rationality and science (Kumar, 2010, p. 254).

The scapegoating towards Muslims in the United States began before 9/11, and the aftermath of the 9/11 attack is more a "dramatic tipping point that justified disparate treatment of Muslims in the media, society and government" (Moore, 2007, p. 119). According to Ibrahim (2010), Islam and Muslims are stereotyped negatively in comparison with the official ideology, for example:

> Muslims living in Europe and the US have become accustomed to the media consistently choosing to perpetuate dominant images of aggression over images of diversity and assimilation. They have become acclimatized to television stations delivering the news in the most succinct and reductive manner, focusing on compelling visuals rather than complex narratives that explain the motivation behind violent acts by providing context, background knowledge and articulate views from multiple perspectives. (p. 111)

Halliday (1999) states that the hatred of U.S citizens towards Muslims happens due to their oversimplification of understanding related to Muslims and terrorism. It is the assumption and generalization of some U.S citizens towards Muslims by their thinking that most Muslims

are terrorists and that Muslims have a high level of aggressiveness, unwillingness to have an open debate, and are not interested in diverse experiences. Also, the media plays its role in the creation of Islamophobia, compounding with authors like Huntington (1998) and Naipaul (1982) who reinforce misrepresentation. Allen (2001) believes that media is the most accessible and indiscriminate disseminator of Islamophobic ideas around the globe. Sayid (2003) believes that orientalists create Islamophobia through misunderstanding by contributing to an ahistorical and acontextual Islamic essence. Uras (2008) states that the rise of Islamophobia is related to the concept of "otherization," which is tied to historical elements in the older generation and, under the influence of xenophobia that views migrants and Muslims in the same classification. However, Ballard (1995) believes Islamophobia originated from the notions of Christianity during the Crusades and it still exists in contemporary thought today. This parallels Salaita (2006), who believes the term Islamophobia should be replaced with anti-Arab racism by pulling together Radical Christian/ Christian Rights and neo-conservative efforts.

According to Swedenburg (2002), Islamophobia in France is related to anti-Muslims or anti-Arabs because the principle opposition is between White native and immigrant Arab others, which is in contrast to the United States racism that centralizes around Black/White polarity. Islamophobia in Russia is perpetrated by using emotive language to create fears among Russians that hold extreme views and pose a violent threat, which comes from radical, international Muslim extremists (Atkin, 2000). Islamophobia in Germany has elements of xenophobia by having hostility towards foreigners, especially the Turks, according to Mazrui (1996). Yilmaz (2001) states that discrimination in preventing religious law among the Muslims in Britain is Islamophobia, in comparison to Judaism and Sikhism because they can practice their religious law under the Race Relation Act but not the Muslims. However, Webner (2005) details her

concern related to The Bill that protects the Muslim community in the United Kingdom against demonization of Muslims and their religion might be used by fanatical Muslim clerics to preach hate and argues further if Islamophobia is a form of racism that needs special law.

According to Bunzl (2008), Islamophobia is used against Muslims in order to protect supranational Europe against immigration that can be related to Muslims from Turks. This is supported by Marranci (2004), who thinks that the hatred towards Muslims is related to the fear of multiculturalism and its consequences. Larsson (2005) believes there is a need for more empirical research among minorities in relation to Islamophobia to better understand the issue. Rana (2007) discusses Islam and how the language of racism can be tied to the historical context of the United States wherein the historical context is tied to racial and social class issues. Medovoi (2012) believes that religion and race provide justification to hate beyond skin color and a mentality of others who are different. Also, Taras (2011) believes religion and culture are more disconnected today, however, hatred is through essentialist framing that has a connection to the historical context of the United States.

Schwartz (2010) offers six aspects of Islamophobia as: (a) Islam is a problem for the world; (b) the entirety of Islam and its history are extremist; (c) moderate Muslims are denied in the contemporary world by denying their active existence; (d) Muslims comply with non-Muslims because of theological changes; (e) all conflicts involving Muslims are portrayed as the fault of Muslims; (f) incite war against Islam as a whole; (g) Islamophobes claim prescriptive authority to define Islam, its principles, foundations, and essence and they can be non-Muslims or apostates from Islam.

According to Elia (2006), Islamophobia leads to the manifestation of patriarchal racism by favoring Muslim American women in order to show that Muslim women are powerless

victims of their male patriarchy in their society. As a consequence of this patriarchal racism that reflects other women as powerless victims of their culture, numerous critical issues related to women are not addressed such as critical gender issues. She comes to this conclusion because the focus is in favor related to issues pertaining to males such as imprisonment and deportation, though the same things happen to women as well.

Love (2009) states that Islamophobia does not affect Arabs and Muslims only but it is racial scapegoating because the perpetrators have fear and hatred based on their discrimination toward the targeted groups through judging people based on their physical appearance. Most of the victims of Islamophobia are not necessarily Muslims or Arabs but they might look like Arabs or have Muslim attributes. He examines racial formation in the United States and the root of Islamophobia discourse to reach this conclusion.

Ali (2012) provides significant understanding of Islamophobia in the United States by categorizing Islamophobia into three phases; (a) Islamophobia before 9/11, (b) Islamophobia after 9/11, (c) Islamophobia during the 2008 presidential state. He also points out that the third phase of Islamophobia in the United States is the beginning of institutionalized Islamophobia when *Save Our State Amendments* are used to ban Sharia Law in the United States. According to Panagopoulos (2006), after 9/11, Americans possess resentment and reservation about Arabs and Muslim Americans because of their low levels of awareness about basic Islam but at the same time, have anxiety about Islam's compatibility with Western values of acceptance, tolerance, and civility.

According to Grosfoguel and Mielants (2006), Islamophobia can be a form of racism in a world historical perspective by examining the subalteration and inferiorization of Islam promoted by the Christian-centric religious hierarchy of the world system. Also, Islamophobia

can be a form of cultural racism by focusing on the cultural inferiority of a group of people, i.e., Muslims under the subjugation of a colonial empire. Muslims usually are associated with people of color subjected under the old Western colonies, namely Britain, France, Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, Germany, and the United States.

Grossfoguel and Mielants (2006) believe further that Islamophobia is orientalism when the issue of patriarchal fundamentalist interpretation of Islam is highlighted. However, patriarchal subjugation of women in Christianity and Judaism practiced by the West is silenced without realizing Islam is the first religion that allows women to divorce more than 1000 years ago. According to Grossfoguel and Mielants, Islamophobia as epistemic racism functions when almost everything against the Western knowledge standard is downgraded and inferior, which then allows making Islam as Other.

Keeling & Hughes (2011) note that 60.8% of police officers do not have a clear understanding of the teaching of Islam and 52.6% of them have inaccurate perceptions of Islam. Also, their knowledge is not based consistently on stereotypes nor are their attitudes towards Muslims apparently negative, however, a minority of the officers sampled revealed that their knowledge is based on stereotypes rather than a factual understanding of Islam and Muslims. These research findings are based on a completed survey of 79 mid-level police managers attending a residential training at a large Midwestern university.

Research in Education about Muslims in the United States

According to Bonet (2011), the Patriot Act and law enforcement agency policies towards Arabs and Arab Americans have damaging effects on their kids' educational achievement, psychosocial wellbeing, and sense of patriotism. The law and policies are framed around problematic ideologies that come from the dominant ideology and discourse about Islam.

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Phelps (2010) believes that there is a need to provide appropriate text materials about Islam and Muslims that provide information about the diversity of culture and belief within the Muslim world in order to address the issues of cultural assimilation and identity among Muslim youth in the United States. This also will promote critical literacy among students. Baer and Glasgow (2010) suggest that United States schools use young adult literature to portray Muslim cultures. This will negotiate understanding between cultures and explaining the unknown to non-Muslim students. According to them, literature can change students' thinking by encouraging reflection to look into multicultural education and beyond. This approach will encourage critical discussion.

Cohen & Peery (2006) describe in their qualitative study how their students in a literature class provide negative stereotypes about Muslim women by associating Muslim women with discourses such as: submissive to men, not well-educated, covered faces with the hijab and burka, can't show ankles, no rights, fragile, loyal and family-oriented, and lastly, separated from men. However, upon remediation through literature related to Muslim women, significant changes were seen changing student attitudes from negative to positive.

According to Mir (2009), American Muslim undergraduate women negotiate multiple identities to fit into the United States college campus cultures that actually limit cultural pluralism and diversity because they are portrayed as Others. This ethnography study is based on identities of Muslim women undergraduates conducted at Georgetown and Georgetown Washington University in 2003. According to Chaudhury & Miller (2008), Bangladeshi American Muslim teenagers face struggles to find their place in American society while at the same time being a part of a religious and ethnic minority.

There are only a few existing studies advocating that American Muslim adolescents encounter discrimination from teachers, school administrators, and classmates (Aroian, 2012, p. 206). So far, studies are scarce that detail micro-aggressions in school settings that happen to Muslim students, although numerous studies were conducted about students of color and reflect that Muslims are a religious minority group that often is ignored in the psychological literature (Nadal, Griffin, Hamit, Leon, Tobio, & Rivera, 2012). The scarcity itself tells us that Islamophobia is rampant in the United States because it is too normative to the extent that the dominant group doesn't realize it happens.

Legal Basis—Underlying United States Acts and Laws Related to Islamophobia

According to Failinger (2012), few legal cases from the nineteenth century and early twentieth century prove that Islam is a non-American religion. Islam was used to reflect common core values between different faiths, showing that the acceptance of American legal principle, and religious tolerance extended beyond traditional Christian ideologies to encompass Islam. However, judges often used faulty notions of Muslims and Islam to justify their conclusions, which reflected inherit stereotypes and insensitivities. According to Ameeriar (2012), there is a pathologizing representation of Muslim Otherness and Gendered suspects in the construction of race and gender in post 9/11. This pathologizing is portrayed in immigration law and policy, related to the intersection of sexuality, race, and nation to inscribe Muslim men as constructed terrorists and Muslim females as victims fleeing a patriarchal culture. Cole & Dempsey (2006) believe that the Antiterrorism Act and the immigration provisions of the 2001 Patriot Act focus not on violence but on the political or religious ideology that motivates the American government to kick out and/or violate Muslims from United States (p. 20). According to Cole & Dempsey (2006):

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In dozens of cases after the 1996 Act passed, the government detained and sought to

deport non-citizens (almost all of them Muslims) on the basis of secret evidence

regarding their political affiliations with "terrorist organizations." In virtually every

instance, it became apparent that those government sought to deport were not dangerous

terrorists. (p. 3)

According to Acer (2004), over 1200 noncitizens, primarily Arab/Muslim, were detained

by the United States government after the 9/11 attacks; they were detained without trials, denied

access to legal counsel, and received abusive treatment. Two months after 9/11, a list of 5000

Middle Eastern men were to be interviewed and on this list, even United States permanent

residents of Arab descent became targets through suspicion of loyalty. This is called de-

Americanization by questioning their loyalty and foreignness of Americans towards Muslims

(Hing, 2002).

Summary

This chapter detailed elements and criteria of CRT as a formidable anti-racist theory.

Prior to the explanation, I summarized racism in the United States to show why CRT is needed.

I provided a brief overview of other theories that originated from CRT. Later in this chapter, I

detailed cases of Islamophobia to reveal the similar oppression due to religious preference

related to racism as well as research in education about Muslims in the U.S. and the legal basis of

underlying U.S. acts and laws related to Islamophobia. Chapter 3 addresses the methodology of

my research, which is autoethnography.

Chapter 3—METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe the methodology of autoethnography to understand the complexity of the phenomenon of interest to me, which is Islamophobia in the United States (Peshkin, 1988). The complexity of Islamophobia in the United States is concomitant to the goal of qualitative research, which aims in this case to identify that Islamophobic behavior in the United States is beyond an act of racism and at the same time to understand Muslims' religious experiences through the lens of Critical Race Theory in order to instigate a new theory, CMT.[39] Interviews detailed my participants' experiences through their narratives to emphasize the need for multiple truths to empower minority voices. This research used data from interviews to provide counterstories and an understanding of my participants' experiences. These experiences were reflected on and analyzed critically in order to understand the reality of Muslims' experiences and Islamophobia in the United States. Meaning in my participants' stories can be created only through the participants' own voices and interpretation (Maxwell, 1992, p. 283) and combined with my own reflection, stories, and analysis. Generalizing and reducing my participants' detailed perspectives into quantitative data would weaken my participants' voices (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). This is not the aim of stories that I experience and understand from my participants because stories are how humans experience and understand the world; their stories and experiences make them human and important because "humans are storytelling organisms," not numbers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). According to Guba & Lincoln (1994), numbers and statistics, through randomization of data, strip the oppressive contexts that my participants struggle to convey, making their experiences insignificant because statistics delete meaning and purpose. Also, qualitative research better accounts for aspects of the

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[39] I explain Muslims' conception of religion in the limitation, please refer to Chapter 1, Limitations of the Study.

participants related to their beliefs, political agenda, and ideology (Stockrocki, 1991).

Performing my own autoethnographic research allows me to generate my own understanding of

the study's settings and reshape and improve the validity of my own conceptualization. I learn

and understand how I have changed over time, understanding that the past is deep, connecting

my present in terms of how I view and understand the world. From these various interactions

within my mind, my participants' stories and understanding my own experiences, I deconstruct

my own self to achieve understanding of my new self and they are connected to each other.

Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner (1995) believe qualitative studies/writing are socially

constructed and the texts deconstruct and reveal researchers' use of voice, authority, and style.

Researchers have to come clean and identify how their own self influences each other

reciprocally (p. 882)

Overview of Qualitative Research

According to Strauss & Corbin (1990), qualitative research can be defined as any method

of research that does not use quantification to derive its results. Qualitative research avoids

quantification because a large sample number does not explain the interpretive paradigm within

qualitative research that explores the deepness of the phenomena but rather generalizes using

statistical methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This affects holistic understanding for qualitative

research. Furthermore, quantitative research brings the notion of Single Truth in contrast to

qualitative research that understands the existence of multiple realities and truths.

Qualitative research empowers individuals involved to see beyond the query (McMillan,

2005). It focuses in depth because understanding is contextual. The researcher has to consider

participants' worldviews, discourse, and schemata before making any judgment or formed

decision. It means qualitative researchers aim to understand participants' interpretation of

phenomena. In one way, it is empowering participants because their anti-thesis to the Grand Narrative is accepted and celebrated (Opie, 1992). In qualitative research, the researcher's judgment is not final or fixed as a singular Truth because there are multi-layered Truths surrounding the phenomenon (Krefting, 1991). For example, the understanding of any particular research might have a different result if the context is changed. This leads to the finality of understanding any phenomenon as continuously evolving, so no single Truth is absolute.

In qualitative research, interaction and relationship between participant and researcher is important. Participants' feedback during the research investigation is important as researchers need to understand meaning produced as expressed by participants (Johnson, 1997). The researcher needs to have understanding by asking questions to clarify his/her query, and barriers should be limited in order to transfer understanding freely. The relationship between participants and researcher must be less formal because in-depth exploration needs to be based on trust established between them (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The less formal relationship between researcher and participants does not mean that rules and regulation are devalued. Researchers must observe ethics all the time by seeking agreement and permission after detailed clarifications about the nature of study with the participants. During the research, participants' sensitivity is of utmost importance by considering their concerns, problems, and any matters related to the study (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). This also means that the researcher in qualitative research does not limit the responses or feedback from the participants by accepting the participants can be influenced by intangible factors. It is seen as enrichment for the study because qualitative research seeks to explore and understand the reality and see the realities from many angles. Participants always have a choice to retract themselves from the study without any penalty or loss.

Importantly, qualitative research aims to study the real world in natural manners (Golafshani, 2003). Qualitative research does not manipulate or control to achieve the understanding or exploration. Humans are organic and this constitutes that human experiences can't be transferred into numerical statistics. Qualitative researchers select their participants because of the richness of the data that they need by seeking personal points of view and perspectives, providing reflections, and insights to understand the phenomenon that researchers explore.

Features of Autoethnography

Before I detail autoethnography, I need to explain how stories operate in qualitative research. Qualitative research is an instrument where participants can empower themselves and this role gives researchers a window into perspectives that might be different than their own and need to be understood. Achieving this paradigm requires the researcher to provide "special effort to preserve the nonverbalized and situational details that furnished the research encounter" or else, "significant contextual information might be erased" (Warr, 2004, p. 579). Stories are the center of detailed living experiences because there is a reflexive relationship in telling the stories, living the life stories, and reliving the stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). Narrative is presented as a framework to understand the participant and data in qualitative research because narrative in the form of stories provides reflexivity where I believe it promotes dialogue. According to O'Connor (1997), "narrative can be a site of a powerful macro-reflexive act, also narrative positioning showcasing personal agency and self-reflexivity are key to understand anyone's autobiographical discourse" (p. 594).

In this research, my research participants' experiences are the ethnography of my study because they are my participants and I am the outsider. I am a participant observer because I

have to observe, listen, participate, and "being there" in order to understand the phenomena (Lewis & Russel, 2011, p. 400). I have been living among the Muslim community in Midwestern City for more than four years. Previously, I lived in Malaysia since my birth. My experiences in Malaysia in comparison with the Muslim community in Midwestern City are totally different. In Midwestern City, I have the opportunity to interact with many other Muslims from all over the world, from different cultures, races and backgrounds because most of the Muslims I meet here are students. I live and observe different cultures and festivals with the Muslim friends that I meet here. I eat the food that they prepare during the Muslim community's activities. When Midwestern City was affected by a tornado, I observed how the Muslim community here called each other to make sure everyone in the community was safe and not affected. I was involved in collecting donations for tornado relief for Muslim brothers in Midwestern State. These experiences are the field text, some of which were captured in photos and some can be derived from interviewing my research participants or through engaging in conversation or dialogue to initiate their memory. It means an ethnographer uses direct observation and other methods to capture emic or the insider perspective of research participants (Bernard, 2006). A participant observer can help represent a humanistic, interpretive approach by warranting the capacity of him/her to interpret cultures and their local manifestations (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 258). Also, ethnography requires me as the researcher to be accurate about participants' culture by allowing a detailed evaluation of the description of their culture and microculture within the field of study (Seadle, 2000, p. 374). Importantly, as an ethnographer, I aim to describe and tell the experiences of my participants (Montagut, 2011, p. 718). Geertz (1973) believes that deep exploration is necessary by providing thick description of long term engagement with the research participants. Based on the above notion in which I as the ethnographer detail the

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experiences of my participants, a way to social justice is provided because in my reflection, oppression sometimes is difficult to see or understand due to the differences between me and my participants' schemata and experiences. However, according to Katz (2012), the ethnography researcher can "show the reader how and what the subjects of research audio-visually express to one another is effective in moving interaction along because of the interpretive work that subjects are doing as they invoke understandings that they do not articulate" (p. 274).

Autoethnography details my story. Autoethnography can also detail my participants' stories by weaving my reflection of my own experiences with their experiences. Autoethnography is legitimate for qualitative research because it can detail "Truths" as a counterstories against standardized, perceived misconceptions about Islam and Muslims that come from mainstream forces such as media and essentialist political platforms. Everything about Muslims and Islam is defined from a very limited and deficit understanding in the main discourse. Due to this nature of oppression, I realized at least I could do something to counter the mainstream Grand Narrative by using my autoethnography and my participants' experiences. This idea became dominant in my own thinking when I read:

> Furthermore, there was an increasing need to resist colonialist, sterile research impulses of authoritatively entering a culture, exploiting cultural members, and then recklessly leaving to write about the culture for monetary and/or professional gain, while disregarding relational ties to cultural members (Conquergood, 1991; Ellis, 2007; Riedmann, 1993).

I don't own guns and I don't think aggression is a good way to solve problems. I don't even know how to shoot an AK47, but for sure, I have the ability to write and I am a thinker. In my Malay culture and also in Arabic culture, a pen is sharper than a sword because it can be used

to present ideas and arguments, either to winning the heart or to defeat opponents' arguments. I don't use my ability to write autoethnography to frame cut arguments as in debate but to present the ideas about Islamophobia and Muslims. I felt the urge to write when I realize how truth it is when Ellis & Bochner, 2000, said, " scholars became increasingly troubled by social science's ontological, epistemological and axiological limitations." I realized I can write my way of knowing or my participants' way of knowing (Muslim ways of knowing) and explain these to the world. I jump with excitement when I realize autoethnography allows me to be who I am and I started to throw my ideas back and forth to provide meaningful interpretation of how I see matters related to Islamophobia and Muslim issues in the Midwest. I "realized that stories were complex, constitutive, meaningful phenomena that taught morals and ethics, introduced unique ways of thinking and feeling, and helped people make sense of themselves and others (Adams, 2008; Bochner, 2001, 2002; Fisher, 1984).

I detailed my story by focusing on dialogue and reflection within myself to capture my experiences. I used autobiography to share my schemata with the readers so that interpretation of my stories was not deemed as an angry Muslim, although I have a right to be angry. I am committed to "the subject, method over subject matter, and maintain commitments to outmoded conceptions of validity, truth, and generalizability" (Denzin, 1992, p. 20). I need to be self-conscious when writing my stories and my participants' stories because their stories are important and meaningful to me. My story can't stand on its own. Autoethnography happens when I as the researcher distance myself "as the subject of inquiry" (McIlveen, Beccaria, Preez, & Patton, 2010, p. 604). Stories come from experiences that are being told. I am connected to my story and experiences and my participants' stories by building "self conscious introspection" to understand myself and others by examining critically actions and dialogue (Anderson, 2006, p.

382). Ronai (1995) called this reflection a *layered account,* which allows the researcher to put

his/her way of living and experiencing the world in multiple consciousness. In this study, I am a

part of the stories. I experience Islamophobia. My family experiences Islamophobia. I am a

Muslim. It means I am a "complete member in the social world under study," which entitled me

"being there as an ethnographer" (Anderson, 2006, p. 379). Also, I put myself into the social

context in my participants' situation (Reed-Danahay, 1997). I construct stories from experiences

and my stories vary; from dialogue, "chronicles, reports, arguments and question and answer

exchanges" (Riessman & Quinney, 2005, p. 393). Also, "autoethnography focuses specifically

on the realities of peoples' everyday lives" (Taber, 2010, p. 14). Autoethnography is legitimate

for qualitative research because it allows me to define myself from the spectrum of religion not

race, because I am a Muslim. More importantly, I am a Muslim that now lives in the Midwest,

United States of America, which defines, precepts and classifies everything according to race.

According to Ellis, Adam, and Bochner (2012),"different kinds of people possess different

assumptions about the world—a multitude of ways of speaking, writing, valuing and believing—

and that conventional ways of doing and thinking about research were narrow, limiting, and

parochial."

　　Intentionally, I chose autoethnography as my research methodology because my stories

are affected by history, social structure, and culture (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). As experiences

construct meanings, it helps me to make sense of the world. This realization makes me as

researcher unable to remove fully my experiences, and later on justifies that autoethnography is a

combination of autobiography and ethnography (Keefer, 2010). Interestingly, Ellis (2004)

provides a description of autoethnography as a piece of writing that "showcase[s] concrete

action, dialogue, emotions, embodiment, spirituality, and self consciousness" (p. 38).

My Autoethnography as Represented in This Research

I sat on the flat, muddy paddy field with my dad. We were surrounded by tall paddy plants. I had a flute with me. I knew how to imitate the female quail sounds. I made the flute by myself using a tree branch and a strip from a banana leaf. My dad brought me here almost every day, especially after it rained. Rain season is good for hunting. There were a lot of fish; there were a lot of quail. These provisions from our Creator could save us money rather than going to market. I imagined at a young age—I had to think about how my parents could afford to feed my seven siblings and me. Life was difficult and life experiences matured me. I had to share many things in my life with my siblings. Due to that, I found seclusion in the library where I could go to my unlimited imagination by reading books.

Usually the hunting time was in the evening till the early morning. We used a gun. This was our bonding time. This was the only time that my dad could interact with me. The rest of the year, I wouldn't be at home. I attended a special boarding school. I was selected to attend this boarding school after the National Exam at the age of twelve. The government sent me there. I didn't want to go but I had to. My parents thought that school was good for me. I thought the school was too far. Until today I thought the school was not good. Life was difficult for me. How could it be good when I was among the few farmers' sons schooling with the rich nobles' kids? There were times I had to wear worn shoes. There were times I wore truncated pants just because my dad couldn't afford to buy me new trousers. But the rich nobles' kids never understood this. There was a time I was bullied because I was different. It was a mental torture department. I felt helpless. And the teachers were busy with the sons of nobles. I hated my school years. The only years that were fun for me were from 1996-1997. After many years of being bullied by the rich

noble kids, I developed vengeance and hatred. I bullied the kids back. The oppressed became the oppressor.

So the next hunting season was supposed to be a bonding time. I was quiet. My mom asked me if school was troubling. I was quiet. How could my parents help when I knew they were busy surviving? How much could my parents know about schooling life when both of them did not even finish schooling? Did this deter me to stop schooling? Yeah, I thought about it. I thought to quit school because I was different. At the same time, I knew I had to be patient. My dad was different that year. Life became difficult. In fact, we went hunting less compared to the previous seasons. My dad was busy—he had two jobs; a farmer during the day and at night, he was a security officer.

School years were over. I went to university because I was offered scholarships. The situation at university was different because I could work. No one bothered me anymore. I was a translator for a book company. There were times I could instruct my professors' kids in math and English. They didn't pay well but at least I could survive, rather than asking for money from my dad. I remembered I like to collect books. Usually after the semester was over, the rich nobles' students threw away their books, so I gathered the books that they threw away and kept them later to read. I was thankful because when I took literature for my ESL courses, I met an American professor that lent me books.

In terms of my relationship with others, I prefer to have companionship with someone that is older than me. I like to listen rather than to talk. It is a great way to learn from other people's experiences. I was lucky enough when some of the professors invited me to attend an intellectual circle. In the intellectual circle, I had the opportunity to read various kinds of books, ranging from politics, theology, theocracy, and history. They also brought me to attend seminars

and conferences usually related to political issues. Most of my friends are engineers, lawyers, and doctors. I benefitted from the discussions with my friends so much from listening and reading the books that my friends read.

I witnessed many wars in my life. I wasn't involved personally with the war but I read, listened, and watched the news. The first war that I witnessed through media was the Gulf War, 1993. I saw some Iraqi refugees come to my country. There was an Iraqi old guy that worked with my uncle. From there I learned the atrocities of war. I witnessed the Bosnian War later through media. I still remember the late news that night showing the penises of Bosnian Muslim men cut by Serbians and later fed to dogs. I also attended a lecture by the husband of a Bosnian refugee who detailed the journey that he and his wife had to go through. The Bosnian War was genocide; the Bosnian Muslim women were systemically raped by the Serbians and the men were killed, later to be dumped in trenches and the Serbians grew trees on the unidentified graves to cover their atrocities.

I noticed the war on Iraq under the pretext of War on Terror. The war is not really about finding the terrorists, but it is related to hegemony and control of Western influences on oil and the Middle East region. It is not about freedom and democracy. Could you imagine how hurtful my feelings were, watching the Muslim women and kids that were killed? Could you imagine how heart wrenching it was, watching all of the atrocities that happened to weaker human beings? Do I have to tell you that sometimes I cried at night watching kids losing their parents to the white phosphorus weapon? Do I have to tell you that sometimes I felt so heavy the responsibility that I have to bear on my shoulders, because as a Muslim, I am a part of a larger Ummah. It is not that I don't like to be a part of this Ummah, whose core teaching is on Tawhid

and justifying the equality among humans, but it's only I felt worthless to the inner core watching the Ummah being devoured one nation after another.

Did I tell you how I developed these concerns and these feelings? For the Muslim, concern and empathy for other Muslims are their upbringing since they were teenagers. The Muslims are brothers. They are one body. They are a nation. They couldn't help it. It is rooted in our core, coming from the Quran and Sunna. I understand that Muslims are one nation though they are separated by the countries' boundaries. I believe the boundaries were created by colonialists when they invaded Muslim countries for resources. When the colonials came, they divided the nations according to geography. It was the same thing that these colonials divided the human race according to categorization of race.

I followed my wife to the United States. I promised my father-in-law that I would take care of her. My wife changed my life from a man who didn't have a feeling of sympathy to a man that realizes life is full of responsibility. Ahh . . . Midwest . . . this is a good place to relax and spend time with my family. I was naïve and ignorant. This was a place where Wyatt Earp killed so many racist junkies. Yeah . . . did I tell you how angry I was when I was accused by the tenant at my rented home because he made a mess? There were broken XO bottles, cigarette butts in front of my home, and the tenant said I did that. Did I tell you I never drink? Did I tell you after that incident a policeman came to my home while I was sleeping, accusing me of domestic violence? Did I tell you that an American spit on my wife? Did I tell you that the American called my wife a terrorist at Wal-Mart? Little did I know that everything that happened was planned to kick me out from the apartment. Little did I know that I was treated like that because I was different. Later, related to the housing, my African American friend told me the landlord's strategies to kick out the renters from their property.

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Purpose of the Research

The main purpose of this research is to investigate Islamophobia and Muslims' religious experiences in the Midwest by focusing on factors that can be explained through the framework of Critical Race Theory as a foundation. This research seeks to propose Critical Muslim Theory as a new theory to the field of education because Critical Race Theory does not address elements specific to Islamophobia such as the role of Muslim identity and religion in the United States.

Research Question

The research question is: How does Islamophobia affect the lives of Muslims in the Midwest?

Research Design & Rationale

My research design is autoethnography, because as a Muslim, I have the qualities of permanent self-identification with my research participants. My research participants will not treat me as an outsider and will recognize that I am a part of them, having prior knowledge about them, their culture, and their languages (Hayano, 1979).

Autoethnography allows me to become a "public intellectual who produces and engages in meaningful cultural criticism" because it allows me to join many discourses in my research such as those about racism and religion (Denzin, 2003, p. 259). It makes me an investigative indigenous ethnographer because I can read the lines of my own lived experience and the experiences of cultural familiars to come to "a critical understanding of self and other" (Alexander, 1999, p. 310). Traditional science is concerned with objectivity, data quality, legitimacy, and ethics (Wall, 2008). These concerns suit the agenda of the Grand Narrative that essentializes validity, truth, and generalizibility. However, autoethnography can be used to outmode validity, truth, and generalizibilty (Ellis, 1999). This happens because the researcher

and the participants can use their experiences to convey understanding of a particular reality (Holt, 2003). Autoethnography empowers researchers' perspectives because it recognizes research as representative within a multilayered world that has multiple truths and viewpoints (Duncan, 2004, p. 27). According to Patton (1996), interaction with the participants themselves illuminates understanding of their oppressed situation. This is not a surprise because autoethnography allows someone's experience to be depicted; subjugated knowledge can be explored and, importantly, readers can see things through the researcher's and participants' self-representation (Adams & Jones, 2008). Mullin (2011) could not relate how autoethnography is a methodology where a self (researcher) can be related to the participants, however, every Muslim understands and believes that each soul is connected to the whole Muslim nation because they are brethren in Unity of Oneness of Allah. Though Muslims share many commonalities, they are not a homogeneous, monolithic group; each individual comprising the group still brings a unique perspective and set of experiences (Ginkel, 1994, p. 9.) This doctrine of relationship for Muslims is thicker than blood because it is based on faith. All of my understandings about Islam and how I view the world from my Muslim lens relate to autoethnography because various experiences and stories are shared within this thesis to describe discrimination that I and my participants face and how the dominant community failed to understand Muslims' religious experiences.

Also, I need to put the elements of introspection into my account of my research, confronting contradictions that I find in my research later on and accepting and understanding myself as I try to understand my research participants' perspectives and understanding (Ellis, 1999, p. 672). According to Ellis (1991), introspection is one method of studying meanings produced by self and others and they are highly contextual and cultural because it is a part of

self-identity. This is not something that should be deemed unacademic because according to Malthouse (2011), descriptions of incidents associated with this research are needed because the specifics help to explain the larger issue that I seek to explore and understand, which is Islamophobia in the Midwest. Autoethnography needs me to be involved "with the subject of inquiry," describing my own life experiences with Islamophobic behaviors and developing my own history in order to transfer my perspectives to the readers (McIlveen, Beccaria, Preez, & Patton, 2010, p. 604). To achieve the introspection of my research participants, I have to enter into the mind of the Muslim and understand the complicated issue of racism and Islamophobia, and then "to render those worlds understandable from the standpoint of theory grounded in behaviors, languages, definitions, attitudes, and feelings to those who studied" (Denzin, 1971, p. 166). In this dissertation, I use Critical Race Theory as the foundation to analyze the experiences and develop CMT.

Pilot Study and Protocol Development

A pilot study was needed to improve the study. It was designed to detect problems related to the research such as misunderstandings of the interview questions (Appendix A) and establishing a step-by-step protocol of the interview for the researcher to follow (Appendix B). It also helped to clarify definitional and data collection methodologies because of the complexity of the research topic, which involved sensitive issues related to race, religion, gender, and identity. When problems were identified, the researcher modified the methodology accordingly. For example, among the research participants, there were language barriers to overcome.

A pilot study was conducted at the Islamic Center in a predominantly White city in the Midwest. My pilot study research participants were one Muslim man and one Muslim woman from a predominantly White Midwestern university. They are between 20-30 years old. I know

them personally based on the discussion that I initiated with them regarding my field of study. After listening to my explanation about my study, participants agreed willingly to be involved in this pilot study. Explanations were given to them prior to conducting the pilot study. The explanation covered my research topic and the purpose of the study. Also, the participants knew that they were free to abstain from involvement without any risks. If the participants agreed after the explanation, I presented them with the interview protocol and interview questions. The pilot study assisted me in refining the research question with more clarity and specificity for this study.

Selection of Participants

This research proposes Critical Muslim Theory as a new theory to address Islamophobia and Muslims' religious experiences in the Midwest. The major purpose of the research is to understand Islamophobia and Muslims' religious experiences and relate these to the discrimination Muslims experience in United States' society. This research emphasizes my experiences and perspectives and those of my research participants, who are Muslim. Thus, my research participants can be anyone as long as they are Muslim. My research participants were selected purposively and based on convenience of location.

After receiving IRB approval for this research from the university, I sought and received the agreement from the president of the Muslim community center and explained my study to him. With his support, I made announcements during Friday congregational prayers and invited any Muslim men or women who were interested to participate in my study. Some of the female participants were invited to participate due to their relationship with my wife.

Selection of my participants was limited to one Muslim Center in a predominantly White city in the Midwest. Twelve interviews were face-to-face and six interviews were conducted via

Skype due to distance. My research participants selected the location that suited them for their individual interviews to take their comfort into consideration. Four interviews were conducted in coffee shops, six interviews through Skype, six interviews were at the Muslim Center, and one was conducted in the participant's home with my wife present.

Participants were nine adult Muslims: five females and four males, over 20 years of age. I originally invited ten people to participate, however, one African American Muslim male participant decided not to continue with this study because he felt that this research was to interrogate his new conversion from Christianity to Islam. I met with my research participants personally and explained my research and provided them with my interview protocol (Appendix B) and interview questions (Appendix A). For three of the women, my wife was present to ensure their feelings of comfort and safety. I discussed and addressed any concerns related to the interview questions or protocol they had. Each participant was provided with two copies of the letter of consent to sign—one for them to keep and one for my files. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without repercussion. Then, a time for an interview was determined mutually at a location determined by the participant to ensure his/her comfort.

Research Site

The research site is a predominantly White city in the Midwest. The population of this city is around 52,281 and includes the student population from Midwestern State University nearby. There are 43,645 White residents and the rest are non-White.

A Muslim Center in this city was established during early 1980s when Midwestern State University received Muslim students from Morocco and Indonesia. At first they acquired a two story house on July 2, 1982, which then was renovated and converted into a mosque. By 1993,

with the increasing number of Muslim students in the university, the Muslim students established an Islamic Center a year after the project was launched. Today, the Muslim Center remains to accommodate the needs of Muslims to practice their religion. The Muslim community is culturally diverse with Muslims from all around the world. The growing numbers of Muslims are from countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Ethiopia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, India, Syria, Palestine, Libya, Algeria, and even Muslims from the United States who have converted to Islam.

Role of the Autoethnographer in Qualitative Research

As an autoethnographer, I interacted significantly with my research participants. These interactions could affect my research especially as it relates to power and exploitation because if power is abused, it will affect the relationship between me and my research participants as well as my research findings (Christman, 1988). An autoethnographer writes from his/her perspectives and reflections; however, dealing with my research participants' wide ranges of values and experiences has the potential to present challenges. Though Muslims share many commonalities, they are not a homogeneous, monolithic group; each individual comprising the group still brings a unique perspective and set of experiences (Ginkel, 1994, p. 9). In autoethnography, the representations of self and research participants are blurred because the researcher is always involved in interpreting and recording reflections. However, this issue was not an obstacle because my role as an autoethnographer was related so much to detailing experiences and making sense of them and at the same time to focusing on "praxis —the actual experiences in the field" (Twyman, Morrison, & Sporton, 1999, p. 313) by "favored in depth studies" (Twyman et al., 1999, p. 314). The role of an autoethnographer is "seeking texts that allow us to enter the world of others in ways that have us more present in their experience, while

better understanding our own" (Burdell & Swadener, 1999, p. 21). This is not only research; it is a part of my journey to understand myself and articulate my voice.

Researcher Assumptions and Bias

When I integrated and conceptualized Critical Muslim Theory, I read extensive literature on Islamophobia cases in the United States of America and Europe. At the same time, I read Critical Race Theory and Social Reconstructionism in classes I took with my major professor. I am aware that my identity as a Muslim yearns to analyze, explain, and transfer my perspectives to others so that understanding and dialogue can be cultivated to achieve social justice. I feel the inability for Muslims to express themselves freely and without constraint and fear of negative repercussion is acknowledgment that Islamophobia is rampant and excessive. This awareness, however, is guided by strict guidelines. I am aware that as the researcher, I am the instrument in qualitative research, however, this does not mean that I am free from methodological ethics and requirements. I included member checking, debriefing participants, peer debriefing, rechecking my interpretation, tight triangulation, and journaling to check my discourse.

Data Collection

The processes for my data collection are delineated in the following.

Protection of Human Subjects

All research methodology conformed to policies set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Midwestern University (Appendix C). Participants chose their pseudonym or if they preferred, each participant was assigned a pseudonym. Every person was entitled to the right of privacy. Confidential information for research participants must be treated in accordance that it does not cause them harm (Galliher, 1973). Participants were provided with a letter of consent (Appendix D) and asked to sign two copies—one for them to keep and one for my files.

All of my interview data were stored in my office and available only to me and my principal investigator. The interview data will be kept in a locked cabinet for three years and then destroyed. The information related to this research that exists in my laptop is protected by password.

Timeline

A timeline tracked the progress of this research. The conceptualization for this research started during coursework with my major professor during Fall 2011. At that time, I had the opportunity to study Critical Race Theory and Social Reconstructionist philosophy. During the semester, the issue of Islamophobia was highlighted and discussed, prompting my interest in establishing Critical Muslim Theory.

My dissertation proposal meeting was December 4, 2012. Then, I conducted my Pilot Study April 2013. After an analysis of that pilot study data and any reworking of the interview protocol and interview questions, I sought and selected research participants by early April, 2013 after receiving IRB approval. Interviews and research analysis took place from early May 2013 through September 2013.

Interviews

Interviews attach meaning to the relationship developed by me as the researcher and my research participants because interviews can reveal my own framework of meanings. Therefore, I avoided imposing my assumptions and structures in gathering the interview responses (Britten, 1995). Interviews provide "us with a means for exploring the points of view of our research participants, while granting these points of view the culturally honored status of reality" (Miller & Glassner, 2011, p. 133).

I used semi-structured interviews to investigate my participants' experiences of Islamophobia and its relationship to racism in the Midwest. It was important for me, as the interviewer, to record accurately, gain cooperation, be neutral, actively listen, and maintain confidentiality. My participants selected locations for their interviews to ensure their comfort (Harrell & Bradley, 1999). There were 18 interviews—two for each participant and each interview took at least one hour. The interviews were recorded and stored on my password protected laptop. The rationale of having two interviews for each participant was to ensure the understanding, interpretation, reflection of my research participants are parallel and precise as well as describing the issue in a holistic manner to transfer understanding. I was aware and careful of inconsistencies and contradictions.

For example, my interview questions were open ended to allow them to elaborate on their experiences. If I came across interesting experiences from their interviews, I asked more questions in depth. This was done to understand their experiences deeply. There were times when the participants cried during the interviews and I stopped the interviews for many reasons. Firstly, I needed to understand what they were saying, so they had to calm down. Secondly, I didn't want any harm to happen to my participants because of this research. Thirdly, I didn't want my participants to think that I manipulated them in a way that made them relive their painful moments. Due to these factors, I selected the interview places carefully. For one female participant, the interview was in her home with my wife present and a female translator. One female participant was interviewed in a coffee shop; two female participants were interviewed at the Muslim Center with my wife present. The fifth female participant was interviewed via Skype. The male participants decided where they wanted the interviews to take place. Also, I my interview questions were based on previous research about Islamophobia to assist me in focusing

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my research topic and at the same time provide two-way communication between me and my research participants (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Shain, 2003). Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility both for me and my research participants to add new areas of discussion spontaneously as appropriate.

Building Rapport and Trust

During the pilot study, I refined and improved the interview questions and protocol. The improvement of the questions ensured they addressed the issue. For example, there might be a question that could disrupt the rapport and trust that already was established between me and my research participants. These are the kinds of questions that were restructured or eliminated.

It is important to establish rapport and build trust with my research participants. Most of my research participants are my close friends. I always visit them during my free hours or on the weekend. During summer, we spend most of our time fishing and travelling. Sometimes, my summer is spent at the Islamic Center helping the coordinators and management do activities related to the Muslim community such as cutting the grass during summers, fixing toilets, cleaning the mosque, or teaching new Muslim converts about the Quran or their academics and studies. Some of my research participants are involved in these tasks. From these activities I heard their stories and developed a good relationship with them. From this relationship based on same faith, we develop mutual understanding and share discussions and dialogue pertaining to our daily life and family. This is how I established rapport and trust with my participants

Observational Data and Visual Data

Participant observation, field work, and visual data are the products of interaction between me and my research participants. This involves collecting data, verbal or nonverbal, wherein collection of these data can be from life stories, opinions, or even things, tangible or

non-tangible (Jacob, 1988). For example, observation of participants' body language reactions upon receiving or remembering discrimination helped me to relate to the experiences and stories they provided. For example, when the female participants were crying, I was very quiet and let them cry as much as they wanted. For American culture, perhaps hugging is necessary but I am a Muslim; I don't want to do that and I don't think my female participants wanted it. In this situation, my wife hugged and calmed the female participants. There were times that my wife cried upon listening my participants' stories. This informed my holistic understanding because it was used to understand and interpret cultural behavior (Mulhall, 2002). Witnessing the agony and pain of my female participants created a determination in my heart that none of their stories would be wasted! It helps me to be attached to Islam stronger than I was before. No visual data was provided by any of my participants (Davidson, Dottin Jr., Penna, & Robertson, 2009).

Audio Recording, Transcription, and Storage

Audio recording and transcription of interviews was used to collect data. I did the audio recordings during interviews, stored them on my password locked personal computer, and later transcribed them. The raw and processed data was available only to me and my major professor.

<center>**Trustworthiness of the Data**</center>

The goal of this research is to value personal experiences and stories, so findings will not be generalized. However, to achieve trustworthiness in qualitative data, the study must still have the rigor that validity and reliability in quantitative studies (Lietz, Langor, & Furman, 2006). The Truth value is different in quantitative studies compared to qualitative studies: quantitative study focuses on internal validity and qualitative study focuses on deriving understanding from the discovery of human experiences (Krefting, 1990). In the following, I focus on the four aspects of

trustworthiness, which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Credibility is an actual representation of data from my research participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure credibility, rapport and trust need to be established for my research participants to be open with me. At the same time, I was able to see their perspectives and understanding. According to Bashein & Markus (1997), trust is based on "similarity, likability, prolonged interactions, appropriate behavior, and consistent behavior" (p. 36). That's why the researcher needs to be familiar with his research participants' culture (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also, credibility can be established by developing triangulation.

Triangulation helps the qualitative researcher achieve greater accuracy of understanding or judgments by providing different methods of data bearing for the same phenomenon (Jick, 1979). Triangulation is a validity procedure wherein researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). According to Denzin (1978), the researcher needs to be aware of (a) data triangulation and (b) investigator triangulation. For data triangulation, I used different sources to establish the validity of the study and these different sources are research participants, books, and journals related to the study of Islamophobia (Guion, Dehl, & McDonald, 2002). For investigator triangulation, this study itself involves two persons, me with my major professor as peer debriefer. I conducted member checks with my research participants to view my notes and transcriptions of their interviews to assure that I transcribed what they mean precisely (Koch,1993).

Transferability

Transferability is putting my research beyond this realm so that it can be applied or transferred to another context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to my understanding, transferability is related to detailed, rich, thick descriptions of my research participants' stories, which later can be transferred to other Muslim populations in the United States because there might be similarities pertaining to the research and readers' situation. In order to achieve transferability, I include rich, thick descriptions of my participants' narratives, which provide their stories and examples of their experiences as Muslims. Demographic information informs the participants' narratives and their experiences.

Dependability

My data that was analyzed and processed was assessed by my major professor to ensure consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My major professor checked my consistency by examining my data, my field notes, and the process (Golafshani, 2003). Also, I developed and concluded my understanding of this research based upon the research findings contributed by my research participants. Even my personal reflections are not rhetorical notions of my understanding only but are supported by research publications. I asked my participants for additional information to clarify what they said during their interviews. Member checks were done with each participant to ensure the accuracy of the interview transcripts and they were asked to correct anything that was not correct, as well as free to delete anything they did not want to share.

Confirmability

The data must be recorded consciously and organized throughout the research process (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). To achieve this, I prepared a research audit trail that encompassed thick, rich descriptions of my study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Another important consideration

upon developing an audit trail is to ensure the pureness of the data by not changing its meaning and make the data according to the understanding of the speaker and its relation to the context (Hoepfl, 1997). I maintained a detailed journal that recorded my perspectives and reflections. Even my analysis is free for my research participants to see and read to ensure I captured their experiences accurately. Omar was the only participant who chose to read my analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis should not be dependent upon one particular method. It should be a combination of methods that, according to Miles & Huberman (1994), need to be choreographed by the researcher. The main objective is to provide a story that reflects experiences in which the stories are bounded by context, are concrete, and can be proven by interpersonal checking (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986). Creswell (2007) provides a data analysis spiral to assist qualitative researchers with managing their data. The first spiral is data management where I arranged my data systematically. My first priority was to put together individual responses with their personal artifacts by putting them into numbered files. The files were labeled according to my research participants without compromising their identity. I also gathered my personal reflections in another file separately from the responses of my research participants.

For the second layer of the data analysis spiral, Creswell (2007) emphasizes reading and memoing, or reflecting on written notes. This stage helps the researcher to get a general idea and schemata of interviewees' responses on the research topic. If we compare this stage with grounded theory, it is considered as data gathering where the reflection of the researcher is mostly on gathering and analyzing data to raise and check emerging ideas and questions because data is constructed through interpretive acts and the construction of reality from both sides: researcher and research participants (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012, p. 44). When I reached this

stage in my study, I always reflected and asked questions back and forth to my research

participants in order to clarify understandings of what they meant. Rapport is important to gain

trust because through this, my participants were open and willing to tell their experiences to me.

This is not any different in comparison to the writing of autoethnography because I combined

autobiography and ethnography of myself and wove them into my participants' stories. I

retroactively selected my past history. My participants were selective in detailing the

Islamophobic accounts of their experiences (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). It produced

considerable reflection because I analyzed my experiences together with my participants'

experiences. I sought to find similar experiences of Islamophobia.

     Creswell (2007) focuses on describing, classifying, and interpreting data as the third stage

in the data analysis spiral. This stage involves the researcher providing his interpretation;

however, my interpretation is based on literature reviews and prior to the interpretation stage, the

data was coded according to categories, themes, and dimensions of the information (Creswell,

2007). However, I found the process of data coding in grounded theory suits autoethnography

well because the researcher can "scrutinize and interact with their data, stopping and asking

analytic questions of the collected data" (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012, p. 44). This can be

achieved by focusing on initial coding where the researcher focuses on the main concern of the

research participants, their assumptions, and what is happening in the data (Thornberg &

Charmaz, 2012, p. 45). Then, the researcher is focused on coding where the researcher develops

categories from the initial coding through selective coding. This process informs the researcher

about the comparison of the data. Before the theoretical coding stage, the researcher makes links

and connections with the data and ideas that might be related to the study. Memoing is not a one

stage process but is involved in all of the stages of analysis, and this process goes hand in hand

with reflection. In writing my autoethnography, I wrote many epiphanies with my own autobiographical life and how they are related to how I think and perceive the world. I also repeated the same process with my participants' experiences. This means that epiphanies were written from the beginning phase of initial coding. This can happen and is legitimate because, according to Ellis (2004), autoethnography can expand outside the realm of anthropology and merge into different discipline. In my case, it merges into my understanding of Critical Race Theory and Muslim way of knowing. Epiphanies combined with the initial stage of coding are powerful because I connect with my experiences and my participants' lived experiences. They merge and create understanding and uniformity, in complex and unique ways about Islamophobia and Muslims, across gender, culture, race, and nationality. I changed from a radical person to a dialogist individual. I also was aware of my participants' stories and made meanings and connections to my own life. The process itself builds tolerance. This process went in and out within me and I didn't stop reflections. For example, when my participants cried, I could relate to my feelings and experiences when I feel frustrated and angry when my wife and I faced religious discrimination. I actively reflected by comparing my participants' experiences with my own experiences and I found the similarities between them. If the experiences were different, I made notes and tried to understand why they were different. I imagined the level of sadness and difficulty they faced, together with other difficulties that added and compounded their burdens. I concluded my field notes by preparing to identify themes that made sense to me, either through my own understandings or previous readings. Definitely, this does not come from no point of reference because my identity comes with baggage. This is not a grounded theory study. I am a Muslim. I face Islamophobia. I learned Critical Race Theory.

Lastly, the researcher can form theoretical coding from the categories or themes that he produces so that "relationships can be seen from each other as research questions can be integrated into a new theory" (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012, p. 51). The interesting part of this part of the process is that I relate my reflections based on the theoretical coding to see the similarities between my own perspectives and literature reviews with findings from this research. Creswell (2007) calls this stage representing and visualizing. My overarching research question is about Islamophobia and how it affects my experiences and my Muslim participants' experiences in the Midwest. From this main research question, I generated 12 interview questions to explore Islamophobia and our experiences. In relation writing autoethnography, every response and answer from these 12 interview questions helped me to recognize themes from my own experiences as a Muslim who experienced Islamophobia. I achieved these themes by constantly providing reflections and epiphanies. According to Ellis, Adam & Bochner (2011), autoethnographer must:

> retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity. However, in addition to telling about experiences, autoethnographers often are required by social science publishing conventions to analyze these experiences.

Individual responses were recorded according to the participants' pseudonyms in order to protect their identity. After finishing each interview, I transcribed and read each transcript twice. I then sent the transcribed interview to my research participants. Any corrections were submitted to me via email and I made any changes needed. Z made some corrections to the first transcript and there were no changes by any of the other participants.

I started reading my participants' narratives and at the same time writing my reflections, which were related to my understanding of their backgrounds. For male participants, it was not difficult because they are my friends. For female participants, I asked my wife for assistance to understand better their backgrounds to develop their personal portraits. I wrote my reflection for each narrative and put them in their respective files according to their names. I kept searching for emerging themes from the narratives. From reflection on the narratives, if I had any questions, I emailed or called the participant for clarification. For example, I asked Z via Skype about the incident that happened to her the night she was kicked out from her home for clarification. Another example is when I asked Niqabi's father about an incident of a Muslim that was arrested due to suspicion about involvement with a terrorist activity to understand the story that was told.

Data were first coded using descriptions that represented the aspects prominent in the participants' narratives describing their experiences as Muslims in the Midwest. These descriptions then were collapsed into larger representative themes that emerged from analysis of the participants' narratives. Although CRT was used as a foundation for the research, as the themes emerged, they took on their own character as CMT.

Summary

This research design is autoethnography. I used autoethnography for analysis, interpretation, and reflection guided by CRT. Chapter 4 addresses the results of the study as follows: (a) the demographic data of the nine participants, (b) personal portraits of each participant, (c) participants' narratives, (d) emerging themes, and (e) summary of the chapter. Chapter 5 provides discussion, the development of Critical Muslim Theory, and recommendations for future practice and research.

CHAPTER 4—FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents how my autoethnography and the narratives of my participants produce multiple consciousness in understanding me and Islamophobia. The participants' narratives detail their experiences of Islamophobia as a result of their religion. The chapter has five sections: (a) the demographic data of the nine participants; (b) personal portrait of each participant; (c) participants' narratives and findings, (d) the emerging themes, and (e) summary of the chapter.

Nine participants were interviewed from early May 2013 through September 2013 after receiving IRB approval. One of the nine participants was interviewed by my wife and one translator to ensure her comfort. Each interview took more than one hour. Three participants were interviewed through Skype because of the distance. None of the participants shared photos of themselves or any other artifacts related to the study. Two participants dialogued with the researcher through Skype conferencing to answer additional questions and to clarify statements that were made during the interview.

The interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) and created by the researcher based on literature reviews of Islamophobia and my own experiences. The interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed. The researcher asked permission from the participants to audio-tape record the interviews. To ensure accuracy, the transcribed interviews were given to the participants for accuracy. They were given full freedom to delete anything that did not represent what they meant. None of the transcribed interviews were changed and no deletions were made.

Demographics

Table 4.1 details the demographics of each participant: (a) pseudonym, (b), gender (c) age, (d) self-identification, (e) prior USA location, (f) USA location, (g) level of education, (h) place of origin, (i) citizenship, (j) marital and parental status, (k) Islamic affiliation, (l) years of being a Muslim.

Table 4.1 Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Self-identification	Prior USA Location	USA Location	Level of Education	Place of Origin	Citizenship	Marital & Parental Status	Islamic Affiliation	Years being Muslim
Ayesha	Female	40	Egyptian American	New York	Midwestern town	High school, Egypt	Egypt	USA	Mother, 2 sons	Sunni	40
Niqabi	Female	22	Saudi	N/A	Midwestern town	MS	Saudi Arabia	Saudi	Single	Sunni	22
Injil	Female	24	White American	Illinois	Midwestern town	PhD	USA	USA	Married,1 son	Sunni but pro Shiite	6
Midwest Muslimah	Female	34	Black American	Midwestern town	Midwestern town	BS	USA	USA	Married, 4 children	None	18
Z	Female	22	White American	Wyoming	Midwestern town	Nursing degree	USA	USA	Engaged	Sunni	2
Omar	Male	34	African American	Arkansas	Midwestern town	BS	USA	USA	Married, 4 children	Sunni	18
Pseudonymous	Male	56	White American	Arkansas	Midwestern town	BS	USA	USA	Married, 5 children	Sunni	22
Uncle	Male	40	Bangladesh American	Midwestern town	Midwestern town	MBA	Bangladesh	USA	Married	Sunni	40
Abu Kutub	Male	44	White American	Midwestern town	Midwestern town	Community College	USA	USA	Married, 2 children	Sunni	10
Abu Irfan Kalantani	Male	33	Malay	Various places in Malaysia	Midwestern town	MS	Malaysia	Malaysia	Married, 2 children	Sunni	33

Personal Portraits of Participants

This section provides a descriptive narrative of the participants in this study. I collected the information from the interactions that I had with them over the years I have lived in this Midwestern town. My descriptions about my participants sometimes are related to their family because as Muslims, we are more centralized toward collectivism rather than individualism. This is especially true for my female participants because I usually know their family members first, before knowing them, and then I met them after my wife introduced me to her friends.

All of the participants in this study are Muslims. The average of their age is 30 years. The oldest participant was Pseudonymous, whom I met when I first arrived in this Midwest town five years ago. The youngest of the participants is my wife's friend. I know her personally because her father is my Quran teacher. Before this study I did not have any interaction with her; I only knew her through her dad and later through my wife. Sis of the participants were born in the United States. Three of the participants are bilingual and the rest are fluent in American English because they are native speakers.

Only one participant did not attend college. Two of my participants went to college at different points of their life. The rest of my participants are still active studying. One of them is taking an online degree course, and the rest are university students.

My participants consist of five females and four males. Their skin complexions are varied because one of them is a South Asian Bangladeshis American male, four of them are White Americans (two females and two males), two of them are African American (male and female), and two are Arab females. All of my participants are married except one female participant who is single.

Personal Portrait: Ayesha, "A Lovely Mother"

I knew Ayesha through my wife, however her husband is my close friend. I taught her husband how to a drive car during the summer. I used my own car and used the parking block at the University's stadium to teach him how to drive. He offered me money but I refused. I didn't think it was necessary for him to incur any charges since I know they just arrived from Egypt.

Ayesha identified herself as a great cook and, yes, indeed she is. Whenever there is an occasion at our local community center, the Director of the Muslim Center gives all the cooking supplies to her. She is more than happy to cook for the Muslims there. She won't take a lot of money for the events because she believes she does it for the sake of Allah. If she takes the money, it might be one dollar for every seven dollars of cost per meal. Even if she charged more than this; I don't have a problem accepting the charge, because, firstly, cooking is not easy. It takes a lot of time and patience. At times, I heard she got sick because she overworked. Secondly, she needs the money to support her two sons for their education. Thirdly, her husband has a health problem. Even though they are covered by insurance, I believe the money is not enough.

They work at various places to support their life expenses. I have compassion for her family because both of them are older and still have to work to support their family. Her husband is 50 years old but still works. There were times when I went to Wal-Mart to buy food around 3:00 a.m. and, to my surprise; I saw her husband still lifting heavy boxes. The next day, her husband was admitted to the hospital due to heart problems and stress.

Ayesha now is an American citizen. Difficult life and political unrest in Egypt caused her to apply for American citizenship. She wants her sons to receive a good education from the American educational system. In fact, this is the main reason why they applied for a green card

when they were in Egypt. She always describes what the future will look like; having a positive side that her kids will be successful through education. She also likes to make her house look beautiful, clean, and tidy.

Personal Portrait: Niqabi, "A Fighter"

Niqabi has seven siblings and she loves them very much. She is concerned about her siblings. When one of her sisters was bullied, she provided the emotional support needed by her younger siblings. She inherits this character because she was bullied when she attended an elementary school in this Midwestern town. Also, she is the first daughter in her family.

Niqabi is a female, age 22, from Saudi Arabia. I was interested to interview her because she wears niqab—a hijab that covers everything on her face except her eyes. This interested because I read about the negative incidents that happened to Muslim women in France that wear a scarf. Since I don't know her personally, I only could approach her only through my wife. Further, I have utmost respect for a woman who wears the niqab because not every Muslim woman can do it.

Niqabi is a strong woman. That's why I consider her a fighter, but she is not aggressive. She is a strong woman because it takes a lot for a Muslim woman to wear the niqab in this Midwestern society where even a slight attachment to Islam is considered alien. It means she has her own stand and belief and she holds to it strongly and dearly. She helps Muslim women in this community by providing emotional support and help. There was a time when one of the Indian women was abused by her husband and Niqabi offered her house to the lady until the situation was resolved.

I know her father in his capacity as a teacher and my student relationship with him. Her father is my Quran teacher and well respected in this community because he is the local Imam

here. I usually consult her dad in matters related to religious jurisprudence. In fact, in one of her dad's lecture and discussion sessions, I had an epiphany. I started to realize my radical thinking and methodology were wrong and needed to be changed.

Personal Portrait: Midwest Muslimah, an "Astonishing Female Leader"

Midwest Muslimah is a caring mother to her four beautiful daughters but at the same time, is a strict mom. She home schools her kids. It is worth her time because her kids won many awards especially related to academics. She takes her kids' education seriously. Her husband said to me that their daughters will not be allowed to go out to play until they finish their homework. Because of her knowledge about the curriculum for American school kids, she is now a principal for the Muslim Sunday school in this community. I used to observe the way she manages the school and I like it very much. As an individual who has a Master's degree in education, she does a good job making the Muslim Sunday School successful and enjoyable.

She is not a brutal mom the way Muslim women are often characterized by the West. During the weekends, the family travels with their kids to spend their time with other close family. She wants her kids to be connected with her other family members who are not Muslim yet. Midwest Muslimah sacrificed a great deal for her parents who are not Muslims even though her parents don't like that she is a Muslim woman now. She has many opportunities offered to her by her Saudi friend to work overseas as a school manager. However, she rejected the offers thinking that her parents might need her help one day. She puts forth considerable effort to win her parents' hearts.

As a full time housewife, she is an excellent cook. My wife told me that she is funny and has a lot of jokes to share. There was a time when she managed a party for her neighborhood and it was attended by Muslims and non-Muslims. The Muslim community here is proud of her

because she managed to conduct and organize such a party. She has good leadership skills and the ability to influence people about her opinions. I am proud of my Muslim sister because as a convert, she achieves much more than I can achieve.

Personal Portrait: Injil, a "Future Psychiatrist"

Injil is a nice, cheerful person despite some negative experiences in the past that happened to her. She is not a selfish person and willing to help any person who is in need. She doesn't let the past tragedy haunt her. She is involved with a foster care parent agency and is one of the active members in this Midwestern town. She takes care of three children at her house ranging in age from 9-14 from the agency. The children usually have been mentally and sexually abused by their previous families. I respect her courage and efforts to change the lives of these children. My wife told me that her ex-husband took her son away from her. During the custody battle, her husband brought a photo of her wearing a hijab and showed it to the court. On that particular day, she was not wearing a hijab, fearing that she might lose her son to her husband. It saddens me that she lost custody of her son to her ex-husband. To make matters worse, her ex-husband keeps scaring her son by telling him that she was a student of Bin Laden and knows how to explode a bomb.

She is an active student in a Department at Midwestern University in this Midwestern town. She earned a teaching assistantship, which is a competitive position in her Department. She teaches undergraduates and at the same time, conducts laboratory research. Her life is busy. She is finishing her PhD as soon as possible so she can move on with her life. During her free time, she loves spending her time with the children at her home by doing fun activities with them.

She is definitely a thinker and a fighter. She provides many useful suggestions on how to improve the relationship between the Muslim community and the non-Muslim American community. For example, she believes that the Muslim community in this Midwest town needs to engage more with the public. From this engagement, awareness will be developed by the public that the Muslim community here exists and wants to improve the relationship between them and the rest of the community.

Personal Portrait: Z, a "Future Muslimah Doctor"

Z is a strong-willed White American Muslimah. She was in nursing school and finished on time despite having problems with her family when they learned about her conversion to Islam. After graduating from nursing school, she continues her study to become a medical doctor. I admire her strong will because medical school in America is among the toughest in the world and the medical field itself is challenging. This shows that she is intelligent and strong. Many people could not do what she does. As a nurse, she deals with her patients' problems. She witnesses labor pain, patients throwing up, and more. At the same time, she has to deal with questions from her patients related to her religion because she wear a hijab, while making her patients comfortable with her answers and not offending them.

Z loves her parents even though they are not Muslim. She calls them frequently to make sure they are okay. She also cares about her health and cycles a lot.

Personal Portrait: Omar, a "Critical Thinker"

Omar is my best friend. He is slightly older than me, and to my surprise, he is a deep thinker. When we meet, he discusses critically about books he reads. He told me before that he has a large collection of books in his library at his home. I sometimes borrow his books and then we spend time discussing the books that I borrow from him.

He has been in this Midwestern town for a long time. He witnessed the rise and fall of the community. He noticed the changes after 9/11 and how it impacted the Muslim community. He told me once that the aftermath effect of 9/11 impacted the Muslims negatively more than the Americans themselves because they are torn with the hatred from some Americans. He said that American Muslims have to deal with the media portraying and depicting negative images and stereotypes about Islam and Muslims.

He advised me not to give up on American society at large. He told me that this society doesn't understand Islam the way it is supposed to be. It is then the responsibility of Muslims themselves to introduce Islam to the American society in general by practicing Islam as the way Prophet Muhammad[40] practiced the religion. He told me that all Muslims need to be positive and contribute to the improvement of American society.

Omar has exceptional oratory skills and he is a powerful public speaker. I enjoy listening to his Friday sermon. I listen to his speech attentively because this is how I benefit from his readings. During his free time, he loves to help his wife play with their kids. One time he asked me to teach his kids how to use compound bow. Another time he asked me to teach his kids the martial art that I learned in Malaysia when I was young. He also asked me how to teach him and his kids how to swim.

Personal Portrait: Pseudonymous, an "Open Library"

Pseudonymous is a man full of wisdom. He is an open library. When he lived in a town nearby this Midwestern town, we always had potluck parties and brought food to his house. I used the opportunity to ask him many questions ranging from politics to the history of the United

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[40] (Pbuh)

States. As an older man who has a degree and master's courses in history and politics, he explained in detail his answers to the questions we asked.

Pseudonymous is a loving father and husband. He is married to a Malay woman. He encourages his wife to continue her PhD. He supports his wife by paying for her books and tuition fees. From the marriage, they have four kids. He always travels with them during the summer and goes fishing with them. His youngest son is a softball player for the school. They never miss any games and they enjoy attending the games when their son plays for the school even though they receive stares and weird looks because of who they are. Additionally, Pseudonymous encourages his kids to be active in social activities and involved with outdoor activities.

Pseudonymous used to own a grocery store in a Midwestern town. Later, he had to close the grocery store because no one came to his shop. His grocery store was converted into a mosque. This was a good idea because he had to travel to the nearest Midwestern town every Friday to attend the Friday Sermon, which took 45 minutes driving time. Despite the boycott from the surrounding community, he maintained a good relationship with his neighbors. Currently, he lives in Malaysia because his wife received an offer as a professor in one of the universities there. He continues his education by taking an online master's degree in English.

Personal Portrait: Uncle, a "Humble Muslim"

Uncle is my close friend. He is originally from Bangladesh, however, he migrated to the United States three months after 9/11. He moved to the United States because his family owned a business in one of the Midwestern towns. He also wanted to benefit from a good education in the United States.

Uncle is generous with his money and time. I benefit from his advice on life and how to be a fruitful worker. He advises me to work hard because he believes success is attained through hard work and diligence. He believes discipline is a recipe to success and to be an open-minded person willing to listen to different kinds of opinions. During fasting month, he cooks for the singles for free. The food is provided for them. I notice many Muslim students came and waited for his cooked food. It shows his food is delicious.

Uncle is married to a lady from Bangladesh. He received his American passport six years after migrating here. His wife provides support to the Muslim community in this town. Reflecting on their efforts and contributions to the Muslim community, I have the utmost respect for them. He keeps advising me to use my skills for the development of others; egardless of skin color and religion. He keeps reminding me that Islam doesn't belong to one particular race or person, but rather the good message of Islam belongs to the whole universe.

Personal Portrait: Abu Kutub, an "Ocean of Knowledge"

Abu Kutub is my close friend. In this interview, he named himself Abu Kutub, which means 'father of books'. He is my mentor and he is at the same level as Omar to me. I admire him for his knowledge and advice. He is a hardworking person too. At the same time, he has a quality that I don't have, which is patience and focus. He cares about others. For example, I traveled with him across the Midwest in order to bury the dead body of a Muslim brother who had no one when he died. I believe his life experiences contributed to what a remarkable individual he is.

His mastery of Arabic is better than mine even though he converted to Islam a few years ago and I have been a Muslim since birth. His knowledge of Islam is more advanced when compared to other Muslims that I know. He is among the men who changed my perspective

towards Americans; that I should be more patient and tolerant toward them because most Americans have no knowledge about Islam. Too often, whatever is presented in the media, even though it is not true, it accepted without investigation or question.

Abu Kutub is patient with his dad, even though his dad disowned him. He keeps calling him to let him know that his dad means the world to him. Abu Kutub used to advise me to respect and honor our parents even though our parents have different beliefs than us because that is one of the important and main teachings of Islam.

Personal Portrait: Abu Irfan Kalantani, "A Writer"

I love reading and writing. I also love poems. I used to write poems and in my diary when I was 14 to 23, reflecting on many things—ranging from incidents, accidents, shitty things that I did, people that I hate, to books that I read. I also know how to draw, but these talents (poems and drawing) were gone when I found my mom reading my letters and diary. I didn't write poems anymore. Before that, I received prizes for writing poems and sometimes chocolate or flowers from strangers (due to my poems). I couldn't retaliate against my parents, so to release the anger; I killed and tortured the animals at my dad's farm. That's how I learned to make traps. Yeah, he owned small piece of farm land after retiring from the army.

Despite doing the bad things to release my agony, I quietly regreted the bad things that I did and made oaths never to do them again. If I felt tense, I went to the mosque and slept there. It was a safe place because Malay Muslims rarely went there to pray. They prefer to pray at home. The mosque is my sanctuary, especially an empty mosque. I like an empty mosque because it gives me a peaceful abode to hide from home. The mosque also provided various kinds of books that prospered my interest about understanding Islam. Sometimes I found a real religious scholar

that gave me good advice without judging me. This made me attach to Islam and being a Muslim.

When I was 28 years old, I had the opportunity to travel to Midwestern town, United States of America. I followed my wife because she pursued her PhD in of the science field related to food and engineering. Later, I had the opportunity to continue my Masters and a year later I graduated with flying colors. Since my wife had not finished her studies yet, I decided to pursue my PhD to improve my employment opportunities in Malaysia if I went home later. I developed an interest in studying and writing, especially addressing the oppressed after reading books provided by my professors, through movies that I watched, or simply listening to lecturers from various Muslim scholars that reside in the United States. My eyes were opened to many forms of oppression and I could relate and situate myself because I used to oppressed and an oppressor (that I am not proud of).

Participants' Counterstories

Is Oprah's story powerful? It is powerful because it is simple yet conveys unexpected narratives, evoking emotions. She provides enough context to enable the viewer to see through her eyes. She also sustains the viewer's mood with background music that accommodates the theme that she wants to present. So too, are my participants' counterstories. They debunk the hegemonic, patriarchal dominant point of view about Muslims and Islam.

I don't know if my story has a defining moment. I don't know if my autoethnography is as good as Oprah Winfrey's weekly stories. But I believe researchers want to read materials that lead to growth. Researchers spend countless hours reading papers in a limited time and are patient because "conference attendees are hungry for something different" (Ellis, Bochner, Denzin, Lincoln, Morse, Pelias, & Richardson, 2008, p. 255). I don't know if I will bring

something different. Only time can tell. I begin by providing stories to illustrate the complexities of Islamophobia from the perspectives of Muslims in the Midwest. My stories and experiences are woven throughout this research in Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5. The stories are varied and develop the pattern of Islamophobia through the emerging themes. As microaggression shows how engrained racism is in society, the participants' narratives and my stories and experiences demonstrate how engrained Islamophobia is in this Midwestern setting. Seeing these patterns helps one experience an aha moment.

Some of my Muslim friends came to the United States because they believe this country provides the opportunity and freedom to be what they want to be. They didn't come to create chaos. They have been struggling for years in their country to survive. Life in their country was not easy. Egyptians have high inflation in their economy. For example, a mechanical engineering professor that works in the Egyptian government university earns just one hundred dollars a month. He or she has no health insurance and has to commute every day to work; sometimes the travelling time is four hours. This is the situation in Egypt. I begin with Ayesha's counterstory because she is from Egypt.

Ayesha: I am not a Camel Jockey

Note that for Ayesha's interview, my wife accompanied me to ensure Ayesha's feelings of comfort and security and a translator also was present.

It's American people doing the bad things . . . in the kitchen I working . . . cook in the kitchen . . . my husband also working with me . . . cook in another building.This woman won't speak with me because she would come in the morning. She come, I say assalamualaikum (or hi) to everybody right? She said hi to each one but not me . . . you know. And it's obvious . . . she said hi, hi, hi, but me, not me.

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Ayesha said that the human resource person where she worked told her to tell the judge that she was not a full time worker but in truth she worked 40 hours per week. This happened when she went to the court for a worker's compensation claim. She fell while she was working and weeks later realized that she could file a claim.

Ayesha: "Yes, she wanted me to lie because she knows I am not to speak English very well."

My wife: "Okay."

Translator: "But she did not tell the interpreter to lie."

My wife: "Okay because she will create trouble."

Ayesha: "And after this, she doesn't speak with me at all, like hi, how are you...she didn't speak with me at all. [Ayesha speaks Arabic]"

Translator: "The human resource told her, she knows that she works 40 hours per week, but she wants her to lie to the judge and tell him 12 hours per week. She didn't know about all the insurance money behind it. She used her lack of knowledge about the insurance policy, workplace policy."

The hostile treatment that Ayesha received surpasses a racial microagression; her treatment involves physical aggression. Ayesha is not a dangerous woman; she is not a threat and doesn't deserve to be called a "camel jockey." Her workplace experiences of aggressive actions towards her resulted from Islamophobic attitudes. She was mocked first, and then when her perpetrators realized she wouldn't fight against their insults, they continued by offering her bacon.

Ayesha: "the other one . . . they take the bacon . . . you know the bacon?"

My wife: "bacon"

Ayesha: "In front of my mouth and told me to eat and say 'this is very good but Islam is not good.' They asked me why Muslim men marry four and you . . . only one . . . you can search for a boyfriend. I told him I am married. I said my husband is working with me. He told me no."

My wife: "So he is suggesting to you to have another boyfriend?"

Ayesha: "Most of the people are not nice in this. When I am clean in the hall, he put his leg like this and he . . . he wants to make me fall down."

While she walked, a man intentionally put his leg out to trip her, or her female bigot boss threw utensils into dirty water—the same boss who asked her to falsify information in front of the judge so that the judge wouldn't know the truth about her workplace injury. I contemplated the paradox of why this bigoted boss hired an Egyptian lady in the first place. This is a paradox because discrimination in the workplace is prohibited, but at the same time individualistic American thinking needs a blue collar worker to do the dirty jobs. Since Ayesha is a "camel jockey" who wears a scarf and doesn't communicate in English well, she has to bear the resentment and racist treatment of her boss. I wonder if this bigoted attitude is related to symbolic racism because we can delineate all the factors that allow her to be subjugated: female, Muslim, non-white, low education.

Did the boss fear Ayesha, a harmless woman who migrated from Egypt to America in hopes that her kids could get a good education—a good education system that allows children to express themselves in comparison to our education system that we have in our country—a good education system that cultivates the love for reading? Muslims come to the United States for many reasons, mainly (a) for the education system and policy, (b) for health-related matters, especially to go to Mayo Clinic in order to receive treatment, (c) for business opportunity, or (d)

for tax benefits. These are among the reasons good Muslims come to the United States. Ayesha's boss had no reason to fear her.

Niqabi: We kill 360 of your people; you kill 1 of our people.

Niqabi came here for an education. I developed an interest in interviewing her because she wears a niqab, which is a full hijab. She explained:

I mean as far as practicing Islam, I practice every day, so that kind of, that gives me my way of life like prayer, like how I do things. It also [relates] to my intention when I do anything, life is for Allah. When I study, [I study] for Allah, when I . . . I mean anything I do in my life, I do it for the intention of seeking Allah's reward. So I don't always agree with their [American non- Muslims] way of life. But there are good things that they do. I really don't judge people. I don't. I like to talk to people and [see] what is behind that person. If they have something good to say and I like what they say, I will, I like it and I probably did and adopt my life around it. If I don't like it I forget it straightaway. I don't really think about their lifestyle much. For example, drinking. I don't know, the way they dress [sexy and provocative], I disagree with that. I won't and I wouldn't, I guess I won't adapt my life to that; I won't change my life to that. To be like them [to be dressing and drinking like them]. I mean, other things than that, I mean from Western culture, there are good things that I really like and I think they actually, they parallel to Islam or might equate to Islam. For example, freedom of speech, which is something that I admire and I like because it doesn't go against, actually it goes with my values, not against them. That is something that I admire in the Western Culture.

I asked my wife to be with me when I interviewed her so that she would feel secure and safe in her attire and in being in the presence of a male. I assumed at first that, as a full-fledged

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practicing Muslim woman, her appearance would invite the same trouble that happened to French Muslim women—secular law hindering their religious freedom by banning the niqab in public. Why is there so much hatred for the hijab and the niqab and ridiculing them when Muslim women wear them with smiles and pride due to their love to Allah? Are nuns treated the way our Muslim women are treated?

I suspected that she would not willingly speak her own mind but I was wrong. She is my wife's friend. Her mom is also my wife's teacher for the weekly class she teaches for Muslim women on the Quran. Among themselves, Muslim women do not cover their hair. And the spirit of wearing hijab and niqab is not to seclude themselves from the public. I don't bar my wife from attending a public university in Malaysia and she earned a PhD from the United States, something that I am proud of. My Quran teacher, who is at the same time a dean for Economic Faculty in a Saudi University, encouraged his daughter, one of this study's participants, to continue her master's degree. However, Niqabi has had negative experiences. Reflecting on one of her memories a few days after the 9/11 tragedy, Niqabi said:

> Yeah, in an elementary school, there was one occasion where my sixth grade teachers and this [what her six grade teachers did], this hurt me even more...but I guess it is not so much because I was a Muslim, I guess it's the war and everything and he was angry. It was after 9/11 and I think America just had invaded Afghanistan. Yeah, they just invaded Afghanistan and on that day, on that day, in the morning, an American soldier was killed in Afghanistan, and it was the very first American soldier killed in Afghanistan. That time 300 something Afghani people were dead, were killed by Americans and I think that was the first class at school and we were sat up, and you know this is the sixth grade class . . . 12 years old for God's sake, he got up to the board and he wrote 360 something and

the other side of the board he wrote 1, and he turned around and he said, he is looking at

me and he said, "They killed one American soldier, we [Americans] killed 360 something

of them." I was just, "MY GOD" and all of them were children and I was thinking, it was

probably like they threw a bomb. That's how this guy [the soldier] died. He was just

making the whole thing and it was so rude, very rude. I could tell he was talking to me. I

don't know what he was thinking. I am not even Afghani. Because I am a Muslim I guess

he kinda linked it all together and the one thing I was thinking was that those 360

something people are children like me and he is happy standing there . . . YAY! We

killed 360 something of you and you only managed to kill one. It was shocking. I was

just sad.

I was thinking the same thing. How could a child be blamed? The teacher abused his power and

destroyed the relationship that he built with his students, particularly students of color. This

involves trust and once it is broken, it is difficult to mend. Students start to reflect on many

things, particularly: are they accepted and viewed as equal in the classroom? Are they viewed as

problems in the classroom? These questions lead to assumptions about whether they are

celebrated or "just an island." Teachers' treatment also leads to bullying. It could happen if a

teacher kept quiet or ignored the incident when a microagression is directed towards any student.

Other students will then think that the microagression is not serious and tolerated; hence, it will

be continued. Students will think that the issue is not serious. Sadly, in this situation, the teacher

is a bigot.

Injil: Muslims are not fish, Muslims don't live in the ocean; Muslims are just a boat.

I could tell from her eyes, she suffered a lot. This was my prejudgment after my wife told

me her story. Her ex-husband took their son away from her. Her husband brought her photo

wearing the hijab to the court telling the judge that she is a Muslim. And on that particular trial day, she didn't wear her hijab because she wanted her son back. I did not know about this because occasionally when I met her in the elevator, she looked happy and cheerful. I didn't know there was another story behind her happy appearance. I have to admit hearing this story is my weak spot. I understand the feeling because my sons are not living with me now. They are 9224.14 miles from me, living on a different continent.

Despite the hardship of being separated from her son, she is a foster parent to three children. The agency trained her and she took the kids who were abused physically, emotionally, or sexually. I am surprised and amazed by her efforts. She is not just new to Islam but she is a proactive Muslim American female who contributes to society. Reflecting upon this, I could only say that most of the converted American Muslims that I meet here surpass the faith of some of the born Muslims in terms of their efforts, diligence, and hard work. I learned a lot from this female American Muslim convert. On top of that, she has a master's degree and is now pursuing her PhD degree.

Despite her involvement to improve the situation of others, she longs to be accepted, to be recognized by society. She shared her frustration when she said:

I feel like a boat in ocean. It doesn't make me a fit [in this society]. I am just in a boat . . . so like America . . . like the ocean and I am like a boat in the ocean . . . not a fish. Christians, regular Americans' culture—They are like fish in the ocean but I am like a boat in the ocean. I have a place there… A boat belongs to the ocean, but it's not part of the ocean, wasn't in the ocean.

This is a frustration because Injil is a White American female and belongs to the dominant group; she is not from an underrepresented population. She elaborates further her frustration by saying:

> The dominant society is obviously not Muslim but it doesn't make me question it...Or it doesn't make my faith confusing at all. I just recognized that they have other beliefs and the dominant culture in United States is driven by the majority culture and it's [Islam] not a majority. I just recognize, [I am] just a small subset within the dominant or even in this society, it's about normal to have no religion, being either Christian or no religion, it's like being a fish. They are both. Live in this something and do what they know but a fish sometimes, take dolphins, they can jump and see there is a boat up there. They can see land; they could see clouds; they can see outside of the ocean. They always see inside of the ocean as something separate from them . . . but . . . a boat in the ocean . . . ?

I took literature courses; I love poetry, and understand metaphors. When Injil explained to me that she is like a boat in the ocean, I found this a powerful but sad metaphor. Fish in the ocean will never accept a boat because a boat is a different entity than the fish. A boat will never be accepted in the ocean but yet the life of a boat is in the ocean. It is her way of saying American Muslims will never be accepted in this society. They are outcasts but at the same time, since they live here, they have to bear all their longings to be accepted within American society. Nevertheless, American Muslims' place is in the United States. This is their home; this is where they are born and where they belong. Injil shares her status as having a temporary existence though she herself is a White American female:

But a boat in the ocean, I am here; I have a place; and I can jump in; I can swim around; I can have fun in the ocean and ultimately I go back to my boat and eventually that boat goes to the land. And so it's almost a temporary existence.

Midwest Muslimah: Here comes Betty X.

Even before 9/11, Betty X was her name whenever her friends wanted to make fun of her. When she embraced Islam, her friends knew about her conversion. She didn't wear the scarf yet Betty X was her "name." At home, she had to deal with questions from her parents. I couldn't imagine the test of patience she had to endure for the sake of believing women were not supposed to be punished for Eve's action. She couldn't make sense of how women should be punished by having to go through childbirth labor and menstrual pain. Later, she found in the Quran that Allah forgave them both, which signals that both of them are responsible for their own actions. This is how Muslims understand the Adam and Eve story. Everyone is responsible for his/her own action and not carrying the burden of Original Sin. Secondly, she embraced and was attracted to Islam by reading and asking questions of Muslims though her parents kept using scare tactics by relating their knowledge/stories about the bad attitude of Turkish immigrants in Germany and indirectly stating that Islam is bad because the followers are bad. Her father used the same scare tactics on his involvement with Nation of Islam. If he didn't meet his wife (Midwest Muslimah's mom, who is White), he would have stayed with the Nation of Islam. Regardless of those trials, she became a Muslim a year later after thorough study.

She found her safe haven among Muslim women. At home, her parents were worried that she was going to hate White people even though her version of Islam is not Nation of Islam. Her mom was worried that her Muslim husband would denigrate her, because Muslim women, as her

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mother mistakenly understood, have to walk 10 feet behind their husbands. Muslim sisters

nearby addressed her questions, and on top of that, she said the Muslim sisters helped her:

> They were teaching me to have patience . . . patience with the people even though it was
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> tearing me apart . . . that I couldn't deal with that of being a religious problem. I dealt
>
> with racism; I dealt with any kind of racism; I dealt with sexism, never dealt with being a
>
> Muslim. And I didn't like that. It was hard to connect the dots. It was really difficult.
>
> Wow, before I could actually speak about how I dealt with it . . . for what you're saying
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> about me [racist things that other people said] specifically at work. [But] with my mom, it
>
> was a challenge, years even up to today, about Islam because all she can see is the
>
> [Muslim] women being covered [and they] don't have any rights.

In her case, I thought skin color racism would be the focus rather than religion; however, I was

wrong. I developed this understanding when she explained that:

> I was working at Sears. I remember going in the next day and my colleagues, because
>
> they were always calling me, "there's goes Betty X" in reference to Malcolm X's wife.
>
> So I always thought they were joking and I kinda realized it was a derogatory term, you
>
> know because I am African American and so was Betty; she was Muslim and so was I.

Midwest Muslimah is an active African American Muslim in my community. She

engaged Muslim kids at the Islamic Center of the Midwest by establishing Muslim Sunday

School and there were no fees. I am impressed by her efforts throughout the years to engage the

Muslim kids to appreciate science and knowledge. She also encourages Muslim sisters to join

various activities that she plans throughout the year at our local community center. She actually

transformed herself and is very confident in comparison to when she was embracing Islam a few

years back.

I am a stronger Muslim. Again I still wear a hijab; I still wear the Islamic dress, though [I am] outspoken. I am still in my community . . . difference now [is] I am little bit stronger [in] faith than when I first embraced Islam so what I knew say 10 years ago; it's a little different than what I knew four years ago and it's totally different than now and it's only by reading Quran [or] strengthening the faith. [I] would have been a little bit stronger in faith, in mind, body, and spirit.

She is vocal and at the same time friendly. She doesn't think it is offensive for non-Muslim Americans to have questions related to Islam. At times, she is our spokesperson and mediator between Muslims and Americans. According to her:

I thought it was a burden then I realized the type of personality I am. I came to Islam; it's their right [to ask questions]. In the Midwest, people do not communicate well but bigger city, New York for example, you get people constantly asking about how you look. Why, why, why in the Midwest, you don't get that. You just deal with the looks to be a burden now. it's a kind of acceptance because I think about how I came to Islam and how, you know, even though I was outspoken I was able to answer questions that they were looking at. Before I used to look the same way, if I saw the thing that, apart from Islam, if I saw I gave that weird look. But now I am trying to clear the doubt. [It was different] before but now more like acceptance. I hate to feel this way because they don't know any better.

Though she is positive about explaining Islam to non-Muslim audiences, from my understanding of her interactions, there have been some mishaps with Americans that reflect the state of their attitudes. According to Midwest Muslimah:

I am not saying it's wrong for them to stare but it gives the idea that they need to know

something and they are too afraid to ask. They are more hesitant, for example, I would

have somebody ask, "Do you know why the Muslims do that?" People always assume

you know exactly why that person does something. They assume that if you met one

person, you know everything about Islam. One thing of challenge that I have to always

clarify; I didn't know about anything going on. I did not want to sound offensive but

always came out at the time as defensive until I realized I had little knowledge or I had

nothing to do with it. [Non-Muslim Americans thought] I condoned it [the 9/11 tragedy

and other acts of terror]; like I knew what happened before as well, before it happened

like this Muslim knew a way to defend them [the terrorists], or before it was they kept

asking if I knew answers to questions that I didn't know. That become hard. They

assumed that if you are Muslim you are Muslim to everybody and you know their minds,

their thinking, their way, you just don't talk to one Black person and assume you know

every Black person.

Z: "Go Home!" & "We are still praying for you . . . from this SATANIC CULT religion."

I knew Z through my Libyan friend who told me that she was kicked out of her home in

the middle of the night after her dad discovered that she was a Muslim. A few weeks after that

incident she came to the Muslim community center and asked for help. I felt badly about what

happened to her. I just knew that she was an outspoken Muslim female who voiced her thoughts

without fear. This characteristic developed my respect towards her. Z told me:

It's kind of an issue so let's keep it a secret because they're not gonna be happy. I get the

feeling that they probably will cut off all contact from me now and so I made a purchase

through iTunes for the Adhan and complete educational Quran and I didn't get to the

electronic receipt before my dad saw it. We had a huge conversation and it was really late at night. They told me to call one of my friends to come and get me. I wasn't allowed to be in the house if I was a Muslim.

Though she is new to this religion, she cares about the Palestinian issue, something that I myself try to avoid discussing in social media for fear of intimidation from the FBI or being linked to terrorists. She used her Facebook and Twitter accounts to voice her opinions, mostly about the suffering of and the injustices toward Arabs. She posted her thoughts about this on her Facebook page and she was confronted by her friend. Also, one of her classmates wore an "I heart Israel" t-shirt. The passive aggressive confrontation continued on her Facebook page when her classmate posted her disagreement related to the United States giving three million dollars to one of the oldest mosques in order to preserve the historical antiquity of the religious place. Later, Z's classmate said that Muslim radicals try to infiltrate the United States government. Z said:

> The money from the historical fund goes to Buddhist temples, Hindu temples, and old churches in Spain, the Cathedral in England, and it's going all over the world . . . you know . . . for different historical places, it is not just going just to mosques. It's kinda weird because you're complaining about this one million dollars but three billion dollars went to Israel to suppress the Palestinians.

She wanted to be identified as sister Z, a young White Muslim American who converted to Islam eighteen months ago. In one dimension, I viewed sister Z more like sister Zorro, who cares for the oppressed and fights injustices. She detailed her frustrations towards her parents. Z said:

and it's frustrating . . . because it's just like I don't get why they are so . . . I mean I can understand why they are upset about it. I truly can't understand why they can't accept it. I guess that's a really big point of frustration. They still continuously tell me that 'we are still praying for you . . . from this SATANIC CULT religion.'

She just finished her degree in nursing and works as a nurse in a Midwestern hospital. Fairly independent, she became interested in Islam after reading a book detailing science in the Quran. She explained to me that the Big Bang theory and a verse from the Quran can be correlated. She also explained to me in detail a verse from the Quran that mentions how two seas meet but they do not mix. She was fascinated by this verse and then explored more, wondering how a book that was revealed more than 1400 years ago could explain this scientific concept. I was indeed surprised by her answers. I am ashamed that a convert knows more about the Quran than a born Muslim. I am amazed by her diligence to explore the Quran and put the verses of the Quran together with scientific explanation. I am surprised by her persistence to explore in depth the misconceptions about Islam and use the opportunities to explain them to her fellow Americans. It was her high school assignment that required her to present a topic about Islam. Then it became a turning point for her. Her high school assignment gave her the opportunity to learn and understand Islam better. Starting from that, she developed close companionships with international Muslim students when she was at the university.

Z is not a White Muslim female radical who is trying to infiltrate the United States government; she is a nurse. She wants to help people. She is a peaceful person. She was also involved in a fundraising project for the school where she studied:

and I was praying outside and . . . Because I was working at the Telethon . . . a fundraiser for the school . . . and I was praying outside in front of the tree . . . and then I was just

standing on my little portable mat thing . . . and grass . . . you know just standing there . .
. reciting Suratul Fatiha and somebody yelled at me . . . across the street "GO HOME"
and I was like, really?

Though this kind of harassment happens to her from time to time, she uses it as an opportunity to teach and educate. Z said:

I am much more open about having an open dialogue about faith now . . . having an open mind now about other people. Then they know that I am more willing to educate them about Islam then they can come to their own decision about it. Like I said before, I have nothing against U.S. In relation to the Palestinian cause with Israel, I take issue with it you know . . . but I can't do anything about it . . . you know, I am a peaceful person I follow Islam . . . that is not included . . . suicide bombing. I love teaching people. Definitely the professors were always supportive . . . maybe able to teach students for instance that Islam isn't something they are very much exposed to it. I like to think that they are grateful for the opportunity to have me there to teach them about that.

I developed a reverence towards Z because of how she handles Islamophobia directed towards her, though it comes from her own parents. If I were in her situation and her age, I don't think I could handle a similar situation well and probably would react negatively. That's not the case for Z. She is a strong and mature lady beyond her age. I developed a respect towards Muslim American females during this research and realize the challenges they face with the new identity that they have.

Omar: After 9/11, it became more about clarifying what someone has seen on the news.

Omar is my best friend. I went fishing with him. I taught him how to use a compound bow. In return, he obtained books for me. I love sitting with him and can sit for hours listening to

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his explanation about the books he reads. He usually gives critical opinions and his reflections from the books that he reads. I enjoy sitting with him because this is the opportunity for me to grow: listening to the perspective of an African American Muslim in the Midwest. He is my teacher. He is among the seniors in this community. I am not referring to his age. He is not old. He has been in this student town since 1996. However, most of us are students. We come and we leave after four to five years. Omar embraced Islam in 1998, two years after he came to this Midwest town. He saw the rise and fall of this Muslim community. I perceive Omar as my teacher because of his perspectives from his own experiences. Ironically, our age difference is small. He is two years older than me. However, his maturity goes beyond his age. He rarely smiles; the roughness of life makes his face look serious all the time, but he has a good heart.

He is different from the other study participants. He told me that no one ever really shouts at or confronts him. Is it because people are intimidated by his tall, big, black stature? Is it because he has a beard? This puzzles me. He told me:

Like I said, for some reason people don't come to me directly and say what they feel so I hear from other people you know. No one ever said anything to me...look. Usually when I travel, I travel with my family, so I usually . . . at that point people . . . no one really ever says anything. Interestingly, no one ever said anything about it. I heard later on some people would say things to other people but no one ever said anything to me directly...People would [ask] what is this, but I think at that time, that was my biggest form of letting people know that I am a Muslim because why are you wearing them.

Omar realizes that non-Muslims have the right to ask questions, and he is okay with the questions, but he feels the level of others' uneasiness with asking and he attributes this to American non-Muslims not wanting to sound ignorant when talking to him. He said:

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There was a guy that I know and he didn't know I am a Muslim so he started talking

about the Middle East. To start with, this is post 9/11, he is talking about the Middle East

and said, "I will never go to Middle East" and I asked "You don't wanna go to Middle

East? And see maybe you like something that you see there"? [Omar's friend replied]

'The only way I would go to the Middle East is if I have an AK47 in my hand.'

Omar told me that he would use this opportunity to teach and re-educate Americans about their

misconceptions. He said:

I told him, 'This is terrible. There are innocent people there.' [Omar's friend answered]

'It's just the way things go.' I said, 'You know, innocent people. I understand your

feelings because you have seen what you have seen, but there are people there; they have

nothing to do with any of that.'

On another occasion, Omar corrected the misconception that his friends had from

listening to strange stories from soldiers who had just come back from Iraq. Omar said:

He didn't know that I am a Muslim at the time and he said, 'some Muslims that I know

practicing religion, right, and they have to fast in some month'. So he wasn't aware this is

the month of Ramadhan. 'Whoever these people are attached to Islam when they fast, at

the end of the day, they use the restroom and then, they look for the name of their God in

their own feces.' This is the way that it was presented to him and I mentioned to him, 'I

think this is a lie.' I explained to him how Muslims feel about going to the restroom and

how we hide ourselves and how we wash ourselves with water and clean ourselves you

know how we feel: that is an act that you don't do in front of people. The unfortunate part

about that is that, people get the misconception that the religion is whatever someone is

doing on TV, bombing up the building or something like that, which is what they

associate that with the religion and they associate the culture with the religion and they

never go away with anything about Islam, that is the real part of Islam.

Another friend of Omar's also made an ignorant statement:

Obviously the biggest misconception is that all Muslims are waiting for the opportunity

to cause destruction to America and that happened because of . . . that happens quite a bit.

People have asked me questions like, 'Do you know any sleeper cells?' or 'Do you know

potential terrorist Muslims' or, and you know this, [they ask about al Qaeda's war

strategies]. Those questions. I don't get those questions very often because a lot of time

people won't ask questions like that outright unless they come with certain types of

animosity to start with.

Omar's experiences are painful to me. It hurts me because I don't know how to handle or

eliminate the ignorant instances he experiences. I probably could answers and explain the

differences he encounters, however, when I realize the ignorance comes from media, I feel

hopeless because I realize it is not easy to defeat media misinformation.

Pseudonymous: An Arab who owns a grocery store.

The locals called him, "An Arab who owns a grocery store." He is not an Arab. He is a

White American from Wisconsin; however, he resided in a Midwestern state for almost eight

years. I know his family well. We went to his house a few times for dinner or for visits. It is just

45 minutes from my town. Sitting with him widened my perspectives since he has a collection of

books ranging from religion, history, politics, and laws related to the United States. His wife is

Malay and his kids are biracial. I know all of them. For example, his youngest son, aged 12, was

selected to play baseball for his school. His wife was a teaching assistant in the statistics

department in my university. In his town, he owned a grocery store that was later converted into

a mosque. They were the only Muslim family in his town. When I asked about his experiences in the Midwest as a White Muslim American, Pseudonymous told me:

> If somebody asked me, certainly I would answer, but I did notice people will make foolish statements like okay . . . because I am a Muslim I must be an Arab . . . (laughing) so like in [Midwestern town] for example they would talk about the Arab who owns grocery store there . . . I am the Arab that owns a grocery store. One person in [Midwestern town], I remember, told me her mother-in-law at some point, you know since we have this grocery store, [asked him], 'where do they hide their guns?'

I was curious how he became a Muslim. Was it because Pseudonymous fell in love with a Malay Muslim woman? Was it his work in Malaysia as a history teacher for some time in the 1990s that ignited his interest in Islam? He said:

> Well, okay . . . originally back when I was in elementary school I was raised as a Christian, as a Roman Catholic. I early on began to question the idea Jesus [41] could be God. Um . . . this begin at the age of 10. I always viewed him[42] as an honorable person, holy man, and so on but never as God. As a result, I began looking for other religions as I couldn't find anything within Christianity that helps that point of view—he is not a God, son of God. I was looking outside of Christianity.

Later on I found out that he became Muslim due to the misconceptions about Islam that were introduced by Salman Rushdie's book *Satanic Verses* (1988), and his elementary teacher. He learned later in his life the reality of the misconceptions. Pseudonymous said:

> In 7th grade, this could be 13 . . . I think I was about 13 then and anyway I had a teacher or nun who explained to us a bit of other religions. She discussed Islam. Of course she

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[41] Pbuh
[42] Pbuh

called Muslims Mohamaddans but she wasn't trying to be hostile. Actually I think she

tried to promote a type of [respect toward other religions]. By the way, by what she said,

she told us Mohammadans pray to Mohammad the exact same way Christians pray to

Jesus. I bought into that. Oh I thought, well Islam will not be the one thing I would be

looking into. That's because it's more of the same thing. Jesus can't be God; neither can

Mohammad[43] . . . Never then looked into Islam very seriously . . . okay . . . I did look into

many other religions.

When I heard this, I realized this is total misinformation. I wondered where the nun got the

information about Islam and Muslims and why she simply called us Mohammadans. If I was

there, I would feel awkward, strange, and angry. Pseudonymous explained more about the

misconceptions of *Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie (1988). He said:

At any rate now, came many years later in 1988, Salman Rushdie with his Satanic Books.

I bought the book. [I] wanted to know what the dispute was about. There was a huge

dispute about *Satanic Verses*. [I] supposed the book would be against Islam and against

Muslims and I bought it and I looked at the book. I didn't see many episodes of insult at

the first glance . . . and . . . I realized something is inconsistent here about this book . . .

but people [Muslims] really strongly objected to what he wrote. And say it is really

insulting. And I had to say *Satanic Verses* doesn't look insulting so I started looking up

things in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, for example; it mentions some people he

characterized in his book, prostitutes were named like Khadijah and Ayesha. I didn't

know about any of these people at all but I started looking it up inside the encyclopedia.

And I soon realized this is what is he doing. He [Salman Rushdie] is playing games

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[43] Pbuh

because he knows most of the Americans, most Westerners especially Americans do not know who Ayesha is, [who] Khadeja is. So he is insulting Americans' Muslim understanding obviously so he mentioned somebody with these names who are supposed to be prostitutes or so because a lot of people have the same names. It became very obvious when you read through it. What you don't understand was he [Salman Rushdie] is insulting the wives of Rasulullah [prophet Muhammad][44].

Pseudonymous then explained how he embraced Islam. I felt relief that Pseudonymous didn't let ignorance lead his life.

So I started reading more about Islam in *Britannica* to find out more about it, which I said I never bothered to read about it [Islam] seriously before because I didn't regard it as potential candidate for a religion I might follow due to the misstatement that Muslims worship Mohammad[45]. One of the very first things the article about Islam in the *Britannica* mentioned is Muslims pray to Allah, not to Mohammad (laughing). This was contradicting what I had understood. That time must been about 25 years ago.

This is what got me interested about Islam because as soon as I discovered Muslims do not pray to Mohammad that's how I became attracted to studying Islam. I understand a lot of people came to Islam through the same way and other people have also [become Muslim because of hatred towards Islam done by others]; because of Rushdie they began looking into Islam and became attracted to Islam. Probably not the same way that I did because I was under the misconception that Muslims pray to Muhammad but Alhamdulillah that particular misconception was erased so I began studying the Quran and this time not just for academic or semi-academic purposes. I tried

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[44] Pbuh
[45] Pbuh

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to understand and decide between Muslims and Christians – but because I started becoming interested in Islam as a deen [way of life] and I studied it for some time and I had some advantages because I was in family housing at University of Wisconsin at the time and one of my neighbors was a Muslim from Libya. He was with his family. It happened that I needed a babysitter for my daughter who was then about 4 years old he and the family would periodically babysit for me and I would get to go to the house and see how they lived and so on and they were living a very happy Muslim life. One of the things that had intrigued me about Islam is the Ramadhan. I saw them during Ramadhan and what was interesting was I saw the children doing Ramadhan. Wow...and I thought it is not difficult, if children could do it, so can I. That practical matter caused me to maybe hesitate but when I found out that Muslims can indeed do Ramadhan that became a plus. Also seeing the experience of him and his family and how he behaves and so they were really a good example of Muslims. That had attracted me to Islam as well.

Reflecting upon Pseudonymous' earlier experiences in life caused me to reflect deeply about how misinformation was fed constantly into his own thinking. He was led to believe Islam and Muslims were different than they are. I wonder how many students were affected by the misinformation provided through education. Miseducation is not acceptable because it leads to ignorance. Ignorance leads to how we conduct ourselves towards others. However, I feel relief when Pseudonymous' babysitter, who was part of a Libyan family, showed him a good example of a Muslim family. I feel delight because Pseudonymous rechecked his beliefs about Islam and matched it with this Muslim family's positive attitude.

Uncle: "Go back to your country; this is not your country."

Uncle works as a quality assurance officer in one of the companies in this town. He came from Bangladesh; however, he migrated to the United States three months after 9/11. I know him as a Muslim brother. Sometimes he brings milk tea to the Muslim center. As I prefer tea over coffee, these frequent sittings with him while drinking tea developed dialogue. He is close to me because during Ramadhan, he never missed a day cooking for Muslim students who were single. I developed my respect for him by listening to his thoughts coming from another Midwestern town, which is highly populated with Muslims. I could see Uncle's thoughts on many issues on how to build a bridge between Muslims and American non-Muslims. Uncle said:

> In dealing [with] my jobs and area that I work and area I go to eat, I try to be very respectful to others. Because that is part of our religion too. That you have to be respectful to mankind. Islam didn't come to only Muslims. Islam came for humanity so this is how I treat others: with the full respect.

He also believes that Muslims need to take initiative to explain Islam to Americans. He said:

> Like last month I went to an amusement park and while traveling, I did the salah zuhur and asr and I combined my salah [the names and times for Muslims to perform their daily prayers]. And I was sitting in the chair performing my salah as I didn't have my clothes and I performed on the ground but people looked and some of them were curious and looked at what I was doing. Some might ask and sometimes they ask, 'What actually are you doing?' They ask 'Are you performing something?' and I said, 'Yes I am a Muslim and this is my prayer time.' We have to face this and with respect. These people are not all bad; they have their respect of other religious too.

He is a gentleman and full of patience when facing a problem. He never gives up his hope for American society. He emphasized that Muslims need to be patient with and respectful to everyone. He said:

> I took those bad treatments as the opportunity to tell them and to show them the good things about us and Islam. If someone comes and gives you bad comments, don't go on the defense. Oh he cursed me and I cursed him back, no don't take it that way. That makes the situation worse. So if you take that opportunity and say I have the time to explain this to you while he is giving bad comments like that so you may do it today to me or do it to others so someone has to step up and tell him why he is doing this.

He is a man who has a lot of things to teach. He preaches the message of peace and how much he hates violence:

> I feel sometimes fear because you know people have all their bad things in their mind. I am sorry that someone just took Islam in a wrong way and caused devastation. They didn't feel that millions of Muslims in this country didn't support that. They didn't realize that. Not every Muslim supports that. Judge by our characteristics, by the way we live, our manners, or eat, our sit [the way Muslims sit while eating]. [46]

He told me that he wasn't even in the United States on 9/11. He and his family arrived three months after. Years past, he still receives bad treatment and comments. I don't have his patience. However, he insists on telling me to have patience even though people throw provocative, insulting comments. He told me:

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[46] According to the sunna of Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, Muslims are encouraged to sit while eating and not walking. This is not compulsory but we are taught of this manner from childhood.

Uncle: "I have been cursed so many places even at gas stations. They just cuss me out . . . you bloody Muslim."

Me: "How did they know that you are a Muslim?"

Uncle: "Because of appearance and skin color. It's only colors that play a role."

Me: "What color?"

Uncle: "Dark brownish, brown color. But they think that the people who are a little reddish are Muslims. They could be cursing out some Hindus or some other religion but they assume that he is a Muslim."

Me: "After 9/11, how long did you receive this kind of treatment?"

Uncle: "Um...I mean I can still remember in 2006, I have . . . I used to work for the fast food restaurant and some customers just cursed me out: 'Go back to your country, this is not your country' and all of this kind of stuff."

In considering Uncle's experiences, I realize I should not give up on non-Muslim society and follow my initial raw emotion of anger. He experienced Islamophobia but yet he stays calm. He taught me a powerful lesson that perspectives are constructed from our own experiences and understanding from our own reality. He handles his reality differently than me. He remains patient. I concluded that we interpret reality differently. Due to the interpretation of reality, our actions differ depending on the approaches that we take. His patience in the face of his negative experiences is profound to me.

Abu Kutub: My father basically disowned me; even recently within the last four months my father told me he never wanted to see me again.

He is my good friend. I have known him for several years. He is a perfect example of someone who stumbled from the right path but then managed to stand on his own and walk well,

as if nothing ever happened. His life was challenging and difficult. His dad disowned him. His father denied he is his father's son, isolated him, and cursed him because he embraced Islam. There was one time that he and his wife visited his dad because as a Muslim, it is obligatory to respect one's parents. He had to shorten his visit because his dad cursed his wife. He is my brother, my good friend, named Abu Kutub. He is an ex-convict who converted to Islam in prison. I am blessed to know him. His lessons of life are rich.

He wasn't looking for any religion when he was in prison. He was satisfied with what and who he was. However, upon knowing that he would be incarcerated for 10 years, he turned himself to God:

At that time basically what happened was: I was facing 10 years jail life [jailed sentence]. I was arrested by the state police and faced federal charges for interstate transporting or state trafficking drugs. At that time you know everybody got incarcerated and went to jail. At the end they turn towards God, you know, last attempt to try to get something, you know, because you don't have anyone else to turn to at that point. At that time you have a lot of time to think; it's amazing how much time slows down when you are in jail because nothing is going on.

At that point I told myself: my whole life I have been a . . . I am a pretty lazy person. I haven't studied, I haven't learned anything. I think I should better myself [because] I have a son out there. It's gonna be a long time before I can go home. I need to do what I can do inside. At that point I turned back to religion and I was gonna worship no one but God.

His quest searching for one true God opened when one day a Christian approached him and questioned his previous Catholic faith.

A Christian was asking what type of Christian I was, so I said I was Catholic, and I am guessing he was like Protestant or Pentecostal or Baptist, I don't know. He asked me, he said, 'You are not even Christian.' I said, 'how do you think I am not Christian?' and he said, 'as a Catholic you guys believe that Pope is God on earth.' So at that point I got pretty upset. It almost turned violent but it didn't. What happened was, maybe five or six months later I was actually sentenced to 11 years and three months in prison and they took me to the actual prison and I was at Al Reno, Oklahoma. At that time I was thinking about what he said you know the whole time. That does not make sense to tell my sins to the man, you know. And Pope can't be like God on Earth. I did go to a few Catholic services when I got there, but the services were mostly in Spanish, so there was nothing to turn to. So I stopped going . . . so I ended going to the Pentecostal services. When I went to the services, they wouldn't say God anymore, they would say Jesus. Thank you Jesus! His name is Jesus, and one day I commented to someone 'you didn't talk about God; it's like you forgot about God.' Basically what happened was the guy told me that Jesus was God and I was like, I don't need this. I never needed this. I don't need this and I was never raised like this. So I can't accept that so that's the reason I left the church. At that point in my life I started looking into books on Hinduism, Buddhism, and stuff like that. There is nothing I can actually take because everything believes in the concept of more than one God.

Abu Kutub became a Muslim through interactions with his African Muslim inmates. His fellow inmates at that time were observing Ramadhan. He decided to fast; however, he had to attend a class to understand what Ramadhan entails for Muslims:

So I went to the first class. When I walked in, there were about three or four people there and there was a guy teaching the class and he asked, 'You know if you asked the Christians, 'why do they believe Jesus is God?' [and] they will tell you because of the virgin birth, but Muslims believe the same thing. However, when we look into the miracle of how Jesus was created, we need to look at it in regards to the same way that Adam was created from nothing and Eve was created from the rib of the man. By that logic, Adam has more right to be worshipped than Jesus. Even Eve because the miracle was even greater [than Jesus]. So I thought, wow, this makes a lot of sense and he [Muslim chaplain in prison] said, 'Muslims don't worship anybody but God [Allah] and our prophet, Prophet Mohammad, is just a prophet like Jesus; we don't believe him [Prophet Mohammad] to be God. He only brought the message so we believe in one God and we don't associate anything with Him. When we pray, we pray strictly to God [Allah] and not to the man that was Jesus. We tell our sins only to God [Allah] and He [Allah] forgives our sins. Only to God [Allah] you know we seek forgiveness. So I told the guy [Muslim chaplain in prison], 'if this is what you really believe gimme your book: the Quran. If this is what you really believe I will find it in the book but if it's not what you believe ...then you know I am contrary to this.' To prove this guy wrong I picked up the Quran and I started reading it. Within three weeks I accepted Islam because our belief is inside the book you know: story of Jesus, Moses, Noah, everything, floods, Pharaoh with Musa [Moses]. It's all in there except you know, one directive: we worship only one God.

His story brought me to tears: his journey searching for the Oneness of Allah was not easy. I was born Muslim. Islam comes to me easily because I was born as a Muslim. I don't have to go

through the exploration and reading, debating or dialoguing to convince myself of the Oneness of Allah. Abu Kutub continued:

I notice a lot of friends, after I accepted Islam, not one among them stayed with me except my Black friends. The others looked at me as if I left my own race because they think Islam is a religion of African Americans or something. At that point a lot of friends like that, even some other friends that stayed on my side, they couldn't be around me for fear that I would comment on something they do that I perceive to be wrong, such as cursing. I stopped cussing. I stopped hanging out. I mean, because a lot of time when they hang out with each other they are doing alcohol, immoral stuff, gambling or what not. I won't come to those areas. When I became Muslim I stopped drinking. I think when they saw that I had stopped cussing. I was more serious about reading and educating myself. I think some of my friends became intimidated to the point where they felt that, being around me, they had to be different from what they used to be. This caused a large break between my friends and me. Like what I said before, those of Caucasian descent stopped talking to me altogether. All for the fact that I left the religion about which they knew nothing. They looked at me as if I had left their race based on the fact that I accepted a religion that they knew nothing about. They think that I am African American. It is not the way I changed or anything but the fact that I accepted the religion.

He told me a story that made me realize that racism related to religion is beyond skin color since Abu Kutub is a White American:

When I moved back to [Midwestern town], it's only 22,000 people. And there is a masjid there. When I first moved there, the community was only three to four families at the most, so there was always a problem. Sometimes even when I crossed the street, because

of my personal clothing, the police would stop me for no reason until I asked them, 'Why did you stop me?' They said somebody the other day just broke in somewhere and they said they were dressed in Islamic clothing like you. The reality is people fear what they don't understand and what they don't know.

He provided another statement that made me sad and depressed:

I look at myself automatically as a minority no matter what I am; [either] I am an American citizen or not. I mean, even though my family, you know, my mom's family has been to America even before America was a country. Her family came to America and my family has been here that long. I am still being looked at as an outsider the way that I am being treated now. I look at it [as] I am the minority. No matter what happens if things don't go right, more likely we are gonna get inside of the deal. Even though I am a citizen, even though I have lived here all my life, I am not gonna be viewed as regular citizen. People automatically profile me when they see me just like when I go to airport when they see I have kufi, or whatever. I am automatically profiled. Every time since 9/11 that I have flown they tell me it's a random search. Every time they search me, I tell them, 'It's not random because you do it every time.' One time this guy walked up to my wife. My wife at the time was wearing the face-veil, niqab. He walked up and he tried to lift her niqab without even asking. He just grabbed it and I told him, "You don't want to do that. That's not a wise move. First of all, you don't need to touch her." These are some of the things we talked about: America is a country of religious freedom but we really don't practice that. That's not the reality.

Abu Kutub is not a terrorist and far from being one. He is not a follower of Bin Laden even though he has a long beard. After he was released from prison, he searched for jobs. It took

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time before he was offered a decent job but it was not in this Midwestern town. He had to move to the East Coast. The East Coast provided more opportunity compared to this Midwestern town. At the same time, he had the opportunity to study Arabic and Islamic knowledge at night. Abu Kutub used to demonstrate his knowledge of Arabic knowledge, which is far advanced in comparison to mine. There was one instance where he was so angry at me because I was listening to a radical Muslim preacher. I couldn't understand why he was so angry. Later, he spent his time teaching me the reality of terrorism and why Muslims should not ascribe to the ideology of Bin Laden and extremism. This happened when I was travelling with him to another Midwestern town attending a conference about the correct understanding of Islam.

Abu Irfan Kalantani: They spit at my wife

My wife came back home crying and was angry. I still remember that evening. She was totally moody. She was not herself. I could see it in her face. She is a patient lady. That evening she was not herself. She was very quiet. I did not cook yet for our dinner. Was it the reason she was mad at me? Did I say something that hurt her feelings? Was she tired from her lab work?

She entered the room and hugged me. She was stressed and depressed. This was not her normal day. Something unusual happened to her today. She hugged me tightly and cried. I was perplexed. However, I understood whenever she wanted a hug from me, it means she was emotionally distressed. She was not herself. She came back, entered the house, put down her bag, hugged me, and cried. I kept quiet. I let her ease whatever feelings that were erupted by something.

I asked her what happened after she calmed down. I stroked her hair gently. She told me three White American male students at Midwestern University were walking in front of her.

When they noticed her hijab, they spit at her. These three White culprits then cursed, smiled at her and ran.

My blood boiled. I didn't show it to my wife but my lips, teeth, and jaws were tight. I told her to dine out for tonight. She did not want to because she felt sad and hurt. I calmed her down by telling her to be patient. I explained this was not a surprise because when they invaded Iraq, these people killed, raped, and even sodomized innocent Muslim women and men. I realize these people who operate upon ignorance are cowards. They are like rapists who selectively choose their victims. I wished I was there to protect my wife. In reflection of my wife's experience, Abeer Qassim Hamza Al Janabi, an Iraqi Muslim female teenager who was gang raped, and then killed by White American soldiers, I understood their ignorance and stupidity, which could only be cured by killing these *bastards* justly. Is there a just court in the United States of America to justly kill and punish them? So far, most of these criminals have not been convicted but rather were analyzed as mentally unstable. It was not enough to rape and kill her, they killed the whole family. In order to get rid of the evidence, they burnt the body of Abeer Qassim Hamza Al Janabi,[47] and may whoever committed these crimes rot in hell forever, Allahumma Ameen! This is one of my counterstories—those who call Muslims terrorist are themselves the terrorists.

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[47] "While Green was shooting the parents and younger sister, Barker with his hands and knees pinned the arms of the sobbing, struggling and screaming Abeer to the floor while Cortez pulled off her stockings, lifted her dress, brutally forced her legs apart and raped her. Next they switched so Barker could have "his turn." Then Cortez held her down for Green. After Green killed her, they with Spielman burned her and tried to burn the house down. But complicity does not stop there. Investigating the crime, Sgt. Anthony Yribe of the 101st Airborne entered the house with Sgt. Cortez and was amazed to see Cortez begin violently retching. He entered the bedroom where the parents and little girl lay dead and spotted a spent U.S. military shotgun shell. With Cortez, he suppressed the evidence. Green spontaneously confessed (initially bragged about) the crimes..." (n.p.) See Mellor (2009), Steven Green Trials: A Bargain to Let War Criminals Go?

When my wife went to WalMart one evening, a lady said to her kids; "Let's get out of here; I don't want to get bombed." They used to harass her when she was at the gas station. One guy came up to her face and harassed her by cursing and showing his middle finger to relinquish his anger. These bigoted individuals were clever; they know how to choose place and time to perpetuate their ignorance on my wife; however they are cowards at the same time. They didn't do that when I was around. The reason is simple; they feared a Muslim man who has long beard and unruly hair like me. Fear of terrorists is real in their mind.

Weaving Experiences

Ayesha was called a camel jockey, and I was called a rag head. It is a normalcy to me. I just shut it off whenever people called me by that name by ignoring them. I used to walk with my other Muslim friends. It was obvious we were Muslims because of the language that we use, our physical appearance, our clothing, and we didn't want or order alcohol or pork for our dinner menu. A bigoted customer might have heard our conversation in XYZ restaurant, before he left, he told us, "You Muslims need to get laid" and showed his middle finger to us and smiled wickedly. What did we do wrong? We were only there for dinner. We went out chasing him but he drove his car fast. I remember his face though.

Niqabi was harassed by her teacher at school. I was harassed by my own professor—the Big Bad Wolf at Midwestern University. It seems subtle, but cleverly in a passive-aggressive provocation by ridiculing my conception and understanding of God. In Niqabi's case, her math teacher imposed fear on her by associating her with Afghanis who were bombed by American forces. It was not to raise sympathy but more to mock her. In my case, it is to show and to mock the difference of my belief about Allah, which is contradictory with Christian belief. Where is then my right to practice the First Amendment of the United States Constitution? Niqabi

expressed similar concern related to the freedom to practice her religion when she wasn't even allowed to pray at school. Her friend made fun of her by asking her to pray in the toilet. My case was different, they allowed me to pray but whenever I went to toilet for ablution, one of the staff made fun of me by sending an email to everyone about toilet jokes that 'we' (read: me) shouldn't go to the toilet longer than 5 minutes. I never went to the toilet more than 5 minutes except when I had problems with my stomach. Why was the email sent when I worked there? You might argue that I should get a life and treat it as a joke but during my six months working there, it was the only joke email sent to everyone. It was intentional. Did they ever consider some of the staff that used their working time to call their boyfriends or surf on facebook?

Injil expressed a concern about how the dominant society perceived her because she wears a scarf. She feels isolated. Niqabi expressed similar concern because she covers her face and only her eyes can be seen. People don't want to initiate conversation with her. In comparison with my experience, my wife mentioned a similar situation. She was isolated even she was in a public space. For example, people stayed 3-5 feet behind her in any queue. She always told me she's all alone. She believed this happened due to fear. Americans are famous with eye contact when interacting in their daily life avoided having eye contact when communicating with her. One day during an internship interview, she was perceived differently because she was wearing the hijab, She used to ask me why the nuns are not treated the way she was treated when both wear scarves in their daily lives. Is it because the nun is associated with Christianity and my wife is a Muslim? Is it because a nun is a symbol of chastity and my wife represents a Muslim ninja terrorist? Why is there such a double standard?

Midwest Muslimah's mom kept questioning her belief though she loves her mom more than anything. Injil's mom keeps questioning her decision to wear the hijab though she claimed

she accepted her daughter's conversion to Islam. Z's parent called her daughter's new religion the religion of Satan. It is normalcy among extremist Christians to label Islam and Muslims as Satan or the Devil. In relation to my case, I respect and love my Big Bad Wolf professor, however, she couldn't accept that I believe in Allah as the One and Only God, Master of the Universe. She didn't say that she hates my belief but her attitude and interactions with me prove she has a problem with her discourse with me.

People said "Go Home" to Z when she was originally from the United States of America. Uncle also received the same treatment. Omar was accused by his friend that he knows sleeper cells in the United States, operating to destroy Americans. Pseudonymous, who is a White American man was called an Arab who owns a grocery store in his town. On top of that, he was suspected to hide his gun somewhere in his grocery store, implying that he is ready to launch an attack against Americans. Abu Kutub was oppressed in prison just because he is a Muslim that embraced Islam. The security officer didn't care about him as a White American Muslim who disagreed with Bin Laden. He was just another American Muslim prisoner—race no longer matters. In relation to my situation, I have been called a terrorist many times. People said, "Go Home" or "Fuck You, Muslim" even in front of my 2-year-old son when I visited Worlds of Fun Park. On top of that, they added, "We don't need a terrorist like you here." I am not a terrorist. There was one time a policeman came to my house when I lived outside the University area. The police knocked on the door and held a gun, ready to point at me. He came and checked my apartment and then asked to check my identification. I showed him everything. When I asked the reason he was there, he told me that he received a call from a landline telling him that there was an emergency. I suspected it was our neighbour that made the phone call. When I talked to

Omar, he said that this is the strategy of the landowner to kick tenants out. I have no idea about this.

These are my experiences and my participants' experiences. I weave their experiences with mine to create themes for CMT. There are elements of fear that are associated with terror. The hijab is targeted because Muslim women wear it; however, for nuns to cover their heads represent the positive symbol of chastity. I had an issue with a policeman that came to my home while my son and my wife were sleeping. The media kept portraying Muslims in a negative manner especially associating Muslim and Islam with religion of terror. Am I telling you lies?

Emerging Themes

The overarching research question that guided this research was: How does Islamophobia affect the lives of Muslims in the Midwest?—with the purpose to develop Critical Muslim Theory. Seven themes emerged from this research based on my own experiences, observations, and analysis of the narratives of my participants: (a) Islam is a religion of terror; Muslims are terrorists, (b) Muslim women are targeted because of wearing the hijab, (c) the media misrepresents Muslims and Islam, (d) there are legal implications for being a Muslim male, (e) ignorance of Islamic practices, disrespect of Islam, stereotypes, (f) oppression as a Muslim is worse than racial oppression. The seventh theme emerged as a result of the other six themes: (g) voices of Muslim men and women are unique. Although CRT was used originally as the framework for interpretation and analysis, the purpose of the research is to propose Critical Muslim Theory. As the themes emerged, so does the basis for CMT. The emerging themes, analysis, and participants' narratives follow.

However, it is important to understand decontextualization before proceeding to the narratives and the analysis that follows because several of the narratives depict this phenomenon.

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Decontextualization is when something is taken out of context. According to Denny (1991),

"decontextualization is the handling of information in a way that either disconnects other

information or backgrounds to it" (p. 66). According to Friberg, Dahlberg, Petersson & Ohlen

(2000), contextualization is "about balancing the extension and restriction of the actual context"

(p.41). Logically, decontextualization can lead to misunderstanding and miseducation. Media

can lead to misunderstanding and miseducation, for example,

> And yet, in the world of television, work is rarely given a context. This too will come as
>
> no surprise to those who study television and advertising. The images that TV ads
>
> assemble and string together are, by their very nature, photographically decontextualized.
>
> Images are taken out of context and reassembled according to the advertiser's agenda.
>
> (Goldman, Papson & Kersey, 1998-2003)

As a result, decontextualization is important in understanding Islam and Muslims' experiences

(Islamophobia) and how it relates to insufficient understanding about Muslims' worldviews.

Theme 1: Islam is a religion of terror; Muslims are terrorists

> Pseudonymous
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> Well, before 9/11, that wasn't the atmosphere. The aspect of the Muslim being violent,
>
> but there was a lot of prejudice I found before 9/11, both from my family and others. My
>
> father, when he found out that I was a Muslim . . . I was using my parents' home at the
>
> time. I lived there. They are both deceased now, but he left out a pamphlet he knew I
>
> couldn't resist reading. I was over there and I had a pamphlet on Islam and it was from
>
> some Islamophobic bigot whose writing was kind of nonsense; it said that Muslims will
>
> offer the eyes of the sheep to eat and if you do not eat the eyes of the sheep, they will kill
>
> you.

Pseudonymous' father told him that Muslims are barbaric and Islam is a nonsensical religion. His dad is not a practicing Muslim and has no idea about Islam and Muslims. If his dad's accusations came from the pamphlet, then the pamphlet was authored so as to portray and associate Islam and Muslims as barbaric, ridiculous, and intolerant, which contributes to the stereotypes and misinformation about Muslims. I am a practicing Muslim and I never offer eyes of a sheep to anyone. I don't have any need to pull the eyes of the sheep from its socket because it is mean and oppressive. I have never seen any Muslim do that. I don't know where Pseudonymous' dad found the pamphlet. It is curious because the author of the pamphlet 'creatively' created the ideas. It definitely is propaganda to promote the idea that Islam and Muslim ascribe to terror.

Pseudonymous also said that his neighbours were suspicious of him. First they mistakenly believed that he was an Arab while he is a White American, and secondly, that he owned a stack of guns:

> If somebody asked me, certainly I would answer but I did notice people would make foolish statements like okay, because I am a Muslim I must be the Arab (laughing) so like in [Midwestern town] for example they would talk about the Arab who owns grocery store there. I am the Arab that owns the grocery store (laughing). One person in [Midwestern town], I remember told me, her mother-in-law at some point, you know since we have this grocery store, asked 'Where do they hide their guns?'

Note how the association was made against Pseudonymous because he is a Muslim. The people in his town called him an Arab because he owned a grocery store, which later changed to a mosque. He clarified to the population in the small town that his grocery store now is a mosque and functions as an information center for the local population. He put up a banner so people can

read it is a mosque and information center where he distributes free English translated Quran to the churches and locals. It is an information center and not a gun factory or a place to hide guns. I always visited him at his house and his mosque because he has many books related to literature and politics. I brought my family to meet with his family and we always had dinner together. I am a responsible Muslim man. If he is a terrorist, definitely I will not visit him and bring my family. The locals there think that he stashes guns to associate him as a male Muslim terrorist:

> But after 2001, people made far more stupid statements pertaining to Islam and Muslims and they in particular always identify the word terrorist with Islam and Muslims as if there were no other terrorists in the world such as an eco-terrorist, the Columbian Drug Cartel terrorists, there is no, state terrorism, Zionist, or even from the U.S. Terrorism became synonymous with Islam. A lot of it started after 9/11 although as I said, there is always pushing that type of view before 9/11.

Clearly there are numerous misconceptions these days with the notion that Muslims are all violent. Again I don't think these are held by the majority of people but it doesn't take that many people. Even only one person telling it to the population and treating Muslims this way is not okay. There are many people that cause trouble for Muslims so the majority of people would think that way.

> Midwest Muslimah
>
> Most people define me post 9/11 as a terrorist. I used to have people calling me and assuming I was a terrorist. They defined me as a terrorist because obviously I am wearing a hijab.

At the beginning of the research, I thought name calling of terrorist would be directed at only Muslim males. However, I was wrong. The terrorist name calling affected Muslim females too. It

doesn't make sense because Midwest Muslimah wears a hijab but never covers her face. The accusation binds the negative conception that Islam and Muslims are associated with terror.

Midwest Muslimah told me that her parents tried to scare her away from Islam. They did this because her boyfriend at that time (now her husband) started studying Islam before 1993. Her parents clearly have a negative bias against Islam by specifically asking her to look for the bad things in Islam. This is misdirecting advice. Her mom judged Islam by specifically associating it with Turkish Muslims in Germany, which she viewed negatively. Since her mom's experience with Turkish Muslims was negative, she decided Islam is bad. Her mom clearly did not realize that the Turkish Muslims she met don't represent Islam in general. This is stereotyping.

> When I first was introduced to Islam my then boyfriend was still studying Islam. It worried me. He freaked me out in a sense. When I told my parents that he is a Muslim they were like, "Dennis, you need to study this Islam. This Islam, this religion, and understand where this is coming from." Their intention was to scare me away from it . . . bad things about Islam.

> Yeah when they told me to read [about Islam]. First, [when] I learned about the Quran, they [my parents] really tried to tell me look for yourself to see the bad things in Islam. Indirectly, because since in Germany my mom disliked the Turkish Muslims there, so I understood that Islam equals bad based on the Muslims that we met. Dad's from Chicago, where he grew up around Nation of Islam. Again, the Nation of Islam didn't like White people. I already grew up with a negative idea about Islam so when she told me I understood what she [meant], 'just find out for yourself. These Muslims here, they do this bad [thing] because remember our friends? She was [abused by the husband]. The

other guy? Remember [at] Chicago? They did this to others.' She encouraged me to see the bad things or just learn for myself and see for myself but I knew she meant all the bad things. But I kinda turned the table back on her because when I went to the mosque and I met the women I asked them all kinds of questions my parents would have asked me, "Why are the women like this? Why don't you . . . ? Why do you hate these people?' and they explained, 'No, we don't do this. This is how we . . . this religion is not bad just some of the people. Sometimes you know, they do what they want to do. They misunderstand the Quran and the [Turkish] Muslims in Germany maybe they are not following, so they were breaking down the questions that my parents told me to research. Z

On the other hand there are people who don't know me very well, especially quite a few people in [Midwestern town] they just probably thought I was just bonkers (laughing), crazy for becoming Muslim and why would you join that religion of terror? You know a lot of people think like that . . . think I was like crazy radical. I am a crazy democrat (laughing). That's one thing. Two would be that we don't have to speak all Arabic. We don't have to automatically learn Arabic in order to learn.

One of them was the concept of jihad and actually a lot of people do think it is something bad when we understand this is an internal struggle. That is such a huge misconception. We are not all bloodthirsty people. I just graduated nursing school and I am going to help you . . . Not killing people (laughing). You know I don't hate the U.S. Another one, they . . . people would think that Muslims just hate the U.S. I don't hate the U.S. and I very much want to stay here.

Z was confronted with ignorance and stereotypes. She was accused of being crazy because she embraces Islam. Those accusing her did not ask or know that she studied thoroughly before she embraced Islam. She was the object of name calling because she embraces Islam, which is an injustice. The perpetrators believed her opinions and research about Islam were invalid. She was accused of being a crazy radical when she is a nurse that advocates the preservation of life. She understands the concept of Jihad correctly, which is tied to the internal struggle within our own soul to improvise our life to a better condition. Muslims face struggle and obstacles to become a better person that functions well in the society. That is what she meant by the concept of Jihad that she and I understand. It was hurtful when people accused her of being a traitor and hating the United States when she loves her own country. She was born in the United States of America and it is where she studied, works, and lives. However, the bigots don't believe that. This is hatred even though the bigots know she is a White American female and a nurse.

Stereotyping continued when she was called a crazy democrat because she is a Muslim. This is the same accusation made against President Barack Obama during his election campaign to debilitate his ability as a candidate for the presidency. Lastly, she was stereotyped that she has to learn Arabic in order to learn and to become Muslim. Her accuser implies that Islam and Muslims force her to learn Arabic. This is scaremongering to justify Islamophobia and that she is an American Muslim female.

Omar

Now the questions we get about Islam are usually around the concept of what the Taliban is and whether our religion actually preaches this. We get questions about the 70 virgins, questions about suicide bombing, questions about Muslim women and the hijab, questions about specific countries that no one had asked about before. So they would ask

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about any Muslim country that's on the news—Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Afghanistan, these countries. Those questions start coming more after 9/11. Before 9/11 if there were any questions they were about the religion and what we believe in . . . What do we wear and why?

Obviously the biggest one is 'All Muslims are waiting for the opportunity to cause destruction to America.' People ask me, do I know sleeper cells? Do I know potential terrorist Muslims? Muslims who could possibly be a part of al Qaeda or something like that? A lot of time, people won't ask questions like that outright unless they come with certain types of animosity to start with.

Omar's countrymen associated him with a terror network by asking if he knows a sleeper cell that is waiting for the opportunity to detonate bombs in the United States. Because he is a Muslim he was accused subtly and passively as someone working with terrorists. This is an injustice and malicious because he is not a terrorist. His parents are not Muslims and treat him and his family with respect. He doesn't want to do anything that could destroy the respect that his parents show him and his family by being involving with Al Qaeda. The media successfully decontextualized Omar's friends because most of them asked him questions related to Islam that reflect influence from the media. It is decontextualization because Omar is not involved with Al Qaeda. Omar provides education and his wife home schooled their daughters, in contrast to the Taliban who denied education to Muslim females in Afghanistan.

Abu Kutub

I was walking to [retail store] at [Midwestern town's] mall and a guy walked up to me. I am guessing he was drunk. He walked up to me, he got like three-four inches from my

face. That really set me off. He said to me Osama bin Laden and uh, I kinda freaked out

you know, and I said some words to him that made him apologize.

Abu Kutub was the object of conflagration and associated with Bin Laden because he has a

beard and wears a thawb (traditional Muslim men's clothes from the Middle East). People do

not call practicing Orthodox Jews who have long black beards, a yarmulke on their heads, and

wear Hassidic sects of clothing dating back to the 18th century a terrorist or Bin Laden. Abu

Kutub doesn't look Arab because his hair is red and he is a White American male but the

conflagration and Islamophobia goes beyond racism because he is identified as a Muslim male.

Injil

I am just his kid sister. But my older brother one time when I first became a Muslim, he

said that Muslims are the cause of the wars and I don't . . . I really avoid he political

aspect of Islam because I just accepted Islam as religion, not as a political alliance. So

when we start talking about start of war, Muslims didn't cause World War II; they didn't

start the Civil War. But in his mind, Muslims are bad. We just don't talk about it. I just

ignore it. When I go home, my mom and my brother don't accept my religion.

I found it interesting because whenever guys found out it was a Muslim who blew

up the Boston Marathon, that day, I was crossing the street, and they were yelling out of

the window of their car. I can't even understand what they say but they yelled because I

am Muslim. I just looked at them.

I was teaching in a middle school at one point and they [the kids] were running

up, they yelled, 'She has a bomb, she is a terrorist.' Yeah, I don't blame them. They are

just little kids. Their parents teach them. I feel sorry that their parents teach them

Muslims are terrorists but I just see this as ignorance. They didn't know that, what we

believe in.

Injil is a White American Muslim female. She embraced Islam because she is attracted to the

concept of God's Unity, which is tawhid in contrast to Christianity. She does not embrace Islam

because of any political factor. The small kids at her school where she used to teach called her a

terrorist because she wears a hijab. Small children learned to be Islamophobes and bigots from

an early age, likely from their parents, by associating Islam with terrorism. The young Muslim

children at the same school where Injil teaches likely are the objects of stereotypes, bullying, and

hostility also.

Injil's brother thinks Muslims are the cause for all major wars, which is misleading and

malicious. Her brother used this false statement to debilitate Injil's decision to embrace Islam by

associating Islam with terror. The same tactic was used by bigots to scaremonger Z when she

embraced Islam. During the Boston Bombing's tragedy, she was yelled at because she is a

Muslim female. The bigots yelled at her because they associated her with terrorists that bombed

the Boston Marathon when the tragedy happened in Boston and not in this Midwestern town.

The narratives above from six of the participants are compelling evidence that people

believe Islam is a religion of terror and that Muslims are terrorists. Pseudonymous is associated

with the Arab race when he is clearly a White American. Abu Kutub's experience is similar

when someone called him Bin Laden because of his beard and his clothing. Their White male

status was abolished because they have Muslim features. Injil was harassed verbally when she

crossed the street on campus because she wore a hijab. Z was harassed because she embraces

Islam. Their White female status was abolished because they are Muslim. Omar and Midwest

Muslimah are both African American, however, their status as Americans isn't valued because

they are accused of being related to terrorists. Note how Islamophobia is endemic and pervasive when the negative connotations are associated with being Muslim for Pseudonymous, Midwest Muslimah, Z, Omar, Abu Kutub, and Injil. The accusations revolve around Muslims and Islam as barbaric and a religion of terror. These accusations often transform into slurs, for example by association, stereotyping, and miseducation.

Theme 2: Muslim women are targeted because of wearing the hijab

Z

One question that I would get a lot about the scarf is, 'Do you have to wear that 24/7? The only direct thing that . . . it was not really a threat but something like really shouldn't happen like people would stare. Nobody said anything directly to me until it was like April . . . this past April . . . and I was praying outside and . . . because I was working at the Telethon . . . fundraising for the school and I was praying outside in front of the tree and then I was just standing there on my little portable mat thing . . . and grass, you know just standing there . . . reciting Suratul Fatiha and somebody yelled at me . . . across the street and said 'GO HOME' and I was like really?

Z was verbally harassed because she wore a scarf. The bigots noticed that she is a Muslim female and shouted at her in a cowardly way while she prayed. Wearing a scarf in this fashion is not normalcy and alien to American society in the Midwest.

Midwest Muslimah

Okay . . . Now the reason I am saying this, when I go to Arkansas is a big city which is about maybe about one or two hours from the big city there. We stop our car and no Muslim there . . . they look at me like I am crazy, 'Why is she wearing a cloth? Does she have cancer?' They have never seen or been exposed to Islam at all. It was the hardest

thing I have been through. What if they seen . . . you know . . . Arkansas is considered

Midwest. And in [Midwestern town], in this city, it is not that the gawking look that I

ever had in Arkansas. I really feel uncomfortable not because I am a Muslim, but the fact

that they never see a Muslim woman in their life. It's just . . . 'What's that? It's just a

rag? What's that? Arab rag on your head? [or] Hey girl you have a nice hair . . . and why

you have to wear this?' At a time when they have modest clothing on it; [they will ask]

'Why not wearing short and low tank top cuz that's what everybody wearing? That one

challenge was my husband family; they couldn't understand why I dress like that. I think

they understand the religious aspect but they couldn't understand why I look that way . . .

You know.

Midwest Muslimah received the same treatment as Z because she wears a hijab. Wearing a hijab

seems to invite staring and questions. Interestingly, bigots do not ask a nun wearing a scarf

questions because it is normalcy for a nun to wear a scarf. It is equated with being godly.

However, for Midwest Muslimah, the scarf is compounded with questions and harassment from

bigots. Their stares verbalized their thoughts that Muslim women are different. Sometimes, they

expounded their Islamophobic thinking by encouraging Midwest Muslimah would look

beautiful if she showed her hair. Their implication was that she looks ugly and alien because she

covers her body in fulfilling her religious obligation. Midwest Muslimah faces discrimination

more than that experienced by Muslim men because Muslim men do not have to cover. Midwest

Muslimah is an easy target for verbal insult because her identity is obvious when she is wears a

hijab. The next narrative describes this plight:

My experiences will never be the same with the Muslim brothers in this community

because a lot of you guys are international folks. I mean to live in American temporarily.

They might have different experience of hardship; not the same hardship that I grew up and dealing with. Once you guys leave, we are still here to deal whatever we are dealing with specifically males, I don't know other brothers hardship. I never asked . . . I know my hardships. I know they came from different country, they married, they got family. My families are not Muslims . . . I deal with them.

If only those people knew what is the hijab is about. For example, my mother-in-law who I dearly love very much . . . She is always telling me when it comes to Islam that she's okay with it; she understands the Oneness of God. But one day she just asked me, 'Why don't you just take off your scarf because you have beautiful hair? I want to show my family members my beautiful daughter-in-law.' I started crying because she had never before questioned that. I remember I cried and told her how much I loved her and I'd do anything for her but I love God [Allah] more. It was hard for me to tell her this because it was so emotional. She never asked me anything, she always agreed with it, and then just asked me to take it off. I could only tell her I love her but I love God more.

This is the same as the previous notion related to bigotry and Muslim women wearing the hijab. It affected her family members even though she believes her mother-in-law, most of the time, treated her with respect. Still, it is hypocrisy from her mother-in-law. It is hurtful when Midwest Muslimah's mother-in-law believes she can be beautiful only by removing her hijab, as though she is a doll to be shown or shared with anyone. My Muslim sister, Midwest Muslimah is NOT a supermodel who flaunts her beauty for a magazine cover for the sake of getting paid or being praised by family members.

Injil

It makes you think that this is the West and you are free. You don't have to worry about anything. One thing that gets me is: 'This is the West, I am free, I can wear the hijab if I want but they don't think that is my choice. They think that I am a Muslim and I have to wear a hijab. I am a Muslim or my husband made me wore it. My parents made me wear a hijab.' It is hard to understand this is my choice and I love it and I want to.

Freedom to practice religion without scrutiny doesn't involve Muslim women wearing the hijab. Injil provides a critical statement about this because she feels people believe that she is being oppressed by Islam. People do not consider her beliefs that she wants to wear the hijab because of her choice. Again, her opinion is rendered invalid by non-Muslims.

I am sure it's different than Muslim men because Muslim men don't have to cover up . . . especially you are in the University, lots of them are from the Arab community . . . and Arab men, a lot of people think that they are Mexican. You as a Muslim man can go to school without knowing he is a Muslim. You see me even as I said, I started wearing hijab. Immediately, everyone know I was a part of Islam . . . I am not even Muslims' guys at the moment. Even the Muslim guys think I am a Muslim. I think the experience of Muslim men is the same as the experience of Muslim female not wearing hijab.

Injil shares the same opinion with Midwest Muslimah: Muslim men are freer to practice their religion because they don't cover. This is not something that they want to contest. Rather, Injil wants to emphasize that it is difficult for practicing Muslim women to practice their religion by wearing the hijab due to scrutiny, stares, and questions that they receive.

My friend said, 'Oh my god! Don't you hate covering like that?' No, not really (laughing). I don't hate it. 'Oh my God! It's so hot. It's like 110 degrees here, aren't you hot?' I'd say, 'It's hot but this little bit of cloth doesn't make it anymore hot than you

are.' People think that I am miserable wearing a hijab, which implies somebody else must

be forcing me to do it. Religion forces me to do it. Especially in the news a lot of people

don't understand Muslim women. They don't see them on the news. They think that

Islam is hiding them. In this country everybody wants a voice, wants to be heard, and

wants to be seen. It's really hard for Americans to understand the concept that some

people don't want to be seen and heard. They want to keep it to themselves.

Injil shared some of the questions and statements she incurs when her friends see her wearing the

hijab. She feels that her friends' perceptions are delimiting and demonstrate their ignorance. Injil

believes Muslim women are attacked verbally and ideologically because American society

doesn't understand the context and wisdom behind wearing the hijab. She attributed the

ignorance as coming from strong individualism and the assumption that everybody wants to

share the dominant society's standards of for beauty. This is the same conception from Midwest

Muslimah's mother-in-law when she requested Midwest Muslimah to remove her hijab to show

off her hair to her relatives. Injil doesn't want to be seen as such and prefers to be modest. Injil's

mom has a similar attitude as Midwest Muslimah's mother-in-law except Injil's mom is worse

because she accused her of wanting attention, demonstrating her ignorance of Islam.

That's what in this society and culture you have to show everybody. Because I am small,

it was hard for me to buy modest clothing. I have to go to the kids' section because I have

a small waist. So they think I must want really tiny short skirts and shorts. I was like,

NO! I want to wear modest clothes. Come on! That's right. That's the part in society that

I find offensive and I'm like, 'Why do you think I want to show everything? Why do you

think I want all my clothes to be tight? Why does my shirt have to show everything? I

don't want that! People just make it their business and the society just assumes that we want it.

With my mom, it is hard for me to accept, she even told me the other day, 'I can accept you being a Muslim but when you wear the hijab then you are trying to get attention for yourself so other people look at you.'

Niqabi

I think it was harder for women because we wear hijab, because I wear veil, I think it's a lot harder. I mean some Muslim men you don't even know they are Muslims, I mean some people don't really . . . I think it's harder especially with the veil. It is a lot more difficult. Like I said, they don't even want to start conversation with you.

Niqabi believes due to society's fear of the hijab, they don't want to start a conversation with Muslim women. This constitutes alienation towards Muslim women. It is Niqabi's choice to wear her veil. The United States professes to be a free society yet some people seek to restrict the freedom of those whom they do not understand, even if it means disobeying their religious identity.

Ayesha

There was an incident where Ayesha's co-worker tried to take off her hijab and ridiculed the reasons she wore the hijab.

Ayesha: "And it is not just me. Sometimes they [co-workers] take off . . . "

My wife: "They want to take off your hijab? For what reasons do they . . . ?"

Ayesha: "Why do you wear this?" they would ask."

My wife: "Wearing this is that, oh, okay."

These incidents are reprehensible because the oppression became physical. Her co-workers may be potential rapists because they imposed their male aggressiveness on a female to satisfy their curiosity. Due to their ignorance, they likely would place the blame on Ayesha because they think she should not cover her hair. They invaded her physical and personal space because she wears scarf.

These cases related to the hijab represent the intersection of gender and Islamophobia due to being identifiable as Muslim women because of the way the women dress. All instances surpass microagressions that are manifest in racism. Once the aggression and oppression become physical and create fear, in these instances and context, it is Islamophobia.

The Muslim female participants in this study face the intersectionality of Islamophobia with gender because of wearing the hijab. The hijab is eclipsed into the intersectionality of Islamophobia with gender because their hijab is equated with Muslims and Islam. This does not happen to Christian nuns. There is no association with Muslim males in matters pertaining to the hijab because Muslim men do not cover. Thus, their identity can be camouflaged. Interestingly, Muslim males, in my female participants' opinions, do not experience the same problem because they don't have the distinguished feature of the hijab, which makes men less visible in comparison with the Muslim female participants.

Theme 3: The media misrepresents Muslims and Islam

Midwest Muslimah

Okay, if I turned on the news, I'd always wonder: 'why do they never interview the correct Muslim women?' You see them interview the Muslim women who never wear the hijab. They are probably the ones who are not really practicing Islam. Allah knows best and to be born not practicing Islam you might not have the correct information of

Islam. Why do they find people who don't represent true Islam? Now granted, there is one time I actually saw on the news a woman who was actually wearing niqab. Most of the time though I think the women they interview do not portray or even look like practicing Muslim women. It hurts because here I am embracing Islam. I know what it means, I know what it stands for. I do this and at the end of the day we are doing this for the sake of Allah. These women here who were probably born in this religion and are probably more knowledgeable than me but they have not done what I am doing so when my parents find out about these women they will say, 'Why can't you dress like her? She is a Muslim but you don't have to wear the hijab.' It irritates me in that aspect not because of whatever she talked about. I could care less what they talked about. Any kind of news sources, the fact that they found a person who does not look like me and they said this is Islam. This irritates me.

Midwest Muslimah provides a critical examination of the context provided by the media when the media focus is Muslim females representing Islam. She saw only one time the media brought a practicing Muslim female to represent Islam. She questioned media integrity because by bringing a non-practicing Muslim female to become the voice for other practicing Muslim females is unfair and decontextualizes understanding Islam. Later her parents use the decontextualized information based on what they saw on TV to argue with her because they believe what they saw on the television must be true.

Pseudonymous

The number one misconception is . . . I think . . . that Muslim are all lunatics. This is aided and helped by the media, for example the Aladdin movie in which pre 9/11 . . . at some point, the princess flies to the castle and she is hungry and she grabs a piece of

bread or something . . . a piece of apple or something to eat . . . and the merchant catches her and he is clearly an Arab and she is very White. He grabs her and is ready with a cleaver and wants to chop off her hands. It releases the attitude that a lot of people do have towards Islam. Of course it is always the women thing that Islam oppresses women. You know this comes from a society where they basically treat the prostitute issue lightly . . . That Muslim women have to wear the hijab—but this is something women themselves want to do. Of course women who are forced to be prostitutes, sex slaves in the U.S., we never discuss that, do we? (laughing) so that's the biggest misconception but there are others of course but I think . . . I see those two as number one—the notion of the Islamic violence and the myth that Muslim women are badly treated.

Pseudonymous believes the media have been tarnishing the image of Islam and Muslim prior to 9/11. Usually the propaganda shows Islam is violent. He also believes the media always show Islam oppressing women by depicting the hijab as oppression, while denying that practicing Muslim women wear the hijab by choice. Pseudonymous provides a critical question towards the media's depiction of Muslim women as oppressed while ignoring women who are forced into prostitution or being sex slaves in the United States.

Omar

After 9/11 it became more about clarifying what someone has seen on the news. . . . People get the misconception that the religion is whatever someone sees Muslims doing on TV . . . bombing buildings or something like that . . . they associate that with Islam and they associate the culture with the religion . . . and they never go away with anything about Islam, the real part of Islam: what and why we practice, what we believe, why we stick to certain things.

Omar realizes that the media leads to misconceptions about Islam because the media depicts bad

Muslims enacting terrorist activities and associates their actions with the core and essence of the

religion. The media never explains or clarifies to the public the differences between peaceful

and extremist Muslims in practicing their religion.

Niqabi

In the U.S., I think a lot of the media is against Muslim women. They are against the

values, ideas, and beliefs as well. I mean they have built this idea that Islam is linked to

terrorism; Islam is linked to death and killing and it sells. People take it and listen to it.

They like it when they see it. Muslim women are portrayed as controlled women who are

not allowed to go out, to leave the house, to study or anything, which is not true at all.

Most of the questions, I get are: 'Oh...you are a Muslim woman, are you allowed to . . . ?

Your husband . . . are you allowed to study?' This is stupid, it is really stupid. These

things in their head, they don't even exist. It will take one case of a woman being abused

or something and they will make it like the whole Muslim nation is like that. They

generalize and make everyone the same.

It [the media, a video] was describing how I am as a Saudi woman, there was a lot

of . . . the video was basically about Saudi woman and there were so many

misconceptions about Saudi woman. It was . . . it really upsets me.

Niqabi believes the media is public enemy number one for Muslim women. This is due to the

false reporting about Muslim women's values, ideas, practices, and beliefs. This is also related

to one media representation that she saw depicting Saudi women in a negative way.

Additionally, Muslim women are represented as controlled by their husbands when in truth,

they are free Muslim women who are outspoken and speak their minds. Niqabi is a Muslim

woman who drives a car, studies, and continues her master's degree. Niqabi also believes the media links Islam with a cult of death and killings. What frustrated her is that the media creates public opinion related to Islam and Muslims and they emphasize the contested concept. The public does not think critically about information misrepresentation from the media.

Z

I blame it on the media (laughing). Fox News is very popular in the Midwest. They draw their conclusions about certain things. My parents were commenting on the Boston Bombing and my parents just love Fox News and immediately they were throwing out 'Islam is jihad.' I mean . . . this is some radical Islamic jihad . . . whatever. They didn't even know who the kids were but just putting it right there you know just . . .on the Muslims.

I know a lot of other people focus on the idea that Muslim women have no rights. That is a misconception . . . Muslim women have no rights and then . . . I am engaged, Alhamdulillah, but I have talked about this but continuously even his family reiterates that my money is mine. It's not that I don't want to help him with anything but the fact that money is solely my property is . . . you know I have many more rights probably than a typical woman. I have a right to education . . . continuing education that my husband has to provide. Or right to my own home . . . a right to living space. Technically I don't have to . . . I don't have to cook and clean and I don't have to be a stay-at-home mom.

Z echoes the same feelings toward media as Niqabi believes. Her parents believe Fox News' misrepresentation of Islam and Jihad by linking them with terrorism. This is misinformation because her parents create a conclusion and assumption without exploring the facts. Z also

believes the media distributes misconceptions pertaining to Muslim women. Society is led to believe that Muslim women have no rights while it is not true in her situation or context.

Uncle

The people that actually have the misconception that Islam is a bad religion have this because of the media and because of some Islamic extremists. They understand the concepts in a different way and have the perspective of devastation. That actually puts other Muslims in bad shape. The media took the opportunity to spread that to non-Muslim audiences: 'This is how the Muslims are.' Now I have I heard so many times Muslims are terrorist, you destroyed this, you destroyed that.

Uncle believes the media creates hatred towards Muslim by associating Muslims with destruction and death. The media creates stereotypes about non-Muslims by generalizing that Muslims are terrorists.

Abu Kutub

I think most of the names, 'terrorist' or stuff like that, come from the news. It's not deniable that the mass media has made a major profit off the headlines of terrorism. They make so much money, and they place so much in the news. People have accepted it. Since 1990 Americans have been in Iraq and Muslims and Islam have been in the news constantly for 23 years. You have people who have actually grown up alongside headline news that always portrays Muslims and Islam as bad. It's only natural a lot of people will fall into this. Not everybody but it will cause natural contempt for Muslims or Islamic beliefs.

Abu Kutub echoes the same statement as Pseudonymous. The media is responsible in tarnishing the image of Islam and Muslims for many years. Abu Kutub focuses on how the War on Terror

is used to make profits through false reporting about the real situation pertaining to Islam and Muslims, however, the association of Muslims and Islam as a religion and followers of terror continues. Due to the daily lies involving Islam and Muslims and the negative association with terrorism, the public believes the repeated lies to be truth.

Interestingly, the Muslim female participants address how the media is used to strengthen the normative beliefs of Midwestern society that Islam is oppressive by forcing the hijab on Muslim women. Besides the hijab, the media is used to proliferate the idea that Muslim women are limited due to the religious aspects and the men. The media also does not provide a fair and balanced view on Islam and Muslims through featuring non-practicing Muslim women on the television. The Muslim males believe the media has associated Islam with terrorism and fear successfully.

Theme 4: Legal implications for Muslims

Abu Kutub

I don't think anyone truly understands what the Patriot Act entails. At this point, we are finding out the government is looking at our phone records, emails, and everything for years without even asking and telling everybody. I don't think anybody fully understands in regards to the amount of damage that has been done in the name of Patriot Act. But that's amazing we don't talk about it. There were some Muslims, American and British-Canadian—they flew through America and they got sent to Syria and they got tortured or when they go to Egypt. I mean this is our own. Look at the amount of drone bombings and stuff going on . . . not just the targets being killed but the children like Anwar Awlaki's son. Regardless what he has said and I don't agree with him, I don't listen to him, but they killed his son after they killed his father. But what's the son ever done?

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Anwar Awlaki was an American citizen—American, he was born and raised in America; he is an American citizen killed. He was killed without any trial through a drone bomb. I mean being one American citizen being killed; it puts a lot of distrust among the Muslim and the government.

Abu Kutub realizes the amount of fear faced by Muslims imposed by the Patriot Act because no one talks about it despite the intrusion of privacy on behalf of this oppressive act. He contested the killing of American citizens in the name of the war against terror because they didn't receive fair trials. He further contested killing underage child, who was an American citizen, when the child wasn't involved in any terrorist activity. He believes this is not healthy because it creates distrust among Muslims and the government.

In the Midwest . . . huh . . . a lot like African Americans in the 80s. African Americans in the 80s if they dress in certain way you have cops pulls over and search the car. That's what they do to Muslims now.

Even though I am a citizen, even though I have lived here all my life, I am not gonna be viewed as regular citizen. People automatically profile me when they see me just like when I go to airport when they see I have kufi, or whatever. I am automatically profiled. Every time since 9/11 that I have flown they tell me it's a random search. Every time they search me, I tell them, 'It's not random because you do it every time.' One time this guy walked up to my wife. My wife at the time was wearing the face-veil, niqab. He walked up and he tried to lift her niqab without even asking. He just grabbed it and I told him, 'You don't want to do that. That's not a wise move. First of all, you don't need to touch her.' This is some of the things we talked about: America is a country of religious freedom but we really don't practice that. That's not the reality.

Abu Kutub believes he has been the victim of religious profiling. The cops in this Midwestern city used to stop and search him because he looks like a Muslim. He even feels that he doesn't belong to the United States anymore because of the religious profiling that he and his wife have to bear whenever they want to fly. There was one time when the security officer at the airport forcefully tried to lift his wife's face veil. He believes the security officer could have asked rather than being rude. He felt this kind of religious treatment and profiling doesn't represent the idea that America is a country of religious freedom.

Pseudonymous

> Well, it [Patriot Act] allows basically for surveillance that's going on. Obama even nationalized his prison program under the Patriot Act, even though one of the co-authors of the Patriot Act said that did not justify it. In fact it doesn't do that but the wordings of the things are so broad and you can run interpretation into that. It allows anything. Back then, when I was a kid, the idea of surveillance worried people, for example, what the FBI used to do. They would try to find out who has doubt by checking certain books that students borrowed in order to track down people who oppose them...Well, that's exactly what's being done now but then I remember things like American life condemned that kind of practice. They were very definitely hesitant but now they fully support of this— taking down what people are reading then informing the authorities. Volunteering on their own. This kind of thing is very disruptive, the impunity of the American public, of the Constitution, and it depends on what Benjamin Franklin said: people who are willing to sacrifice their liberty for security deserve neither. They don't need security.

Pseudonymous believes the Patriot Act is meant to spy on Muslims in the War Against Terror and anyone can be a potential terrorist under its wide scope, which is open to interpretation. It is

open to abuse because anybody can be part of it by providing misinformation and it can be a tool of oppression towards Muslims because of the extremist Muslims involved in 9/11.

I got stopped for driving as a Muslim on the way to an iftar during Ramadhan. I was with my wife and the whole family. We were going to the iftar at the [Midwestern town] masjid (mosque) and so it's a cop—he turned his light on so that I pulled over and he said he was checking our seatbelts. Come on! Cops do not particularly stop your vehicle to check your seatbelt! They are empowered to do so if they know you don't have a seatbelt but they aren't empowered to stop you and then check your seatbelts and give you tickets. Anyway he did and despite my repeated warnings to my kids to wear your seatbelt, one of them was not. All right, they are not at fault but I got a ticket for that but the thing was, when he gave me the ticket, he marked it down as a misdemeanor. A criminal offense! which is not and I have to pay 200 dollars. Okay I took that to the district attorney, he then changed it so it's not misdemeanor. The sole reason for this of course, because I was driving while Muslim and he could not have seen passengers without seatbelts because my wife, Rose, and Lavender were all in the back seat.

My wife also experienced something like this. She was once in [Midwestern town] to do some shopping and she went by this intersection though I-XX, which goes to the west. So she was stopped for going 1 mile or 2 miles over the speed limit (laughing), 72 instead of 70. Cops almost never stop somebody like that unless you are 5 miles over. When they stopped her I was pretty strongly suspicious that they stopped her because she was a Muslimah because I read in the newspaper that this particular intersection was viewed as a strong possibility that Osama bin Laden was gonna blow up.

Pseudonymous and his family were stopped while driving. He believes it was religious profiling: Driving While Muslim. In fact, he was summoned because of a misdemeanour rather than a traffic violation. This was an injustice against him because a misdemeanour is a criminal offense. Luckily, he got it corrected by addressing the issue with the court. He believes the police officer gave him a misdemeanour because his family was with him and his daughter and wife were wearing a hijab. His wife also was stopped while driving for going one or two miles over the speed limit. Pseudonymous believes the cop usually will stop people if they drive five miles over the speed limit. He believes the police stopped his wife because she wears a hijab and the intersection was under surveillance by the police due to their belief that Bin Laden would make it a potential terrorist attack.

It is interesting that two men, neither of whom are African American, indicated legal implications for being Muslims. Although this is not a large number of participants, their experiences are significant. They also are clearly aware of the implications of the Patriot Act and the injustices happened to them while dealing with law enforcement.

Theme 5: Ignorance of Islamic practices, disrespect of Islam, stereotypes

Niqabi

Niqabi requested permission from her teacher to pray inside her class. However, the request was rejected. She didn't really get angry when her request was denied but what was hurtful to Niqabi was that her teacher told her to pray inside the bathroom. She detailed her experience:

No. I don't think not before 9/11. I mean we used to pray at school. It was okay. There was one teacher who didn't allow us to pray. She is American, White. Probably at that time she was like in her mid- . . . maybe mid-30s.

She wouldn't let [us pray]. It was in the winter and we had prayer time and when

we got home, Zuhur time was already over. Before, we were used to praying in the

school; it was okay at lunch time. So we went to the library and prayed and [in] her class

she wouldn't let us. There was a time when she said no you guys have lunch to pray, so

we obeyed the rules and we went to lunch and after lunch we asked to pray, but she said

no. Not in front of other kids; she wouldn't let us do in front of other kids. The other kid,

she told us to do it in the bathroom. Yeah, we were upset, and she said we have to do it in

the place where no one sees you and that is in the bathroom. We were really upset and it

was me and the Turkish girl.

No, she didn't [explain why to us]. I still remember even though it was a really

long time ago. I was in third grade, and it was rude, the way she said it wasn't very

professional: 'NO! You can't pray in front of class.' That's what she said. 'You can pray

in the bathroom.' Then we asked, 'Can we do it behind your desk? No one can see us

behind your desk.' She said, 'No.'

Niqabi explains the ignorance of Islamic practices pertaining to practicing Muslim women at

school. Praying is one of the five pillars of Islam. Any practicing Muslim male or female is

serious about the five pillars of Islam because that is their identity. However, due to ignorance on

the behalf of her teacher and the classmates, she and her friends were told to pray inside the

bathroom. A prayer functions as self-purification and her teacher's ignorance was offensive.

Yeah, yeah , I think that they [my classmates] have a prejudgment; I can't work on

anything that they would say, 'My god I don't want to work with her [on class

assignments] . . . she probably doesn't know how to do this' but then . . . I mean . . . they

would give me a chance and I proved them wrong. I think people change their views

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when they see me. You know when I work with them, the project or whatever, they changed their views.

No, they [people in general] do not initiate conversation. When I speak they are shocked; they think because I am wearing a veil, I am stupid and [when I talk]. I guess they are shocked because I have an American accent too. Like, wow, she is an American, she speaks American. They are all shocked when I talk. There was an incident but this was not in America; this was in England and I was walking out of a lecture, like a hundred students in a lecture room. There were these guys talking about me and they were making fun of me because of how I was dressed. One of the guys said, 'She just probably doesn't even understand us.' I heard everything, I knew what they are saying, I knew everything. Another guy who was in a workshop session with me the day before said, 'No, she's American. I was in the workshop with her yesterday. She is American.'

They all are shocked and say, 'Wow, she is an American. She's dressed like that.'

Niqabi explained the alienation that she has to bear because she wears a niqab (veil). This alienation happened due to stereotypes directed towards her because she is wearing a niqab. They assumed she was stupid because of her appearance. Her capabilities were judged from her appearance. What surprises others is that she has an American accent because she received most of her education in United Kingdom and the United States.

Z

Oh I like got kicked out from the house; I had to get packed up to go to [Midwestern town]. My parents were just like 'Go!' and then they said they were just kidding and let me back. It was really hard. It has been hard. The next several weeks after that, my mom and I could not really talk really much. I cried a lot. Then Ramadhan happened. My mom

called me one day and asked me if I'm going to be observing Ramadhan. She just burst into tears on the phone and said, 'I want you to talk to your dad about this because he is better at words than I am' and I talked to my dad. It's frustrating because it's just like, I don't get why they are so, I mean I can understand why they are upset about it. I truly can't understand why they can't accept it. I guess that's a really big point of frustration. They still continuously tell me that 'We are still praying for you from this SATANIC CULT religion.'

Z was kicked out from her home because she embraced Islam. Her mom was disheartened about it and when she realized Z was observing Ramadhan, her mom became remorseful. Her family did not know that Ramadhan (fasting month) functions as self-purification and caring about needy people. Z's mom did not have to worry because Ramadhan is related to the purification of the soul rather than remaining hungry throughout the month. Also, despite Z's conscious decision to embrace Islam, her parents still believie that Z is carried away into a Satanic Cult religion, which it is not true.

Omar

They [my friends] noticed that I changed. I think the biggest change that I made at the time was I stopped rapping, stopped making music um that would probably be the biggest change and the one that I got criticized for the most is that I wouldn't, because we were in the middle of trying to make a CD, trying to make it and become big in the rap game. One day you know I started to think this is not the right thing to do, I am a Muslim now; I want to change that so I started talking to them and told them, I don't want to do the rap thing anymore. They would say, 'You know you will miss it and you want to come back.' [This happened] every time they had a chance.

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Omar's friends continued to criticize him for the changes he made not to be involved in the rap music industry anymore after he became a Muslim. His friends did not understand and continued to talk to him about returning despite his saying no.

> When I first became Muslim, I used to wear a thawb every day. When I went to college, I would wear a thawb to class; I also used to wear kufi on my head. I would wear Shalwar Khameez. I would wear this type of clothing every day; I went to this store to work, that was my main formal dress, that dress obviously changed from what I used to wear: baggy jeans and the big t-shirt. That was the biggest change: how I started dressing.

> Interestingly, no one [my friends] ever said anything about it. I heard later on some people would say things to other people but no one ever said anything to me directly. People would ask, 'What is this?' but I thought at that time that that was my best form of letting people know that I am a Muslim. They asked, 'Why are you wearing them?' and I would tell them, 'Oh you know, I feel like wearing this because I am a Muslim.' They would ask me about that but that's as far as our conversation went. I've never had people say anything directly to me. Indirectly some friends told me that other friends said, 'You know Q has changed.' This is what they said. They would say he is changed. He's wearing clothes like this, he doesn't deal with us the same way that he used to deal with us but no one really said anything directly to me negatively.

Omar also began to change in terms of the way he dressed. Somehow, his friends thought it was offensive and started asking questions when Omar used his unique way of dressing as a means to convey information about Islam and Muslims. However, his friends didn't know or realize the changes were the way for him to communicate and initiate conversation about his new way of life (religion).

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The most important thing is to make people understand the religion of Islam because I think people have certain perceptions that whatever Muslims do . . . that is Islam . . . if a Muslim is drinking alcohol, eating pork or if the Muslim is blowing up the building. Or if the Muslim is driving fast on the highway because the idea is being ingrained that we are very strict with our religion . . . that's anytime a Muslim does anything because we are so strict with our religion, people believe so that must be Islam.

People misunderstood Islam and Muslims. People can accept there are bad Christians but Christianity is not affected by the action of the bad Christians, however, they could not extend this distinction to Islam and Muslims. For example, Timothy McVeigh, a man involved in the Oklahoma shooting, would never be identified as a Christian by the media. This is not the case for Muslims. If a Muslim does something bad, the media portrays that it has something to do with Islam. This is biased reporting and miseducation to the public. It is compounded through stereotyping.

At my job one person who didn't know that I am Muslim said, 'Some Muslims that I know have to fast in some months. When they fast at the end of the day, they use the restroom and then they look for the name of their God in their own feces.' This is the way that it was presented to him and I mentioned to him: 'I think this is a lie' and I explained to him how Muslims feel about going to the restroom and how we hide ourselves and how we wash ourselves with water and clean you know, how we feel that is an act that you don't do in front of people.

One kid would ask a question or usually people asked about people marrying more than one wife. I said, 'It is not required but it is allowed.' If they asked me, 'You have to marry more than one wife don't you?' I said, 'No, I don't have to marry more

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than one wife.' Or my family asked me, 'What is my name? Did I change my name?'

They would interrogate me and ask me, 'What is your name? What is your name?' I told

them, 'My name is, My name hasn't changed.' And they would say, "No you have to

change your name," and I said, 'No my name hasn't changed. You change your name if

your name means something derogatory or something that worships false gods or

multiple gods.' I remember a grade school kid asking me about what he heard about

Islam—that if we do something bad they bring pots of boiling water and you have to put

your hands in it, and if your hands came out burnt, you were guilty. If it doesn't come out

burnt, it means you didn't do it.

You know there is the idea that this guy must have some serious problem. The

other perception, which I think, comes from some small experiences that we have. You

can find this in television and movies in particular—is that Americans always become

Muslim after they got out of prison. Or people embrace what is considered an exotic

religion by which I mean anything that is not Christian. People embrace religion because

of some mystical things—because they dress like this, because they have this kind of

magic or ritual involved like where to slaughter goats and the tree grows in the backyard.

This crazy mystical idea that people have had—Americans become Muslims because of

these things. A lot of time people would approach me with questions about people, 'Do

you know about Islam and do you know <u>the people</u> you are involved with? A lot of time I

got questions that were very mystical.

All of the narratives above detail how stereotyping is ingrained towards the Muslims by

the media and society. Most of the time, Omar tires of it because he realizes the stereotyping

never ends. This hurts him because he is a critical thinker and yet the questions that came to him

most often were with stereotypes rather than seeking understanding. The person posing the question alluded to the stereotype to the extent that the process of enlightenment or re-education must return to the basics of Islam. Upon realizing that the person has no idea what the basics of Islam are makes the process of re-education doubled effort. It also shows that people are not critical in listening to what they hear or see from the media about Islam and Muslims. Even if they are critical, they don't apply what they see or hear from the media to reality because they assume all Muslims fit the stereotypes. This reflects the process of decontextualization where the context of time and space are eliminated so the assumption is made though the assumption might be precarious to Islam and Muslims because they are more destructive criticism or Islamophobic in nature.

> Uncle
>
> We are praying in the masjid and there are people from church and about 15 or 20 people outside our masjid used a microphone to preach about Jesus Christ and . . . They tried to stop a car to push the Bible in the car. We had to call the cops to come and arrest that preacher and they are not the type of Christian that our prophet Jesus[48] taught about.

This incident is an example of disrespectful and aggressive behaviour towards Islam and Muslims. It is proselytizing through force, which does not justify the need to preach about Jesus[49] because as Muslims in general, we know, love, respect, and understand him[50] in the early age of our lives. There is no need for the radical preacher to proselytize or create fear towards Muslims because we know and love Jesus; however, we don't accept him as God.

> Abu Kutub

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[48] Pbuh
[49] Pbuh
[50] Pbuh

I didn't have any [experiences as a Muslim in the Midwest before 9/11] outside the prison. Everything happened within the prison. During my experiences with the guards and so forth we didn't have as many problems as we did after 9/11. I mean people started doing anything that they could do to make our life more terrible. They saw us as Muslims so they caused a lot of problems for us. Like people became automatically afraid of anybody who's Muslim. They were making threats almost like how they dealt with those of Japanese descent during War World II. You know? When they started building concentration camps for the Japanese. You know they were American citizens but because of the fear, they were put in camps.

They messed with your food; they would come up to mess up your food and take stuff away. Coming to the area where you live, taking things out of your room even though you are allowed to have them. If someone sent somebody a letter and they thought there was something in your letter that wasn't right, they would put you in what they call segregation. They put you in special housing and they would lock it. Anything they considered that wasn't right or even though they have no proof or anything, they just automatically locked it. Make it hard for you. There were even times when they would rip people's Quran. And we were allowed to have this thing they called kufi, they take 'em for no reasons. Just to mess with us. One of the officers in another institution, the inmates killed him because he dragged somebody's Quran on the floor.

Yeah the majority of guards within this institution were ex-military and then when 9/11 happened, they served the military. I guess they felt compelled to do more than what they were supposed to do. You are already incarcerated, you have nothing, and you don't have any connection. I, for instance am nobody who in [Midwestern State] did time for

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drugs and accepted Islam two years earlier. This got anything to Osama bin Laden? It doesn't make any sense.

September 11 changed the lives of many Muslims, including Muslim prisoners. Abu Kutub faced discrimination because he was a prisoner—a Muslim prisoner. In the prison, people believed that Muslims caused problems, compounded by fear that they associated with Bin Laden and terrorist networks. It appears the situation for Muslim prisoners in prison worsened. Abu Kutub was guilty by association with terrorists and the stereotyping towards Islam and Muslims. Islam is something that the security officers, who were mostly ex-military, toyed with by ripping up the Muslim prisoners' Koran. As ex-military, they believed Muslims are the enemy of the United States. They demonstrated not only a lack of respect, but also aggression toward Muslim prisoners. Abu Kutub doesn't have anything to do with Bin Laden, but his status as a White Muslim prisoner didn't help him and he was oppressed.

Well there was once or twice when some young people said something they shouldn't have said. There were a couple of words exchanged that happened twice but typically they say those things because they think you are foreigner. Once you open your mouth and they know that you are American, because you speak without an accent, they usually got pretty quiet. Afterwards they tended to do that only when they think the person was from another country.

When he was out of prison, there were numerous times Abu Kutub was harassed in public because of his appearance. Abu Kutub is a White American male but has a long beard and wears a thawb. The bigots made fun of him but the harassment recoiled once the bigots realized he is an American due to his accent.

I look at lack of education and ignorance. If they do have some education about what

Islam is, normally it is miseducation because what they hear and what they read in

newspapers is normally miseducation. It is because somebody who is not even qualified

to teach or to tell people about Islam is on a national news platform and they talked about

what Islam is. They don't have a degree in Islamic studies; their degree may be in

engineering or mathematics. People look at Islam as being discredited and is not being

consistent, so a lot of time we have problems with miseducators.

Abu Kutub realized that the problem of hatred towards Islam and Muslims is primarily from the

media. The media is the catalyst for Islamophobia when it provides a platform of miseducation

and decontextualization through a point of reference that justifies the negative and preconceived

notions that the American public has towards Muslims. Abu Kutub realized that the point of

reference provided by the media usually does not have an accurate understanding of Islam but

they speak freely about Islam. Midwest Muslimah echoes this when she mentioned media

decontextualization.

Theme 6: Oppression as a Muslim is worse than racial oppression

Midwest Muslimah

I feel like in the 80s, everybody loves each other . . . so . . . early 80s, early 90s, it was

okay. Then I came here and I always had people pointing out, 'You are not White. Your

hair is this way, colored this way.' I knew how to deal with that kind of racism. It made

me stronger and I could deal with somebody who came to me and asked, 'Why does your

hair look like this?' When I became Muslim I had two jobs. I didn't know how to deal

with being a new Muslim and how they were treating me. I didn't know how to deal with

it because it was a new kind of prejudice. [It is] strong when it comes to racial or

whatever. I am cool . . . beautiful . . . I have this color but when it came to Islam I was not

very knowledgeable in Islam and about Muslims. I didn't know what to think. I didn't

know how to deal. When I became a Muslim, I knew this was where I belonged but I just

didn't know how to defend myself in a sense. I didn't know how to explain it to myself

because it wasn't racist . . . it wasn't sexism or where you were born , you have to deal

with everything. I couldn't do it.

This is an excellent example of Islamophobia overriding racism based on skin color. Midwest

Muslimah felts the hatred towards her as a Muslim woman is worse compared to the hatred of

bigots towards her as an African American female. She felt hopeless in facing the discrimination

related to religion because she didn't know how to explain and define the hatred because the

Islamophobia she faced was not about sexism or her skin color. I understand this because for a

practicing Muslim female like Midwest Muslimah, Islam and Muslim are her identity and how

she understands the world.

I was working at Sears [and at the same time] I was working on campus and I remember

going in the next day and my colleagues because they were always calling me, 'there

goes Betty X' in reference to Malcolm X's wife. So I always thought they were joking

and I kinda realized it was a derogatory term, you know because I am African American

and so was Betty, she was Muslim and so was I.

They [colleagues] are all African Americans. So I didn't think about it being a

bad term and I was thinking about it, not having a scarf yet, but they were teasing me

about me being Muslim and I did not know how to respond to that.

Calling Midwest Muslimah 'Betty X' seems to indicate her colleagues assumed she was

associated with the Nation of Islam. What is powerful and provocative about her narrative is that

she stated she was used to dealing with racism but was not prepared to deal with the Islamophobic treatment she endured as a result of being a Muslim: "I knew how to deal with that kind of racism . . . . it wasn't racist; it wasn't sexism or where you were born , you have to deal with everything. I couldn't do it." This indicates that she felt Islamophobia was harsher treatment and more difficult to endure than racism. Although she is the only African American female in this study, it de-centers race and places religion at the center.

Theme 7: Storytelling, Counterstories: Voices of Muslim men and women are unique

Throughout Theme 1 through Theme 6, the themes detail the voices of oppressed from among the Muslim men and women participants. Their voices contained and expand the need to understand the role of Islam in constructing their identity and how they see and face Islamophobia. I explored their voices and compounded them with my voice to derive meaning and the patterns of Islamophobia. Their voices and my voice merged and become one voice to fight Islamophobia. I saw certain things in common and I am grateful to my participants for sharing their voices. Through their voices and mine, I produced significant and unique stories detailing the oppression and Islamophobia we faced. Table 4.2 summarizes the participants' and the themes associated with each.

Counterstories

Throughout Chapter One through Four there are several of counterstories related to monolithic perceptions of Islam and Muslims. The readers are invited to read between the lines and reflect actively. Every time the name of Jesus[51] appeared, I put "peace be upon him" (Pbuh) as a salutation and prayer for Jesus[52]. Jesus[53] is one of the five[54] greatest Messengers[55] sent by

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[51] Pbuh
[52] Pbuh
[53] Pbuh

Allah. Muslims must respect all the Messengers of Allah, regardless of where they came from because by not respecting them or by making fun of any of the Messengers of Allah like some media make fun of Jesus[56], satirically or jokingly, is an act of apostasy. This status is not limited to Jesus[57] only but to all the prophets, though the prophets might come from the Jewish faith, or their names appear in the Bible or Torah. Apostasy is something that practising Muslims afraid and aware of. I can assure you that I and other practicing Muslims respect Christianity to the extent the Quran specifically instructs Muslim to be just. Readers can refer to this in footnote 10 in Chapter One. I also denounce the act of terrorism and hate indiscriminate killing because it is written in the Quran that killing an innocent soul is not allowed because the sin is equivalent to killing all of mankind. This is written in footnote 10 in Chapter One. I also allow my wife to study and she excels in her study without having any problems coming from me. Am I now an intolerant Muslim? This study itself is a counterstory. You just need to read between the lines.

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[54] The five prophets are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them all)
[55] Peace be upon them all
[56] Pbuh
[57] Pbuh

Table 4.2 Themes associated with participants' narratives

Participants	Theme 1: Islam is a religion of terror; Muslims are terrorists	Theme 2: Muslim women are targeted because of wearing the hijab	Theme 3: The media misrepresents Muslims and Islam	Theme 4: Legal implications for being a Muslim male	Theme 5: Ignorance of Islamic practices, disrespect of Islam, stereotypes	Theme 6: Oppression as a Muslim is worse than racial oppression	Theme 7: Storytelling, Counterstories: Voices of Muslim men and women are unique
Ayesha		X			X		X
Niqabi		X	X		X		X
Injil	X	X					X
Midwest Muslimah	X	X	X			X	X
Z	X	X	X		X		X
Omar	X		X		X		X
Pseudonymous	X		X	X			X
Uncle		X	X		X		X
Abu Kutub	X		X	X	X		X
Abu Irfan Kalantani	X	X	X	X	X		X

Summary

In Chapter 4, I interpreted and analyzed my participants' narratives and their experiences with Islamophobia. I provided their narratives and personal portraits in order to develop an understanding of who my participants are. Their narratives then were grouped to illustrate the emerging themes, which I analyzed and explained through including my personal perspectives. The nine participants' stories are guided by my stories in the previous chapters. The intention is clear: to demonstrate in-depth the varieties of Islamophobic experiences faced by my participants and me.

Table 4.1 provided descriptive demographics for the nine research participants. This is necessary to emphasize to readers that they are not all Arabs or people of color. Rather, the majority of them are White Americans. The issue of Islamophobia is not a matter of race in my study. My participants went through a conscious decision to embrace Islam and most of them are Americans. However, their new identities as practicing Muslims subjected them to oppression because of their religion. From these narratives and dynamics, I extracted themes in order to analyze Islamophobia. Table 4.2 provided the themes that emerged from my participants' narratives.

Chapter 5 provides detail about the development of Critical Muslim Theory and includes (a) summary of the study, (b) discussion, (c) development of Critical Muslim Theory, (d) recommendations for practice, (e) recommendations for future research, and (f) conclusion.

CHAPTER 5—DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 includes (a) summary of the study, (b) discussion, (c) development of Critical Muslim Theory, (d) recommendations for practice, (e) recommendations for future research, and (f) conclusion.

Summary of the Study

This study explored Islamophobia in a Midwestern town in the United States through an autoethnography to describe my experiences and my counterstory. My participants' narratives are the ethnography and their counterstories describe the negative treatment they experienced as Muslims. My research participants' narratives are important to strengthen my reflection on Islamophobia. Their experiences provide more examples and patterns of Islamophobia, which have differences from some of my experiences because each person's experience is unique. They helped me to connect to my own experiences, thus providing multiple consciousness. This is inherently true because according to Ellis & Bochner (2000), autoethnography is an "autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting personal to cultural" (p. 739).

After receiving IRB approval from the University, I began my interviews, which extended from May through September 2013. Participant selection was based on convenience and purposive criterion sampling. My male participants were identified individually by me through my relationship with them. I asked for guidance from my wife for the female participants because she knows them through their interaction at local Community Muslim Center in this Midwestern town. They included (a) four Muslim males and five females. Two of the participants are university students. One of them is an international student; two are Arab females; two are African Americans—one male and one female; four are White American males and females.

I explained the importance of this study to detail Muslim experiences to my participants. I also explained how this study can benefit Americans in the future because by detailing their Islamophobic experiences, some Americans who read this study can understand the reality that is faced by Muslims in the Midwest. Each participant was interviewed twice for over one hour. Three of the participants were interviewed via Skype; two were interviewed in a coffee shop; one was interviewed in her home in the presence of my wife and a translator to ensure the feeling of safety and comfort for the participant; and three were interviewed at the Muslim Center in the Midwestern town. The interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed. After transcription, I gave the transcripts to the participants so they could make any corrections or deletions needed to ensure they were accurate. In this way, member checks were conducted with the participants. My major professor served as my peer debriefer.

As I read through and reflected on the transcripts several times, I made notes and memos in the margins. Although Critical Race Theory was used as the foundation for the analysis, I began to identify emerging themes from the participants' narratives that were consistent and represented instances of Islamophobia from which to develop Critical Muslim Theory. I ensured trustworthiness of my data through establishing credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

My dialogues with my participants detailed elements of Islamophobia. My participants' experiences were interpreted from my understanding of Islamophobia through my reflections. Before self-reflection, I studied and analyzed their narratives. Because I am a Muslim and experience Islamophobia, we share similar counterstories, however, our contexts are different because our personalities and experiences differ. The different experiences of Islamophobia in this research are one voice because I integrated my voice, opinions, and reflections, from my

counterstories and their counterstories. Their narratives evoke their counterstories and show that their voices are valid, unique, and powerful.

The purpose of this study was to propose Critical Muslim Theory as the theoretical framework to understand Islamophobia and Muslims' religious experiences in the Midwest. Critical Muslim Theory is used for analysis and interpretation due to the centrality of religion as the lens through which Islamophobia that emerged from my counterstories and experiences and those of my participants. The CMT tenets parallel those of Critical Race Theory, however, the themes are different due to the centrality of religion rather than race. The major significance is that the religion of Islam and Muslims' experiences of oppression are the focal point. Importantly, Midwest Muslimah, although the only African American female in the study, stated that she finds Islamophobia more oppressive than racism.

Muslim Identity

According to Billing (2013), identity is developed dependent on many factors. In different parts of the world, people even develop their identity based on a third gender, neither male nor female. Therefore, it is not impossible to identify and affirm my identity as a Muslim and Islam as the centrality of self—a Muslim self. I see everything around me from this perspective. Some of my White American friends have difficulty understanding this identity. However, when reflecting on the concept created by DuBois (1903), double consciousness, it becomes possible to understand the way I see and identify the world from Islam as a *deen*—a way of life. DuBois said:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro;

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two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

> The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife — this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He wouldn't bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face. (1903, pp. 2-3)

From double consciousness, I propose Muslim Double Consciousness, so readers can understand how religion is the centrality to practicing Muslims:

> Practicing Muslims see everything around him or her from the lens of Tawhid, which is supported by the Quran and Sunna. Even the understanding of the Quran and Sunna are perfected only by studying and practicing the knowledge gleaned. The process itself is not one way but rather, is continuous until the last day of our life. Because we are Muslim does not make us superior to others—if God's consciousness is absent and doesn't help us from wrongdoing (oppression) [58] to others or even to ourselves. [59]

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[58] Oppression is among the many thematic messages in the Sunna that Muslim needs to avoid, involve in, or not be part of, even to the nonbelievers (non-Muslims). A companion of the prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, Jabir bin Abdullah reported that Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: "Be on your guard against committing oppression, for oppression is a darkness on the Day of Resurrection, and be on your guard against petty-mindedness (stinginess) for it destroyed those who were before you, as it incited them to shed blood and make lawful what was unlawful for them." See Sahih Muslim, Book 32, Hadith 6248

Practicing Muslims do not want to destroy America because America is the opportunity for us to understand and learn from each other and we don't want to impose Islam[60] on Americans because Islam is submission to God (Allah) through understanding and knowledge.

The main difference that a Muslim Double Consciousness has in comparison with DuBois' (1903) double consciousness is our priorities are encompassed and encapsulated specifically in the Unity of Allah (Tawhid). A practicing Muslim lives and eats for the sake of Allah; s/he talks and smiles for the sake of Allah; s/he treats non-Muslims with respect and welcoming because s/he believes, at the end s/he will return to Allah and be judged according to his or her intentions and actions. Adapting this notion from DuBois doesn't mean Islam is a Black religion; it is universal because Islam is not a religion of race. [61]

The Centrality—Religion vs. Race

Discussion and research addressing the centrality of Islam over race is difficult to locate. Race is a centrality in American minds. Interestingly, the centrality of race doesn't have its

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[59] Hurting yourself is oppression towards self, which is the same with committing suicide. Suicide is not allowed; thus suicide bombing is not allowed. This is an aggression towards our self.

[60] We don't come to the United States to conquer. In the Koran, there is a verse: "Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth has been made clear from error. Whoever rejects false worship and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that never breaks. And Allah hears and knows all things." Another verse: "So if they dispute with you, say 'I have submitted my whole self to Allah, and so have those who follow me.' And say to the People of the Scripture and to the unlearned: 'Do you also submit yourselves?' If they do, then they are on right guidance. But if they turn away, your duty is only to convey the Message. And in Allah's sight are all of His servants." See Koran (2: 256) and (3:20)

[61] There is a verse in the Koran that says: **"**O Humankind! We have created you from male and female and have made you into peoples (shu'ub) and tribes (qaba'il) that you may know one another; truly, the noblest (akram) among you before God are the most pious (atqa) among yourselves; indeed, is God the All-knowing, the All-seeing." See Koran (49:13).

origins in American slavery but occurs earlier by associating religion and race in Europe, according to Majid (2009),

> Religion, a nineteenth-century European concept, was simply a cover for race. This explains why the prominent French philologist Ernest Renan's declared war on la chose semitique (the Semitic thing) targeted Jews and Arabs indiscriminately: both religious communities represented "the Semitic spirit" in its purest form. (p.12)

Hardy (1999) detailed Islam and the race question beautifully:

> The contrast with societies that grew up under the influence of Islam is considerable. Although Islamic society was multiracial from the beginning, in none of the regions where the religion became dominant did the concept of race enter Muslim consciousness. In fact, Arabic had no word at this time which would correspond to the semantic range covered by the English word "race." The word that is sometimes translated as "race" in versions of Classical Arabic texts is "jins" or "genus." "Jins" is a classificatory term taken over from Aristotelian science and is used regularly in Islamic law, for example, to define the value of commodities. For example, the eleventh-century Transoxianian jurist Abu Bakr as-Sarakhsi, who writes
>
>> The free and the slave are of one genus. As far as his origin is concerned, the human being is free. Slavery intervenes as an accident . . . So slavery does not bring about a change in genus. (Kitab al-Mabsut (Beirut: 1398/1978) XII, 83-84.)
>
> In the fifteenth century, as racist ideology emerged in the West, the Muslim Ottoman empire was also coming on the scene. "Racism", however, could not have formed part of its legitimating apparatus. It formed no part of the Ottoman Muslim legacy.

Of course, social differentiation did and does exist amongst Muslim peoples. This cannot be denied. In the tribal society in which Islam was born there existed differences in social status between the various tribes. Moreover, the societies of the Roman, Persian and Indian worlds where Islam planted its roots were highly articulated in terms of occupational differentiation. But while we find instances of discriminatory exclusion founded on a people's social standing, this did not take on a predominantly racial character.

In the United States as related to the social construction of race, scientific racism and eugenics were instrumental in cementing the ingrained nature of racism in the society, culture, and psyche of white Americans' minds.

A Eureka Moment

Islamophobia is complex and problematic. Some scholars understand Islamophobia as a distinct social phenomenon and others consider it to be a type of xenophobia (Helbling, 2008). Adams and Joshi (2007) state that, "*Islamophobia* is used to emphasize the phobic dimensions of the "fear or hatred of Islam and its adherents that translates into individual, ideological and systemic forms of oppression and discrimination (see Zine, 2003, p. 40)" (p. 283). My centrality of religion in this study as the main factor of hatred manifested through Islamophobia in the development of Critical Muslim Theory is because Islamophobia is not related to race. Bleich (2012) believed that Islamophobia is a complex and problematic term to define by saying:

> Islamophobia is an emerging comparative concept in the social science. Yet, there is no widely accepted definition term. As a result, it is extremely difficult to compare levels of Islamophobia across time, location, or social group, or to level of analogous categories of racism, anti-Semitism, or xenophobia (p.179).

I saw that Islamophobia stands on its own rather than being tied to racism. Bleich (2012) continued further:

> I propose that Islamophobia can best be understood as indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims. Because not all criticism constitutes Islamophobia, terms like indiscriminate —or cognates like undifferentiated or un-nuanced—cover instances where negative assessments are applied to all or most Muslims or aspects of Islam. As with parallel concepts like homophobia or xenophobia, Islamophobia connotes a broader set of negative attitudes or emotions directed at individuals or groups because of their perceived membership in a defined category. Viewed in this way, Islamophobia is also analogous to terms like racism, sexism, or anti-Semitism. Aversion, jealousy, suspicion, disdain, anxiety, rejection, contempt, fear, disgust, anger, and hostility give a sense of the range of negative attitudes and emotions that may constitute Islamophobia. Finally, directed at Islam or Muslims suggests that the target may be the religious doctrine or the people who follow it (or whose ancestors have followed it, or who are believed to follow it). This recognizes the multidimensional nature of Islamophobia, and the fact that Islam and Muslims are often inextricably intertwined in individual and public perceptions. (p. 181)

Regardless, social justice is paramount, as it is the main goal for both Critical Muslim Theory (CMT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT). This autoethnography is an introspective heuristic that allows me to see the development of my growth and maturity over time. Throughout my research, I realized there are some good Americans who want to make this world a better place to live. I consider this a Eureka moment and this is cordial to the idea that:

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The researcher should be aware that his/her ideas about the topic might have to be

changed during the research process. Obviously we do not start with a tabula rasa, are

never free of preoccupations and don't have to be. Ideas and concepts however should be

open for correction if data are inconsistent with them. This is not as easy as it appears, as

we usually have psychic if not emotional 'vested interests' and try to stick to what we

believe and take for granted. The rule asks the researchers to keep their position flexible.

(Kleining & Witt, 2001, p. 1)

My Eureka moment develops an understanding for others. Often I see the perpetrators of

Islamophobic and racist remarks say in justification, "I didn't know" or "I just speak my mind"

or "That's not what I meant." The counterstories in this research bring the issue of Islamophobia

alive. Bringing concepts to life is an important teaching strategy. An effective teacher

understands that it's not his or her technique alone that brings teaching success; the maturity that

derives from truly understanding particular contexts and situations contributes immensely. A

person who understands Islamic history and context cannot be an Islamophobe. True

understanding leads to acceptance, not judgment.

Autoethnography can be used to create a theory; in the case of this research, my

counterstories and the counterstories of my nine Muslim participants were used to create CMT.

Critical Muslim Theory replicates tenets of CRT, however, CRT does not account for the

religious dimension of Islam and being Muslim in the discrimination that Muslims experience.

My data comes from my observations and interviews in the Midwestern United States and I am

engaged heavily with CRT. Therefore, my research results are specific to this place and context;

I predict that CMT may be different in Europe or in Asia in comparison to the United States.

Future research needs to discuss, critique, develop, and refine CMT.

The centrality of religion replaces race concomitantly to understand that hatred of Islam and Muslims supersedes racism and skin color in CMT. The logical arguments are that Islam does not belong to Arabs and that Muslims are diverse and complex entities. My research participants who are White were alienated from their own families and friends. On numerous occasions they were alienated and their statements and Islamic beliefs were ridiculed. All of my White participants said that they don't feel they belong in the United States because of who they are. Interestingly, one of my African American participants states that the hatred towards her surpasses racist tendencies or behaviors with which she has been confronted. As an African American Muslim woman, she could identify racist attacks on her but as a Muslim woman, she believes that Islamophobia is worse than racism. In her case, her African American friends make fun of her by calling her Betty X because she converted to Islam. Additionally, it appears that her friends may be confusing her devotion to Islam with the Nation of Islam, which is different.

Some may argue that religion is an ideological construct or a human creation. From a Muslim perspective, Islam is not an ideological construct or a human creation. How does religion become a salient factor for oppression? Islam is entirely different than race because the latter is socially constructed by bigots for the sake of classification and control. How then is Islam a factor in oppression as race is a factor in inequity?

It is a human factor, which I term religious intolerance, which is in direct contradiction to the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment right to religious freedom, and, further, represents intersection with the Fourteenth Amendment (Chon & Arntz, 2005). From the responses of my participants who are converts; their choices are conscious choices without any influence from Muslims. They became Muslims through detailed study and observation about Islam and Muslims. If their families have problems accepting the new religion that my participants are

embracing, it is a matter of ignorance, intolerance, and not respecting individual choice. Religion becomes the most active and profound human factor tied to the emotional, spiritual, physical, and intellectual schema of intolerant individuals.

Dimensions of Islamophobia compound with intersections, for example, gender, social capital, the law and rights, language, and race. Most of my female participants recognize and admit that their gender causes people to oppress them. For all of the female participants, wearing the hijab was guaranteed oppression and of a type that male Muslims did not experience due to their gender. One of my participants received severe treatment in her workplace because she is not American and because she doesn't speak American English well. Due to that, people manipulated and abused her.

Discussion

Chapter 1 provided background information regarding the historical nature of Muslims in the United States. As noted earlier, hatred of Muslims escalated in the U.S. in the 1970s and escalated after 9/11, which contributes to the historical context of Islamophobia. From a legal perspective, Chon and Artz (2005) state:

This much is clear from the historical record: Perceived religious difference contributed to racial formation of the Japanese Americans, justifying the differential treatment by the executive and legislative branches of government, and endorsed by the Supreme Court.[56] . . . . Religion was one marker of racial difference, so much so that it could be *advanced without loss of credibility or face in legal rhetoric by elite lawyers and judges*. It was not only culturally different but also politically threatening. A similar differentiating process is at work today. Islamic beliefs are frequently viewed as religious zealotry directed

against the secular or Christian West. One example of this is the term jihad, which has gained much notoriety especially since 9/11.

> Jihad is a core principle in Islamic theology; it means to strive, to apply oneself, to struggle, and to persevere. Jihad, in the most straightforward sense, connotes a strong spiritual and material work ethic in Islam . . . Importantly, the Qur'an does not use the word 'jihad' to refer to warfare or fighting; such acts are referred to as qital.[59]

Despite the layered meanings of jihad, it has entered into the common U.S. lexicon with a strong primary connotation of violent aggression against non-Muslims.[60] (emphasis added, pp. 226-227)

Chon and Artz employ an interesting concept they term, "Religioning Race" (p. 228), and recognize Critical Race Theory. Unfortunately, although Islamophobia is the focus of their article, they fail to extend it into its own theoretical basis in placing religion at the center. However, they were on the brink:

> In the post-9/11 era, what exactly is meant by race? Race is composed significantly of a religious dimension that has not been critically isolated, analyzed or discussed. Islamic religious difference has been racialized in the context of the war on terror, just as religious differences contributed to the consolidation of Japanese American racial difference during World War II. Yet the existing architecture of domestic and international anti-discrimination law has avoided recognizing racial discrimination based on religious group difference. Domestic and international law simultaneously creates and obscures current "Muslim" racial identity. (Chon & Artz, 2005, pp. 215-216)

I submit that Critical Muslim Theory is the method through which religion may be critically isolated, analyzed, and discussed. Chon and Artz assist in providing a legal basis for Critical Muslim Theory through their identification of the Patriot Act and the intersectionality between the First and Fourteenth Amendments as manifested in an unprecedented way in U.S. jurisprudence and as different from the racial formation of Japanese Americans identified in their quotation above. In the following, they contribute further to the primacy of religion over race:

> Religion exists both in the cultural sense as well as the ritual sense. It is about a community of like-minded people who identify with each other in ways other than what they are doing when they are praying. Religion is an aspect, sometimes a defining aspect, of culture. However, it is different from other forms of culture because religious adherents believe that their system of beliefs has a divine origin: they believe God decided what the rules are, and these rules are more fixed than fluid.[12] In the U.S., the law of religious freedom has been compartmentalized into a narrow First Amendment box. Relatively few cases have explored religious tolerance via the intersection of the First and Fourteenth Amendments.[13] But the category of religion is unruly, addressing more than just faith and ritual.[14] Rather than being confined neatly into a private sphere within a public-private dichotomy demanded by U.S. constitutional law, religion spills over into all aspects of civil life and, acknowledged or not, constitutes a critical component of the war on terror. Moreover, law actually affects the shape of religion just as it shapes other cultural aspects of human social organization. Religion and law are mutually constitutive components of culture.[15] Even a single religion such as Islam or Christianity is composed of a diversity of perspectives.[16] Thus, any analysis is subject to all the usual postmodern caveats about representation, essentialism, and so on. Nonetheless, and at the risk of

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oversimplifying, Islam is different from present-day Christianity because its ritual practices tend to be more overtly integrated with daily life compared to the mainstream Protestant Christian denominations as practiced in the U.S.[17] (Chon & Artz, 2005, pp. 218-219)

The treatment Muslims' experience, exacerbated since 9/11, in the Midwest is a direct contradiction to their Constitutional First Amendment rights to religious freedom, and, as noted by Chon & Artz, intersects with Fourteenth Amendment rights. However, historically, normative religion from the onset of the founding of the United States of America was considered white and Protestant (Adams & Joshi, 2007). Consider the term, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) that in critical circles defines privilege in terms of power, and often hegemony and patriarchy, denoted by virtue of race and religion in the U.S. The Irish Catholics can attest to the hatred one group can experience on the basis of religion . . . and they are white. They formed their own private schools so their children would receive the religious instruction of their choice to avoid the indoctrination in public schools that were saturated with religious doctrine. Eventually, the Irish assimilated and became accepted as "worthy citizens" in the U.S. The pinnacle of their acceptance, assisted by their whiteness, came with the election of John F. Kennedy as President in 1960. However, Muslims and Islam are not accepted in the Midwest by some people and their right to their religious freedom without persecution remains to be realized. Chon & Artz (2005) clarify this further:

> If religion is an integral aspect of construing the terrorist as a racially inferior other,[123] the opposite is also true, if one uses the term "race" as it is typically understood, as tracking census categories. *Islam cuts across all racial groups, including the so-called White race. Arabs, not all of whom are Muslim, are currently classified as White by the U.S. Census*

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Bureau,[124] *although their status as "Whites" has shifted over time.*[125] *The federal government has targeted not only Muslim people of Arab ancestry, but also European Americans* such as attorney Brandon Mayfield,[126] Asian Americans such as U.S. Army chaplain James Yee,[127] and Latinos such as enemy combatant Jose Padilla[128] for differential treatment. *None is Arab, all are U.S.-born citizens, and Mayfield is White. Yet, their race, ethnicity, and indeed national origin seemed to play a far less important role in terror-profiling than their religious difference from the U.S. Christian majority*. A substantial U.S.-born Black Muslim population as well as a growing group of African Muslim immigrants have also experienced selective treatment by public and private entities.[129] Thus a definition of profiling that mentions race, ethnicity or even national origin but excludes religion would be profoundly misleading. It points away from the common denominator that ties these disparate racial groups together as associated with terrorist activity. (emphasis added, pp. 239-340)

Chon and Artz, although not separating religion and race formally, identify Islam and Muslims as a diverse group of people, including Whites, who are targeted as a result of their religion. Further, they provide a legal basis for Critical Muslim Theory in addition to evidence that Islamophobia places religion at the forefront over race. Further support for the legal basis for CMT is found from the American Society of International Law (2003). They also note the intersection of First and Fourteenth Amendment rights. Moreover, they add Fifth Amendment rights to due process following 9/11 in that the Patriot Act created denial of due process of the U.S. Constitution's Fifth Amendment, which was erased by Presidential decree by George W. Bush, Jr. following the 9/11 attacks.

Adams and Joshi (2007) offer additional evidence, although they too do not separate race and religion and the primacy of religion or contribute to the legal basis. Their work is from a Theory of Oppression. In the following quotation, they have not made the distinction that Muslims encompass numerous races and ethnicities; nevertheless, they address somewhat the historical nature of Islamophobia as well as the impact of the media in making Islamophobia worse:

> Islamophobia in the United States is not a post-9/11 phenomenon, but the religious and racial stereotyping of Muslims as if all were Islamic militants has accelerated in response to the oil crisis of 1978; the first Gulf War of the 1980s and 1990s; the attacks of September 11, 2001; and the bus, train, and subway bombings in London and Madrid. Uncritical conflation of theology and ideology with race and national origins leads to the essentializing of all Arabs and Asians with "Muslims" and all Muslims with "Islamic terrorists" and fanatics. Stereotypes in the media and statements by government officials paint Islam and Muslims as intrinsically violent, destructive, and incapable of self-regulation or democracy, whether on the basis of theology or genetics (Afridi, 201; Mamdani, 2004; Nimer, 2002). Remarks from political leaders and by the news media, with caricatures that are the filmmakers' or cartoonists' stock-in-trade, lead incrementally to the stereotyping of all brown-skinned Muslims as the enemy of a democratic West (Shaheen, 1984, 2001). (p. 265)

Regarding the above quotation, "all brown-skinned Muslims as the enemy," it is important to note that several of my Muslim participants are White. Their white privilege does not spare them from Islamophobia as also noted by Chon and Artz (2005). This is a profound finding and substantiates centralizing religion rather than race in the formation of Critical Muslim Theory.

As noted by my participants' counterstories and my own, as well as by Adams and Joshi (2007) above and as implied by Chon and Artz (2005), the media fuels Islamophobia through perpetrating inflammatory and inaccurate information. Ali, Clifton, Duss, Fang, Keyes, & Shakir (2011) identify prominent foundations who fund "misinformation experts, validators, grass roots organizations, religious right groups, and their allies in the media and in politics [that] profoundly misrepresent Islam and American Muslims in the United States" (p. 4).

Based on my participants' experiences and my own experiences and observations, they were treated badly regardless of their skin color. Family relationships were lost because some participants embraced Islam as their religion. If the blood relationship can be broken because of changing religion, race is no longer the main or central issue. My participants reiterated how much they love their families and embrace them but still are viewed differently. The advantage CMT has in addressing Islamophobia over CRT is it addresses religion through Muslims' perspective as "deen." "Deen" may be understood as being submissive and worshiping Allah through the religion of Islam; and, Islam is a comprehensive way of life, 24/7, in private and in public, which involves physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual elements. From a Western secularist's point of view, religion is a private affair and it is up to the individual to determine how she or he experiences the faith (Haque, 2004, p. 5). This is what makes it so difficult to transcend/internalize religion over race because according to Stonebanks (2008), the United States population could not escape having negative perceptions towards Muslims and Islam because Islam and Muslims are viewed as "archaic, irrational and monolithic mind set as opposed to a Muslim way of knowing that is both complex, unique and diverse" (p. 37).

I have not explained CMT's development using a deductive method. I do not think this is prudent because CMT is in its formative stages, although I believe this research contributes

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considerably to its viability in that regard. It is in the development stage. However, I believe the deductive method is valid for an established theory. For example, if there are thousands of racism cases, the cases can be arranged according to the criterion in any established principle. It is a top down approach. Another example is that racist incidents can be arranged accordingly to deduce the principles of CRT. Even according to the method of change in Islamic principle, a top down approach does not work. In a reflection of this, a change that was introduced by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt will not be successful because it is through a top down approach. In this case, a change, if subjected through the means of political power or revolution only will not succeed. Islam is not a revolutionary religion. Islam seeks to change individual Muslims to be a better individual and a better individual Muslim will change his/her family. If I have 100 Muslim families, these groups of families will produce another better community. Groups of communities will produce a strong, improved Muslim country. This is why I don't emphasize a top down, deductive approach for CMT. It is opposed to my way of Muslim way of knowing because I created CMT as a theory for reflection and action, not revolution, and thus, this is why most of themes relate to combating ignorance. [62]

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[62] "And the slaves of the Rahman[Allah] are those who walk on the earth humbly and when the ignorant people speak to them, they reply peacefully, [63] and those who pass the night prostrating and standing before their Lord [Allah], [64] and those who say, "Our Lord [Allah], avert from us the punishment of Jahannam[Hell Fire]; indeed, its punishment is a persisting affliction. [65] Indeed, evil it is as an abode and a place to dwell in [66] - and those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly, and it (i.e. their spending) is moderate in between (the two extremes) [67] - and those who do not invoke any other god alongwith Allah, and do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity, except rightfully, nor do they fornicate; and whoever does it, shall face the recompense of his sin, [68] the punishment will be doubled for him and he will remain there disdained, forever, [69] except the one who repents and believes and does good deeds, then Allah will change the bad deeds of such people into good ones, and Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful" (See Koran 25: 63-70)

Development of Critical Muslim Theory

This is the first study of Islamophobia and Muslims' religious experiences developed using Critical Muslim Theory to the best of my knowledge. I propose CMT based on observations, interviews with my participants, and my own experiences. I read books detailing oppression; I see oppression; I understand how oppression works; and I live(d) oppression. I read books written by Derrick Bell and from discussions in graduate classrooms with other graduate students at Midwestern University, I observed patterns of oppression. The discussions detailed oppression from the perspective of CRT. I saw the same pattern of oppression and racism discussed within the framework of CRT in the stories I heard from Muslims I live among in my Midwestern town. I first named CMT Critical Islamophobia Theory (CIT), but later we changed CIT to CMT because the centrality of CRT is race and racism and "Muslim" was more accurate than "Islam." Additionally, Muslims' religious experiences are at the heart of the theory because experiences are the central issue in autoethnography and qualitative research.

Earlier in this and other Chapters, I provided an historical context and established a legal basis for CMT. The findings of this research constitute a call for the development of Critical Muslim Theory. In developing CMT, I began with research on the process of building a theory as depicted in Figure 5.1. Carlile and Christensen's, *The Cycles of Theory Building in Management Research* (2004), and their framework provided guidance. To my surprise, CMT works both deductively and inductively, or top down and bottom up. Argumentation might arise from essentialists because I used inductive reasoning in developing CMT, but CMT is a qualitative theory and I am interested in achieving:

> understanding (Verstehen) of a particular situation, or individuals, or groups of
>
> individuals, or (sub)cultures, etc., rather than to explain and predict future behaviors as in

the so-called hard sciences, with their arsenal of laws, theories, and hypotheses employed

or rejected on the basis of their predictive value. (Bendasolli, 2013, p. 1)
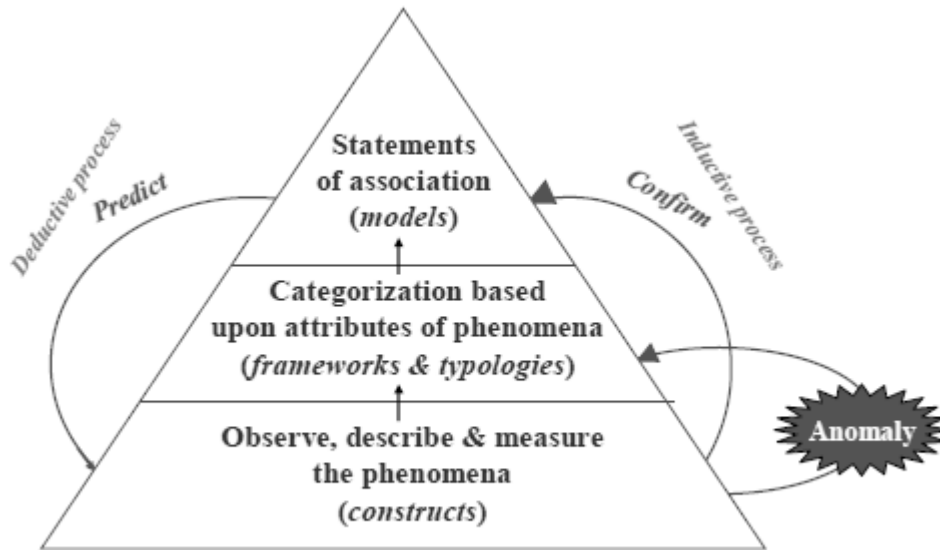
Figure 5.1. The process of building theory (Carlile & Christensen, 2004)

A second argument might concern the issue of using empirical science to test the

hypothesis; however, qualitative studies are not interested in testing hypotheses because we

focus on meaning. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005):

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical

materials—case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, artifacts,

cultural texts and productions, observational, historical, interactional and visual texts—

that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. (p. 3)

Induction itself is probabilistic because I made generalizations from specific incidents

producing CMT from specific Islamophobic, hateful, and bigoted incidents due to religious

preference. The purpose of my research is to understand the phenomenon of Islamophobia and

Muslims' religious experiences. The induction process involved in developing CMT is depicted

in Figure 5.2 and identifies emerging themes related to the Islamophobic incidents based on religious preference experienced by my participants: for example, understanding hegemony and Islamophobic behavior among some Americans towards Muslims.

```
Stories of oppression,
Islamophobic incidents,
microaggressions

Stories of oppression and
Islamophobic incidents are
categorized according to emerging
themes with CRT as the foundation

Observation, interpretation, descriptive categorizations
are developed into CMT
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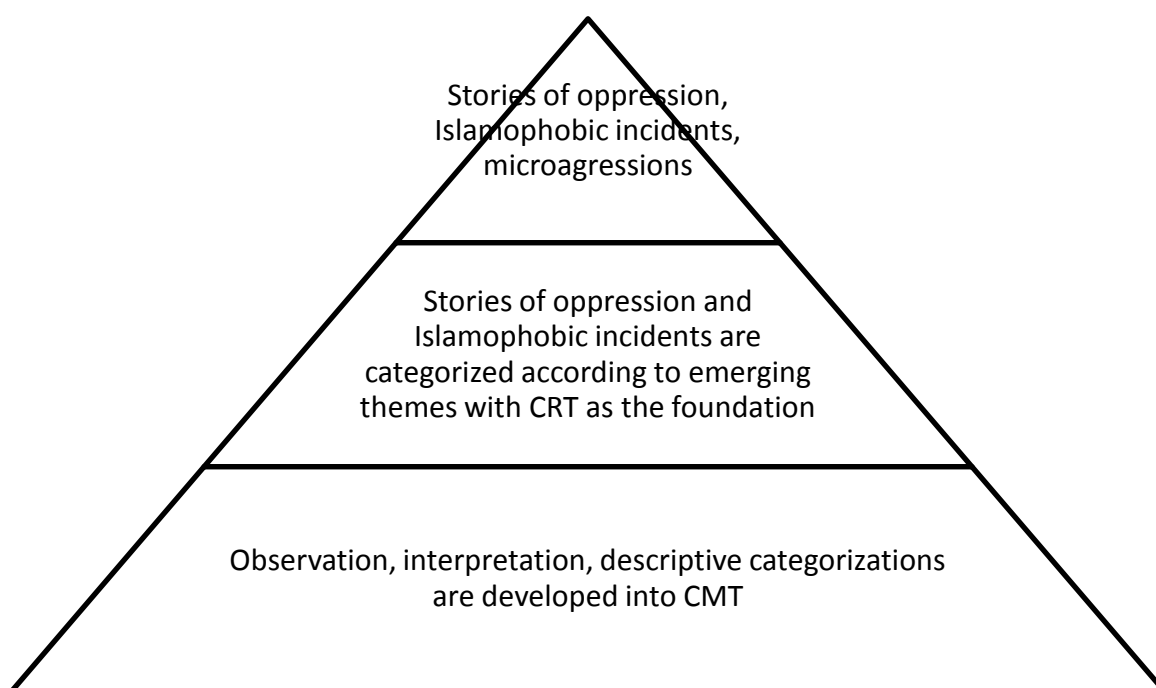
Figure 5.2 Inductive reasoning in developing CMT

Critical Muslim Theory also can be developed from deductive reasoning as depicted in Figure 5.3. Reports of specific incidents of Islamophobic behavior from my participants paralleled instances of racism in CRT. In fact, I developed CMT by using CRT as my initial lens and foundation and then looking for similar patterns in Islamophobic cases or Muslims' religious experiences. Deductive or inductive reasoning notwithstanding, my interaction with my participants created a dialogue within myself. The voices of my participants were absorbed into my emotion. Later on, these voices developed a self-dialogue. Self-dialogue occurs when a person engages in reconciling his or her presentation in multiplicity and is not limited to uniformity because the self can divide within entities to take different perspectives (Shaw, 2001).

It is logical why I feel my participants' sharp pains. It is not only because they are Muslim,

although some of my personal experiences as a Muslim are similar to theirs. I empathize with

anyone who is not treated fairly because as explained earlier, as a Muslim I was taught to be just

to everyone, especially to non-Muslims. In this case, I sympathize and empathize with Boston

bombing victims and I abhor the actions of the terrorists responsible for the indiscriminate

killings.
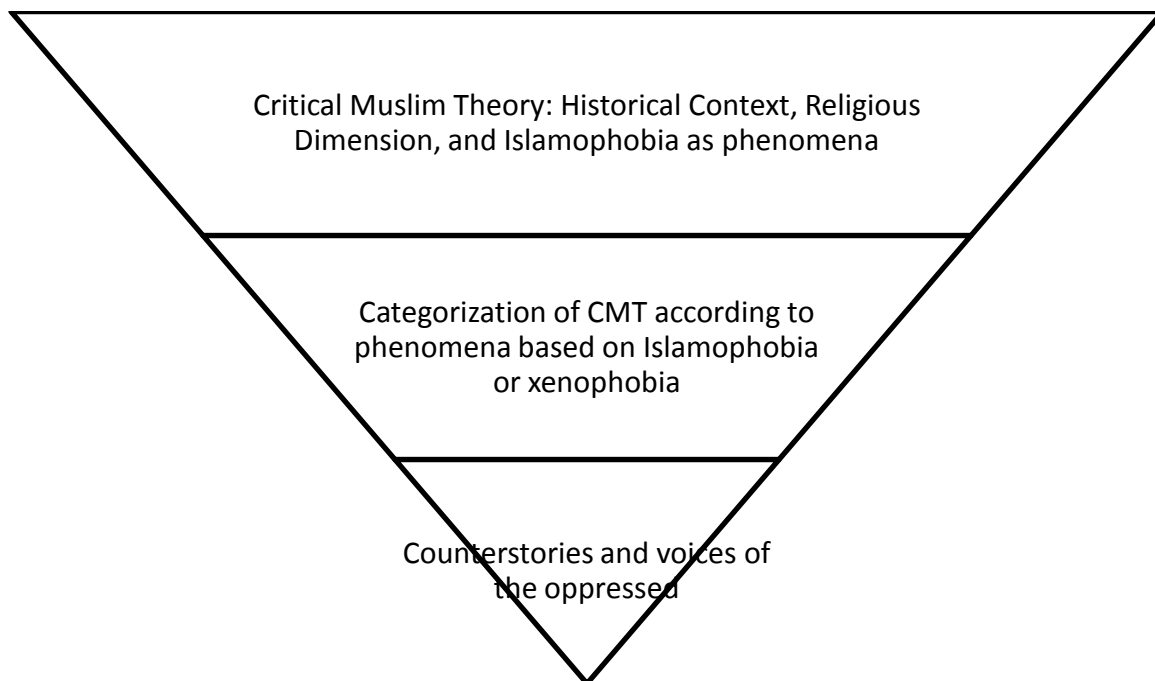
Figure 5.3 Deductive reasoning in developing CMT

Tenets of Critical Muslim Theory

Because CRT provided the lens and framework to develop CMT, let us revisit some of

the basic tenets of CRT. According to Delgado and Stefancic (1991), there are five basic tenets

of CRT: (a) racism is endemic and pervasive in the United States among the dominant society. It

will never go away in totality due to the painful legacy of slavery and the history of people of

color in the United States; (b) CRT is critical towards the U.S.' dominant society's understanding

of meritocracy, neutrality, and colorblindness in relation to legal discourse: "our system of

white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material" (Dixson, 2007, p. 3). Race relations in the United States belong to the dominant society, which holds power and privilege; (c) race is a social construction in the United States. The belief of a dominant race based on intelligence or physical traits has no basis in scientific fact. The differences between races in terms of physical features do not equate moral superiority or intelligence and they can't be used as a standard for beauty. However, the dominant society in the United States ignores this notion; (d) intersectionality amplifies oppression, i.e., oppression faced by underrepresented people is not one dimensional but multidimensional because it intersects with other aspects such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, or citizenship (i.e., American or Alien); (e) storytelling in the form of counterstories situate the voices and experiences of people of color at the forefront. Their voices and experiences are important, unique, legitimate, and valid. Their oppression and subordination is understood by listening to their voices, which fight oppression. These tenets served as a foundation for my analysis of my experiences and those of my participants. As the themes emerged, they provide the basis for the tenets and accompanying themes of CMT.

According to my understanding of inductive reasoning, we can prove any idea or emerging phenomena by providing evidence and examples to support the development of the event. In case of CMT, I developed the tenets using this method. The emerging themes provided the basis for the tenets for CMT through the existing tenets of CRT. My process, then, is reconsidering the tenets from CRT as they represent participants' experiences to develop CMT, which places religion at the center of the examination instead of race. This was accomplished according to my point of view as a researcher by providing evidence and examples from my participants' narratives to support the tenets that I developed as depicted in Table 5.1.

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Table 5.1 Tenets of Critical Muslim Theory Associated with Themes

Critical Muslim Theory Tenets	Themes that Inform the Tenets
Tenet 1: Islamophobia is endemic and pervasive.	Theme 1: Islam is a religion of terror; Muslims are terrorists Theme 2: Muslim women are targeted because of wearing the hijab Theme 3: The media misrepresents Muslims and Islam Theme 4: Legal implications for being a Muslim male Theme 5: Ignorance of Islamic practices, disrespect of Islam, stereotypes Theme 6: Oppression as a Muslim is worse than racial oppression Theme 7: Storytelling and Counterstories: Voices of Muslim men and women are unique
Tenet 2: CMT is critical towards how the dominant society views Islam and Muslims.	Theme 1: Islam is a religion of terror; Muslims are terrorists Theme 2: Muslim women are targeted because of wearing the hijab Theme 3: The media misrepresents Muslims and Islam Theme 4: Legal implications for being a Muslim male Theme 5: Ignorance of Islamic practices, disrespect of Islam, stereotypes Theme 6: Oppression as a Muslim is worse than racial oppression Theme 7: Storytelling and Counterstories: Voices of Muslim men and women are unique
Tenet 3: Islamophobia is a social construction	Theme 1: Islam is a religion of terror; Muslims are terrorists Theme 3: The media misrepresents Muslims and Islam Theme 5: Ignorance of Islamic practices, disrespect of Islam, stereotypes Theme 7: Storytelling and Counterstories: Voices of Muslim men and women are unique
Tenet 4: Legal basis	Theme 4: Legal implications for being a Muslim male
Tenet 5: Intersectionality	Theme 2: Muslim women are targeted because of wearing the hijab
Tenet 6: Storytelling and counterstories reveal the oppression and pain of Muslims	Theme 7: Storytelling and Counterstories: Voices of Muslim men and women are unique

Additionally and importantly, Critical Muslim Theory has an historical context, which informs Islam, the Muslim experience, and Islamophobia, and a legal basis as established in this chapter and elsewhere.

Tenet 1: Islamophobia is endemic and pervasive

For Tenet 1, Islamophobia replaces racism in CRT because Islam is not a religion of race. Further, my participants and I experience oppression on the basis of religion and being Muslim. The literature review in Chapters 1 and 2 support this further as do the narratives of my participants. Islamophobia's endemic and pervasive character encompasses oppression, aggression, decontextualization, ignorance, misinformation, Islam as a religion of terror, and Muslim men as terrorists. Additional elements relevant to CMT's tenets that differ from those of CRT include ignorance of Islamic practices, disrespect of Islam and Muslims, stereotypes (e.g., rag head, camel jockey), and targeting Muslim women because they wear the hijab. Ignorance of Islamic practices and jurisprudence is an Islamophobic force because of the complexities in understanding the rules and laws related to Islamic law. A prominent example is how the Republican Party uses Sharia Law in order to scare people away from Islam, Muslims, and having Islamophobic groups influence Americans to believe their political agenda. Ramos (2011) said:

> Representative King (Republican, New York) chairs that committee and has singled out Muslims as *the* source of potential terrorism on our shores. We were most recently exposed to a sustained public airing of wild-eyed Islamophobic storylines during the controversy over a proposed Islamic centre for lower Manhattan. Seemingly moderate American Muslims were said to be secretly plotting to replace the US constitution with Sharia law. Civil rights organisations were portrayed as front organisations for violent

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foreign "jihadi" groups. Islam was revealed to be an inherently violent, even terroristic religion. Such slanders and conspiracy theories demonise Muslims and Islam. They would be laughable were they not so ubiquitous, and therefore dangerous. Hysterical Islamophobic rhetoric casts suspicion on all Muslims and amounts to fearmongering, plain and simple. It deserves to be condemned, not dignified with congressional hearings. Unfortunately, Representative King has invited witnesses with records of making outrageous claims about Muslims, such as Walid Shoebat. Shoebat asserts that "Islam is of Satan".

This is not a one case event. It is perpetrated continuously especially during election season for political support by creating public opinion that Islam and Muslims are equated with terror. According to the Muslim Public Affair Council (MPAC) (2010), Republican fear mongering of Islam and Muslims is a lie purported towards the American public. The Council states:

Using uncreative and unsubstantiated claims about Muslim Americans, Sharron Angle, the Republican candidate for U.S. Senate in Nevada, is vying to knock Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) out of his seat and his role as the Senate Majority Leader.

Last week, Angle accused two U.S. cities of having implemented "Shariah Law" - Frankford, Texas, and Dearborn, Mich. Addressing a Tea Party rally, Angle said: "We're talking about a militant terrorist situation, which I believe isn't a widespread thing ... My thoughts are these. First of all, Dearborn, Michigan, and Frankford, Texas, are on American soil, and under Constitutional law. Not Sharia law. And I don't know how that happened in the United States." That's not all that Angle does not know.

Angle demonstrated her ignorance about Shariah and got caught for not doing her homework. Sadly, Angle received applause from audiences by using Islam as a punching

bag to release the rage of the voters. In this election season, attacks on Muslims and Islam by Republican candidates have become all too commonplace. Just think of Roy Blunt (Missouri), Rick Scott (Florida), Rex Duncan (Oklahoma) and Renee Ellmers (North Carolina).

CNN did a little fact-checking on Angle's statement this week, and found that the town of Frankford is actually an annexed part of Dallas, and consists only of a single church and a cemetery. Then there's Dearborn, home to a large Arab American community, many of whom are Christians. According to the City of Dearborn's website, of the 85,000 people living in the city, 37 percent said they adhere to a religion with 6 percent reporting to be Muslim. Dearborn Mayor Jack O'Reilly, sent an invitation to Angle to visit the city to get a firsthand look at the community, which is home to seven mosques and 60 Christian churches. Unsurprisingly, Angle has not accepted the Mayor's invitation.

I have been telling the truth when I said Islamophobia is endemic and pervasive. The statements provided prove the first tenet of CMT. Now let us look into the statement from MPAC and unpack the themes related to CMT's first tenet. First, the statement from the MPAC is valid and not storytelling; it is news reporting. Theme 1 (Islam is a religion of terror; Muslims are terrorists), Theme 3 (the media misrepresents Muslims and Islam), and Theme 7 (Storytelling and Counterstories: Voices of Muslim men and women are unique) are all encapsulated in the statement by MPAC. Thus, Islamophobia is endemic and pervasive.

Let's investigate Theme 2 (Muslim women are targeted because of wearing the hijab) and Theme 6 (Oppression as a Muslim is worse than racial oppression). According to the American

Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the discrimination and oppression towards Muslim women is on the rise. The ACLU wrote:

> Muslim women have been prohibited from wearing their head coverings in a number of contexts. They have been harassed, fired from jobs, denied access to public places, and otherwise discriminated against because they wear hijab. Because of their visibility, Muslim women who wear hijab face particular exposure to discrimination and have increasingly been targets for harassment in the aftermath of September 11. While it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics about discriminatory incidents, reported instances of discrimination appear to be on the rise. (2008)

Civil rights complaints filed with one Muslim advocacy group rose from 366 in 2000 to 2,467 in 2006, an increase of 674%.[2]

The same group reported that, in 2006, there were 154 cases of discrimination or harassment in which a Muslim woman's headcovering was identified as the factor that triggered the incident.[7] The most common complaint in these cases was being prohibited from wearing a headcovering, which accounted for 44 incidents.[8]

One expert has found that Muslim women who wear headscarves are more likely than those who do not to face discrimination: 69% of women who wore hijab reported at least one incident of discrimination compared to 29% of women who did not wear hijab.[9] The current era "is believed" to be a post racial society. However, the oppression for Muslim women is worse than racial oppression when, according to the ACLU, Muslim women were denigrated and couldn't participate in daily events. Racism in the United States has surpassed excluding people from their daily activities. The ACLU (2008) wrote:

At work: Muslim women have been denied the right to wear a headscarf while working as police officers[10] and in other occupations.[11] Women also have been fired for refusing to remove their headscarves.[12] Teachers in public school have been prevented from wearing religious garb, a bar that has been authorized by some state statutes and upheld by some courts.

At school: Muslim girls who wear headscarves, or whose mothers wear headscarves, have been harassed and assaulted.[13] Students also have been denied the right to wear hijab to school[14] and have been prevented from participating in extracurricular activities, including musical concerts[15] and athletic events.[16]

In law enforcement contexts: Muslim women have been denied the right to wear a headscarf while in jail and courthouse detention,[17] while visiting family members in correctional institutions, while accompanying family members to court, and even while working in correctional institutions. Women also have been harassed by police officers for wearing headscarves, both when being arrested[18] and when they have called the police for help.

In public places: Muslim women and girls have been denied the right to enter public buildings, shopping malls,[19] and swimming pools[20], and amusement parks unless they submit to being searched by male guards or agree to remove their headcoverings and their garments that they wear for religious reasons.

In obtaining drivers' licenses and otherwise engaging in civic life: Muslim women have been denied drivers' licenses unless they remove their headcoverings for the photograph.[21] The same has happened to women seeking to obtain passport and NSA photos.

Critical Muslim Theory's first tenet, Islamophobia is endemic and pervasive, is true.

Tenet 2: CMT is critical towards how the dominant society views Islam and Muslims

For the second tenet, CMT is critical towards how the dominant society views Islam and Muslims, came from CRT's second tenet in which CRT is critical towards how the dominant society in the United States understands meritocracy, neutrality, and colorblindness in relation to legal discourse in Islam. Critical Muslim Theory's second tenet emphasizes the importance of being just and equal when building and developing perspectives on matters related to Islam and Muslims. This doesn't mean that Islam and Muslims can't be criticized, but rather, the criticism must be constructive and has its own basis rather than coming from ignorance, biased opinions, and neglecting the other side of the story. The ideas that the media dissipates about Islam and Muslim women become public opinion because U.S. society depends so much on television, which often provides news in 30 second bits of information—and believes what is broadcast without thinking critically about it. Through biased reporting, people associate terrorism with Islam and Muslims because it promotes the view that Muslims and Islam are violent. According to Alsultany (2012):

> While it has become increasingly common to show the verbal tirades of Arab terrorists, promising to free their country from U.S. foreign policies, it is uncommon for the context of such references to be adequately addressed. The concept of freeing an Arab country from the negative impacts of U.S foreign policies remain abstracts, since viewers don't see the daily realities of those countries. Both the suffering of Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation that is supported by U.S policies and the suffering of the Iraqi people as a result of a decade of U.S sanctions are absent from the story line. (pp. 30-31).

Critical Muslim Theory is critical towards the representation of Islam and Muslims or anything associated with them because misrepresentation and decontextualization create negative praxis towards Islam and Muslims. This false news reporting creates public support for injustice, war, and oppression. According to Andersen (2007):

Had the occupying forces in Iraq been able to establish that Iraq had in fact produced weapons of mass destruction, for instance by discovering stockpiles of such illegal weapons, production facilities for them or documents proving their existence, a post bellum argument could have been made for legitimacy of the war, because it would have been shown that Saddam Hussein had in fact posed a real threat. After the war, neither evidence of weapon of production nor any connection to Al Qaeda was found. (p. 55)

Critical questions can be generated from this tenet due to the manner in which the dominant society perceives and understands Islam, which then transfers into praxis whether negative or positive. Other critical questions relate to Muslim women from the standpoint of equality and freedom. The freedom the dominant society understands generates from a liberal and Western perspective of freedom in determining Muslim women's roles. Alsultany (2012) wrote:

Furthermore, the U.S government and media present U.S military intervention as the solution to the oppressed Muslim woman, *without noting how U.S military intervention in the name of democracy and freedom has contributed to violence against Muslim women.* The co-opted feminist focus on how women in Afghanistan are deprived of education and employment and forced to wear burqa *conceals how conditions of war, militarization, and starvation are harming women.* To cite one example of overlooked consequences, *the U.S war on Afghanistan in the years after 9/11 led to starvation because U.S bombing*

impeded the delivery of food aid. The reductive framing of the oppressed women creates a palatable narrative, *where the blame can easily be placed on a people and a culture seemingly a world apart from Americans. Thus, the U.S government (not to mention its citizens) need not be held accountable for its involvement in creating this modern conflict that contributed to the conditions of women's oppression.* (emphasis added, p.81)

Theme 3 (the media misrepresents Muslims and Islam) was addressed for CMT's second tenet. The rest of themes compound, intersect, or implicate the other themes or the oppressions directed towards Islam and Muslims. For example, I detailed how media misrepresents Islam and Muslims (Theme 2) can lead to the praxis of Islam as a religion of terror; Muslims are terrorists (Theme 1) or implicate public support to invade/occupy/bring war to Muslim land (Iraq), which informs 'oppression as a Muslim (female) is worse than racial oppression' (Theme 6). I don't continue because I start to bleed again emotionally.

Tenet 3: Islamophobia is a social construction

According to Gramson, Croteau, Hoynes & Sasson (1992), reality construction leaves open array of messages that are produced in many voices and messages and that can be read in many different ways. Upon reflection of how a reality is constructed, I believe social construction involves how an idea about particular things is built upon depending on the agenda of the transmitter of the ideas. When CMT addresses Islamophobia as a social construction, the hatred towards Islam and Muslims is built by the society's ignorance or maybe pure hatred depending on political motives. Pseudonymous shared in his narratives how the idea of hatred towards Islam and Muslims began when he was small and attending school. Pseudonymous couldn't know his teacher's agenda when misinforming him and the students about Islam and Muslims, however, he developed a concept from this miseducation that Muslims worship

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Prophet Mohamad[63] and, thus, the religion was called Mohammadans. This vilifying Islam and Muslims leads to Theme 3 (the media misrepresents Muslims and Islam) because from the beginning of the life, some education feeds misinformation, which then develops into misunderstanding and beliefs (Theme 1: Islam is a religion of terror; Muslims are terrorists, and Theme 5: Ignorance of Islamic practices, disrespect of Islam, stereotypes), which is found easily through the media today. When education is Islamophobic, it leads to a social construction. This is ironic because education shouldn't be a catalyst for hatred. The experience of Pseudonymous linked analogously with Findley (2001) when he explained how ignorance towards Islam and Muslims was rooted from his early childhood. Sadly, the education that he received from an early age is a social construction prevalent in religious institutions that do not understand diversity. Findley grew up believing and understanding false information about Islam and Muslims. He wrote:

> False stereotypes can hide the truth from people of any age. At the age of six, my introduction to Islam got off to a bad start. While attending Presbyterian Sunday School in Jacksonville, Illinois, I was misled about Muslims and their religion and I harbored the misinformation until middle age.
>
> Our teacher, a kindly volunteer who served faithfully for years, told us that uneducated, primitive, violent people lived in desert areas of the Holy Land and worshipped a "strange God." In one of my earliest childhood recollections, I remember that she called them Muhammadans and kept repeating, "They aren't like us." As she talked, we played in a large sandbox, moving into different positions miniature likenesses of palm trees, camels, tents and nomadic people.

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[63] Pbuh

Her comments stuck in my memory. For most of my life, I held a vision of

Muhammadans as alien, ignorant, threatening people. Like many Americans today, my

teacher innocently repeated misinformation she had acquired from other poorly informed

people. She recited to our class what she believed to be the truth, including the misnomer

"Muhammadans." I don't believe she intended to instill misinformation or defame Islam.

She simply lacked the facts, as did other teachers and the ordained minister who led our

congregation. (Findley, 2001, p. 19)

Another social construction related to Islamophobia is the hijab because it receives

negative attention from the media and even in intellectual circles. This is not surprising because

the hatred is rooted deeply from the colonial era. The oppressors (White male colonists) that

brought 'modernity' to the Middle East believe their 'high status' as the upholder of modernity

faced rejection because Muslim women hold esteem to the hijab. It is not surprising whenever

invasion happened on the part of Muslim world, the rise of adherents to the hijab among Muslim

females increased. The rejections of their ideas of Western liberation make them powerless.

That's why the hijab is tied symbolically to backwardness. To satiate their oppressor's mind of

their need to control, Muslim women were exposed through paintings and photographs. Looking

into the rape cases and photos of naked incarcerated Iraqi Muslims circulated among the military

during the Iraq invasion and Abu Gharib scandal explain this. The point being, hatred and

Islamophobia towards the hijab is socially constructed since the colonial era.[64]

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[64] "What happens, then when one encounters a world set up to deny the gaze? The gaze requires a 'point of view', to see but not be seen, and also that the natives present themselves as spectacle. It is not hard to see immediately how frustrated a European visitor would be upon arrival to the Middle East, where the women covered their faces with veils. The women do not present themselves as an exhibit. Neither do the houses in which they lived (lattices were over windows that looked onto the streets), nor did male/female segregation allow for it. The veiled women violated all the requirements of the world-as-exhibition: they could not be seen; they could not

Tenet 4: Legal basis

The New York Police Department (NYPD) has been involved in surveillance of mosques for the entire city. The Muslim surveillance program targets the Imams and the congregants. The law is manipulated, including the ideas of fighting against the terrorism to justify spying on Muslims and intruding on Muslims in America's First Amendments rights (Yachot, 2013). According to Khaki (2012), White House funds have been used to fund the spying activities by the NYPD. The NYPD has made the life of Asad Dandia difficult through spying on his activities collecting money for a charitable organization that feeds the poor and distributes food to the poor community in New York (Dandia, 2013). American Muslim Civil Liberties groups released a news report detailing how the process of Mapping Muslims, done by the NYPD surveillance program has damaged Muslims' relationship with each other because of fear and mistrust. This report also details the mistrust that being developed between Muslims and authorities[65]. Abu Kutub told about the fight against terrorism and how it is not done properly

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be seen, but were seeing; and they were not a picture that could be read. They were mysterious beings who refused to offer themselves up to the visitor. For me, this is a key aspect of the European campaign against the veil. Europeans arrived in the Middle East with the confident knowledge of being at the apex of civilization, but this conviction was destabilized upon arrival in the Middle East. How could one be superior, or establish authority over creatures who could not be known (because they could not be seen, grasped as a picture)? What could not be seen, grasped as a spectacle, could not be controlled. Moreover, Europeans felt uneasy about the veiled women: the Europeans knew they were being watched by women who were themselves unseen. That gave the women some power over the Europeans. That was a reversal of the expected relationship between superior and inferior- to see without being seen. And so- and here is the crux of my argument- the Europeans retaliated. They attacked the veil, they tried to rip it off; they tried everything they could to see the women." See Bullock (2003), *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical & Modern Stereotypes*, (p. 6)

[65] The above example is a specific case of legal basis for CMT. I already mentioned some of them in Chapter Two: Literature Review in relation to legal basis and earlier in Chapter 5 regarding the Patriot Act and the Constitutional Amendment violations. Also, see Creating Law Enforcement Accountability & Responsibility (CLEAR), The Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (MACLC), and The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Right (AALDEF) 2013 publication's *Mapping Muslims: NYPD Spying and Its Impacts on American Muslims.*

because it brings damage and distrust from Muslims to the government. Pseudonymous mentioned how flimsy the War Against Terror is because any (innocent) Muslim could be in trouble because of the spying program.

Tenet 5: Intersectionality

The intersection of religion and gender and the intersection of gender, religion, and U.S. national security create a powerful paradigm and methodology to understand oppression towards Islam and Muslim women. Most of my female participants believe they were oppressed more in comparison to Muslim males. The dominant society views Muslim women as an oppressed group through their identity as Muslim women. Critical Muslim Theory views the issue of Islamophobia towards Islam and Muslims as more challenging to Muslim women compared to Muslim males. The effects of Islamophobia towards Muslim women are more damaging due to the intersection of oppression towards Islam and gender. The intersection of oppression experienced by Muslim women is different, based on religion, than those experienced in racism.

Islamophobia relates to interest convergence through oppression. The prominent example is the War on Terror and the United States hegemony of controlling the oil production. To make it legitimate on the eyes of Americans who believe in justice, equality, and democracy, the media portrays the Muslim world as barbaric, monolithic, and a threat to American democracy. In reality, the media is manipulated to gather support to justify the invasion of Iraq. The clear example is the accusation of Saddam Hussein having the nuclear capability to attack the United States although no weapons of mass destruction were found. The U.N. provided proof through their inspections that there were no nuclear weapons capable of attacking neighboring countries or the United States, but still, the invasion against Iraq continued. Bullock (2003) explained interest convergence successfully:

While US administrations and other Western powers do not have anything against Islam as a religion in general, or against Muslims in general, I am convinced that the public rhetoric demonizing Islam is part of the Western maintenance of its global hegemony. The discourse of the veil in the West is tied to Western national interests. US policy in the Middle East is to protect its access to Middle Eastern oil fields and give unconditional support to Israel. Because Islam is perceived as anti-West, the contemporary Islamist movements to install Shari'ah law are feared. It is thought that Muslim governments committed to implementing Islamic law will interfere with Western interests and may threaten Israel. Hence pro-Western, secular governments in the Muslim world are supported, even if they repress their own populace. (p. xxxiv)

She continued explaining the interest convergence in relation to maintaining Western hegemony through the demonization of Muslim women through veil. She said:

Hence US and Western national interests have allowed the demonization of Islam in the public mind to flourish. And ideas about Islam's oppression of women and the role of the veil in that oppression are part of this discourse. When the Western populace is predisposed to disliking Muslims and Arabs, asserting US/Western foreign policy needs is easier, because the public supports rather than criticizes the foreign policy (for example, by not condemning Israel's extrajudicial assassinations of Palestinians, or the suffering of innocent Iraqi citizens owing to sanctions.) People who consume mainstream news as their only source of information about Islam cannot know anything but the negative perspective on the veil. (pp. xxxv-xxxvi)

Tenet 6: Storytelling and counterstories reveal the oppression and pain of Muslims

Critical Muslim Theory demonstrates that the voices of oppressed Muslims are unique and sources of knowledge that address the centrality of their counterstories and experiences. Their experiences are rich and reveal dimensions of oppression that we could not imagine before. From their narratives, there are variations of oppression and Islamophobic behavior directed towards them solely because they are Muslims, despite the hardships they face.

Storytelling and counterstories of Muslims can counter lies by informing the misinformation from the media and bigots. Storytelling and counterstories begin the healing process and remediation for oppressed Muslims and at the same time help to transform the Islamophobic society to understand what it entails to live under religious oppression. Furthermore, storytelling and counterstories do not end after someone finishes reading them but they expand to other territory, fields, and topics.

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Recommendations for Practice

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The narratives of the Muslims' stories in this study open many issues related to oppression and Islamophobia. My participants shared their experiences to tell details about what is to be oppressed because they are Muslims. As a result of this study, I proposed CMT. In this section I provide recommendations for practice.

The first recommendation for practice is to learn about and understand Islam and Muslims. This is important to eliminate ignorance, stereotypes, and misconceptions. Most of the comments by bigots have no basis in Muslims' faith and are based on misconceptions. The best way to understand Islam is through real and sincere interactions with Muslims. This can be done by visiting Muslim centers in the Midwest, rather than make assumptions about people and their religion based on inaccurate knowledge about Islam. In this case, if the misinformation comes

from the media, the information needs to be verified by asking experts or Muslims themselves. This is promotes correcting deficient views about Islam and Muslims.

Education is a powerful vehicle for forming ideas and concepts. I developed the ideas and concepts related to CMT through courses that I took while studying at Midwestern University. This is one of the biggest contributions of United States academia to me and to Muslims per se. The ideas and concepts that I learned from Social Reconstructionist philosophy and Critical Race Theory combined with the ideas and background information related to Islam and Muslims that I gathered throughout my whole life. The process was not easy because I deconstructed myself many times and autoethnography is a process where I bared my soul, as well as a therapeutic process that always generated my thinking and emotions. It put me on trails where I found the exact location or situation that changed my life in the past. Importantly, it will help readers who might experience similar situations. There were times that I hated myself for being helpless to help oppressed Muslims and I realized this is not healthy because it leads to anger. Later, through interaction and relationships with American Muslims, especially the converts, helped me to ease and expand my thoughts. They explained the strains to dumb the nation that exist in the society whereas they have been brought up with these strains. Here I refer to the powerful role of media and the effects of propaganda to stupidify and dumb down the nation. The new Muslims' advised me to be patient and not to situate the reality of the political situation in the Middle East to the United States context, because every society has different dynamics. If I did so, it is unfair and oppressive and could lead to negative implications because we have a different understanding about how we perceive the world. I also avoided talking to Muslims who do not hold to the correct understanding of Islam. I perceived that an individual Muslim could be bad if his/her praxis does not situate the correct context and imposes the political agenda to reach what they

want. It is bad because any actions (radicalism) can damage good relationships and efforts that both sides (Muslim and non-Muslim) try to develop. The tendency to be radicalized or extremist itself is oppressive because it is based on ignorance and not understanding the reality of a situation. What I am saying is there is a bad Muslim who operates from ignorance and there is a bad non-Muslim who operates from ignorance. Therefore, education is a catalyst for change in society. Since the nature of the discussion is delicate, fragile, and complex, sincere hearts are not enough. Both sides need to have a civilized, well-mannered dialogue to foster understanding.

I formed a good relationship with my professors because both sides agree and know how, and understand the centrality of affirming each other's knowledge and perspectives. The interaction is also sincere. The key to this good relationship was to be honest about my agenda. In fact, this is the nature of qualitative research because it goes in depth. Muslims need to state their agenda in order to develop trust and vice versa with their professors. Muslims do not need to be afraid because Islam does not hide what it has. Sincerity is needed on both sides in order to develop interaction and trust.

Classroom interaction should be a safe setting to voice opinions and practice praxis. Muslims also need to be open and navigate negative criticism peacefully. Teachers should regulate zero tolerance policy on bullying and intolerance towards any religious slur. Teachers could prosper in developing tolerance through understanding of students' religion through discussion with students and their families rather than depending on books or the media.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research on Islamophobia from the centrality of religion (rather than race) is lacking. To the best of my knowledge and based on my research, I believe this study is the first of its kind. Therefore, more quantitative and qualitative studies are needed that bring religion to the center to

expand and support Critical Muslim Theory as a theory and as a methodology. For future research, larger studies with a greater number of participants are recommended for the Midwest and different locations in the United States. For example, the Islamophobia level and its causes in different regions could be investigated through qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approaches. Lee, Gibbons, Thompson and Kimani (2009) developed the Islamophobia Scale, which measures cognitive and affective behavioural facets of fear-related attitudes towards the religion of Islam and Muslims. The internal consistency for this study is .92 and it supports the reliability and validity of multifaceted measures of Islamophobia. Later, the same scale was tested for confirmary factor analysis and test retest reliability analysis. As a result, the Islamophobia Scale, which centralizes fear and psychological factors, is reliable across time. Kunst, Sam, and Ullelberg (2012) developed the Perceived Islamophobia Scale to analyze perceptions of general fear of Islam and Muslims, fear of Islamization, and Islamophobia in the media. The scale is valid and reliable across different Muslim minority groups, and suggests that anti-discrimination law is not sufficient in protecting Muslim minorities from religious stigma and psychological well-being. These two instruments may lend themselves to future research studies.

My second recommendation for research is for comparative qualitative studies to investigate the experiences of Muslim American males and females at the intersection of race and religion and religion and gender and with analysis and interpretation through the lenses of CRT and CMT. These comparative studies then can seek to determine if the findings are consistent with mine in terms of locating religion at the center rather than race and the impacts of the intersection of religion and gender. These studies would be informative to conduct in the

United Kingdom and Europe to determine if the character and focus of the phenomenon is similar to or different from the way it is manifested in the United States.

A third recommendation for research in education is to investigate the beliefs, attitudes, and practices regarding Muslims in general and Muslim students in particular, of pre-service and in-service teachers. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods studies would inform this area of interest. The results hold the potential to improve teacher education programs and professional development, which benefits children, education, curriculum, and pedagogy.

The fourth recommendation for research is the challenge to conduct a Muslim Doll vs. White Doll replication of the study by Kenneth and Mamie Clark, Black Doll vs. White Doll, in the *Brown v Board of Education* trial. The results of this study could evaluate children's perceptions of religion and race.

Research exploring the relationship between CMT and Institutional Islamophobia is another area of possibility. Reflecting upon the harsh treatment received by Muslim women who wear the hijab and how the media and essentialist political groups and individual fear mongering of Sharia Law and Muslims provides insight Institutional Islamophobia is real. As such, this provides a viable research focus.

Critical Muslim Theory is not only a proposed theory but a proposed methodology. It is a Muslim way of knowing. It is an epistemology and stands on its own. In-depth research exploring Muslim Double Consciousness would contribute to this concept. Further research is needed using CMT as a theory and a methodology. For example, in terms of legal basis, research determining its more historical roots is needed from the standpoint of the earliest interaction of laws and courts between and among the earliest Muslim inhabitants in the United States. Another interesting research approach or focus would be to test CMT in a city with a large Muslim

population to determine how legal bases and Muslims' experiences converge. Additionally, exploring legal cases focusing on Muslims across the United States would add to the broader legal basis for CMT. In addition to expanding the historical context and legal basis for CMT, more research is needed to explore the potential existence of more instances of interest convergence.

In terms of the storytelling and counterstory aspects of CMT, more stories are needed to inform the public so change can be made. The public needs to understand the story of the oppressed so if hatred dissolves empathy, at least through listening to and reading Muslims' counterstories, people may develop sympathy.

Conclusion

Critical Muslim Theory's basis is influenced significantly by Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory situates race at the center through its first tenet: racism in the USA is so embedded that it appears normal. Critical Muslim Theory seeks to reveal oppression experienced by Muslims in the USA because of their religion—Islam. Religion is placed at the center of the investigation rather than race due to persecution because of being Muslim. It strives to create understanding and dialogue between Muslims in the USA and people of different religious orientations. It interrogates the intersections among race and racism, ethnicity, nationality, gender, socioeconomic status in an effort to expose more deeply the injustices experienced by Muslims through storytelling and through their counterstories.

This study proposed a new theory, Critical Muslim Theory, in order to address the issue of Islamophobia facing me and nine Muslim participants in a Midwestern town. The study used autoethnography, which detailed the researcher's experiences while weaving in the nine participants' narratives to illustrate the complexity and the nature of Islamophobia faced by the

research participants and me. The centrality of CMT focuses on religion rather than race. Critical Muslim Theory was developed through inductive reasoning. The proposed tenets for CMT are based on the emerging themes from the narratives. An historical context for CMT was begun. The researcher identified six tenets of CMT:

Tenet 1: Islamophobia is endemic and pervasive

Tenet 2: CMT is critical towards how dominant society views Islam and Muslims

Tenet 3: Islamophobia is a social construction

Tenet 4: Legal basis of Islamophobia

Tenet 5: Intersectionality

Tenet 6: Storytelling and counterstories reveal the oppression and pain of Muslims.

The foundation for Critical Muslim Theory is provided. Based on the research findings, it warrants additional research investigation as both a theory for analysis and interpretation and as a methodology to contribute to the literature for CMT. The significance of this research is in situating religion, Islam, and Muslims' experiences of Islamophobia at the center through the lens of Critical Muslim Theory.

Epilogue

This is the end of my story. I am not rotten anymore. In the beginning of the story, I was aggressive, however at the finishing line I unpacked the hatred towards the big bad wolf. I forgive her. There is no end in fighting ignorance with harshness. It is about having multiple/double consciousness in order to see many perspectives, to understand the Muslim way of knowing. If hatred came from the beginning, the big black wolf wouldn't be able to see until the big bad wolf purifies her intentions and thoughts.

As for me, the journey continues. At the beginning, I have a way of creating an army. But again, what's the point of destroying the good experiences that I had. I learned from the bad to be guidance for the future. Among the big bad wolves, there are some cubbies who learn without hatred. They are the future.

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epistemology.net/attachments/847_Ajiss21-3%20-%20Zine%20-

%20Anti%20Islamophobia%20Education.pdf

Zinn, H. (2005). Tyranny is Tyranny. In Chapter 4 *A People's History of the United States* (pp.

59-76). Retrieved from: http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/zinntyr4.html

The primary purpose of this study is to propose a new theory, which is called Critical Muslim Theory (CMT). The purpose of Critical Muslim Theory (CMT) is to explain various factors/patterns of Islamophobia that are happening in the Midwest and understanding Muslims' religious experiences. These interview questions will help me to understand your critical context and biography about you to explore your experiences and story as a Muslim.

Personal Information

Name (Pseudonym):

Age:

Gender:

Parental status:

Citizenship status:

City, State or Country of Origin:

Level of education/Course of study:

Length of time residing in current location:

Other locations of residence in the United States prior to this one:

How long have you been a Muslim?

Sunna or Shiite?

Experiences as a Muslim in the Midwest/United States:

1. What motivated you to become a Muslim and embrace Islam?

2. What were your experiences like as a Muslim in the Midwest/United States before 9/11?
    Prompt: How did you position yourself as a Muslim in the Midwest/United States before 9/11?

3. What have your experiences been like as a Muslim in the Midwest/United States post-9/11?

Prompt: How do you position yourself as a Muslim in the Midwest/United States post-9/11?

4. What have your experiences been like traveling in the Midwest/United States?

5. How do you make sense of your religious beliefs and values as a Muslim within the dominant society in the Midwest/United States?
    Prompt: How do those who are not Muslim define you? What experiences have you had that illustrate this?

6. What do you think are the misconceptions, if any, about Muslims in the Midwest/United States? (Shain, 2003, p.ix)
    Prompt: How do you make sense of any prejudice directed toward you? (Shain, 2003, p.ix)

7. What words, concepts, ideas, etc. are/have been used to describe you, members of your family, Muslim friends, etc. as a Muslim in the Midwest/United States?
    Sub-question: What names, if any, have you been called because you are a Muslim? What do you think the origin of those names is?

8. How are you, as a Muslim man/woman, portrayed in the media in the Midwest/United States?
    Sub-question: How does this make you feel and what are your thoughts about/reactions to this?

9. What are your thoughts about the Patriot Act?
    Sub-question: What events or experiences caused you to think this?

10. How do you view your local Muslim Community Center/mosque?

11. For females: How do you think your experiences in school, in the community, in the Midwest/United States is the same as and/or different from Muslim males?

12. How do the curriculum, teacher(s), and school community celebrate you and/or your children/family as an individual Muslim at school?
    Prompt: What are teachers' perceptions towards you and/or your children/wife/husband in terms of ability, performance, and treatment?

Appendix B—Interview Protocol

Prior to Interview

Before the study is conducted, I will explain the following about the research to participants:

1. The purpose of the research:

    I.   To propose Critical Muslim Theory that details experiences of Muslims in the Midwest among research participants.

2. The procedures of the research

    I.   Interviews (and my own experiences) as primary sources of data collection

        i.   Photos

        ii.   Other artifacts participants desire to share

    II.   Member checking

        i.   Research participants will review their interview transcripts and make changes to the transcripts to ensure what participants said is precise. Participants also will review draft and final versions of the manuscript to ensure the interpretations and analysis represent them accurately.

        ii.   Initial coding based on transcripts, photos, and any other artifacts participants have to share.

        iii.   Data will be analyzed using CRT.

3. The risks and benefits of research

    I.   Risk

        i.   None to participants however, research participants might potentially experience some degree of anxiety when sharing any experiences they may have had with discrimination.

II.   Benefits of the research

    i.   Contribution to limited research towards Muslim communities in the Midwest.

    ii.   Increased understanding of a Muslim community in the Midwest.

    iii.   Opportunity for educators/researchers to view Islamophobia from CMT lens

    iv.   The potential for providing the foundation for a new theory: Critical Muslim Theory

    v.   Contributions to the educational research about Muslims

4. The voluntary decision to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

5. The procedures used to identify and protect confidentiality by providing anonymity.

6. Research participants and researcher will sign two copies of the consent form. Both parties will keep a copy. Interview questions will be given to participants in advance of the interview to provide ample time for explanation in case explanation needed.

7. The researcher will arrange times for debriefing to ensure credibility: Participants will be given the researcher's contact number and email in the event of an emergency. Participants also will be given the IRB address in case a query occurs.

Conclusion of Interview

At the end of the interview:

1. Researcher will thank the participant for his/her willingness to participate in the research.

2. Schedule second meeting

3. Do necessary action for research continuity:

  I.   Record field notes

  II.   Journal reflections after each interview

4. Listen to and transcribe participant interviews

5. Check with principal investigator to update on progress of study

Appendix C—IRB

KANSAS STATE | University Research Compliance Office
UNIVERSITY

TO: Kay Ann Taylor   Proposal Number: 6666
        Curriculum & Instruction
        228 Bluemont

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
        Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 04/30/2013

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Islamophobia & Muslims' Religious Experiences in the
        Midwest--From Critical Race Theory to Critical Muslim Theory: A Muslim
        Autoethnography.."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full
approval. This proposal is **approved for <u>one year</u> from the date of this correspondence, pending
"continuing review."**

APPROVAL DATE: 04/30/2013

EXPIRATION DATE: 04/30/2014

Several months prior to the expiration date listed, the IRB will solicit information from you for federally
mandated **"continuing review" of the research.** Based on the review, the IRB may approve the activity
for another year. **If continuing IRB approval is <u>not</u> granted, or the IRB fails to perform the
continuing review before the expiration date noted above, the project will expire and the activity
involving human subjects must be terminated on that date. Consequently, it is critical that you are
responsive to the IRB request for information for continuing review if you want your project to
continue.**

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

  ☒   There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.
  ☐   There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification
affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are
subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected
with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this
approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to
subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Appendix D—Invitation Letter to Participants/ Letter of Consent

Date

Dear

This is an invitation to participate in my research about Islamophobia for my PhD dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Kay Ann Taylor. In this letter, I provide you with more information detailing this study and what will it entail if you decide to take part.

First of all, participation of this study is voluntary. It will involve two interview sessions (required minimally two one-hour interviews).The place and the method of interviewing will be decided upon our mutual agreement. In fact, the method of interview depends on your privacy and concern; you may decide to have a recorded interview, voice recorded interview, or phone recorded interview, and all of these will be conducted only with your permission granted to the researcher. At any time you may decide to withdraw from the interviews by telling the researcher without any negative consequences. I will provide you with a copy of the transcribed interviews to confirm the accuracy of our conversation, and for you to add and clarify any information that you think necessary. All information that is shared with the researcher is completely CONFIDENTIAL. Your name and identity will not appear in any report or study resulting from this research; however, ANONYMOUS quotations might be used. All data and information from this study will be stored in a locked safe location at room. The data and information will be kept for 3 years, and only the researcher (me) and my professor (Dr. Kay Ann Taylor) will have access.

There are no known or anticipated risks in this study although participants might potentially experience some degree of anxiety when sharing their experiences of any discrimination you may have experienced. If you have any concern or questions related to this study, please contact me through my email; ridhuan@ksu.edu. You also can contact my supervisor, Dr. Kay Ann Taylor, ktaylor@ksu.edu. You can also contact the IRB contact person at this address: Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice Provost for Research Compliance and University Veterinarian. Room 1 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan Kansas 66506, phone 785.532.3224. (comply@ksu.edu)

It is incumbent upon me to tell you that this study has received Institute Review Board (IRB) approval at Kansas State University. Also, this study/research is not funded by any organization. It solely belongs to the researcher (Mohamad Ridhuan Abdullah) and I do not have any obligation to report to any funding agency.

I look forward to speaking with you. Thank you for your time and consideration to participate in this study.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Kay Ann Taylor (Principal Investigator)
Associate Professor,
228, Bluemont Hall, Kansas State University.
785-532-6974 (ktaylor@ksu.edu)

Mohamad Ridhuan Abdullah (Co-Investigator)
Doctoral Candidate in Curriculum & Instruction
College of Education
Kansas State University
785 477 5634(ridhuan@ksu.edu)

Consent Form:

By signing this form, you are NOT waiving your legal rights or releasing the researcher (Mohamad Ridhuan Abdullah) and the institution involved from their legal and professional responsibilities.

I have read, understand, and have the opportunity to ask any matters related to the invitation letter provided by Mohamad Ridhuan Abdullah at Kansas State University.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described above. By my signature, I acknowledge that I have a signed and dated copy of this consent form for my records.

Participant name:

Participant signature_____
Date_____

Witness signature_____
Date_____

Appendix E—Debriefing Statement

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this study. Your participation was valuable to us. In this study, we are interested in understanding Islamophobia and Muslims' religious experiences in the Midwest. Based on this research, I aim to create Critical Muslim Theory.

This theory will develop understanding of the American Muslim community in general in combating Islamophobia and racism, at the same time building a b ridge between the American Muslim community with the mainstream society.

It is important to note that this study might lead to possible psychological risk. In case that happens, I will provide you with a contact number of local Muslim chaplain or you may visit Kansas State University Counseling Services, which can be contacted at counsel@ksu,edu or by phone at 785-532-6927

We hope this clarifies the purpose of the research. If you would like more information about this study, you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Kay Ann Taylor at ktaylor@ksu,edu or call (785-532-6974).

Thank you again for your participation.