BEYOND AND BACK TO THE BLACK-WHITE BINARY:
MUSLIMS AND RACE-MAKING IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

Atiya Husain: Beyond and Back to the Black-White Binary: Muslims and Race-Making in the
United States
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Scholars tracing the history of the concept of "race" refer briefly to how religion was the primary

way of conceiving of difference among peoples in the premodern era. Basic western binaries like

Christian/heathen and civilized/savage coalesced into the contemporary black-white binary.

Moments like 9/11 and the consequent "racialization of Muslims" have brought this historic

relationship between race and religion to the fore. To understand the post-9/11 moment, Muslim

racialization literature argues that a new de facto racial group emerged after 9/11, but does not

examine how this group fits into the existing black-white binary based US racial structure.

Literature on the black-white binary meanwhile offers valuable theory for analysis of racial

structures, yet overlooks the role religion has played in building these structures. This study fills

these gaps in the literatures on Muslim racialization and the black-white racial binary by

situating Muslims in the US relative to the black-white racial order. I conducted an ethnography

of a diverse range of Muslims in a metropolitan area on the west coast, including black, white,

Arab, South Asian, East Asian, and Latina/o Muslims. I completed 68 in-depth interviews and 12

months of participant observation (August 2014-2015). I argue that blackness and whiteness are

not only racial concepts, but also religious concepts. Race has long been studied in terms of

black and white in the US, but our understanding of the scope of these concepts has been limited

by the absence of religion from such scholarly work. In contrast, this work shows how religion

continues to matter in the construction of race. The increased attention on Muslims as a

"racialized" group, evoke and bolster longstanding racial structures like the black-white racial

binary that have held scholarly attention for decades.

To Nanna

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BPP   Black Panther Party

CLMA   Civil Liberties for Muslim Americans

ICSH   Islamic Center of Stone Heights

MVC   Muslim Voices for Change

NOI   Nation of Islam

WDCM   Warith Deen Community Mosque

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A growing body of literature is trying to understand what race has to do with Muslims' experiences in the United States after 9/11. This dissertation began with the same general interest. I spent one year in racially diverse Muslim communities in a metropolitan area on the West coast that I call West City. I spent almost every day with my participants and accompanied many of them to the mosque, to school, work, doctor's appointments, religious study groups, convert support groups, LGBT rights organization meetings, protests, weddings, funerals, arts and culture events, and a weekly soup kitchen. As an ethnographer, I was embedded in the field to the point that I filled many roles alongside my role as a researcher. I served as a babysitter, a shoulder to cry on, a driver, a dance partner, and a wingwoman. I was sometimes perceived as an undercover agent conducting surveillance. I was sometimes perceived as a daughter, sister, or a quick friend. I also volunteered for many things, including listening to the same story multiple times.

While this research began with various questions on what race has to do with Muslims' experiences, my time in West City drew me to a related question: what do Muslims' experiences mean for "race" itself? My analysis is guided by the following questions: How are Muslims racially positioned in the US? What can their racial positioning tell us about the black-white binary based US racial structure? To address these questions, I examine the relationships between blackness, whiteness, and Muslimness.

I find that Muslimness in the US is positioned racially as brown and foreign relative to what it means to be American. Second, I find that Muslims' racial positioning helps shape the boundaries of blackness and whiteness, which I argue are religious as well as racial concepts. While some social phenomena are called race and some are called religion, I show that they are actually entangled in one another. I illustrate the everyday life of this entanglement and its implications. Ultimately, I argue that we will not understand race until we understand religion.

These findings and conclusions are best explained by my trajectory in the field. I went into the field thinking I would refine the "racialization of Muslims" thesis, which argues that "religion is racialized." This thesis holds that Muslims have been racialized after 9/11, as per Omi and Winant's (2014:13) definition of racialization: "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group." Studies on the racialization of Muslims consistently show that the racial meaning applied to Muslims is that they are foreign, un- or anti-American, unassimilable, violent (terrorists), oppressed if they are women, and oppressive if they are men (Bayoumi 2009; Elver 2012; Hammer 2013; Joseph, D'Harlingue, and Wong 2008; Love 2009; Naber 2008; Rana 2011; Selod 2014; Selod and Embrick 2013; Sheth 2009; Volpp 2002). However, these studies focus only on South Asian and Arab Muslims.

Because of this focus, it is not clear whether the racialization thesis holds for other racial/ethnic groups among Muslims. According to some estimates, black people (African American and immigrant) are a plurality of Muslims in the US (Gallup Center for Muslim Studies 2009). Even in the absence of more confident estimates of how large this non-Arab and non-South Asian group of Muslims in the US is, the methodological problem still stands: the

conclusion that Muslims are racialized is reached based on the study of a subset of Muslims in the US.

The Muslim racialization thesis raises another question: if Muslims are racialized, who are they racialized relative to? Race-making processes are relational and bear some relationship to racial structures. Racial structures in the US always include, at the very least, a concept of white and black, representing the top and bottom of the racial structure. How, then, are Muslims racialized relative to the US racial structure? The literature focuses on uncovering racial meanings attributed to Muslims, but it does not address how those racial meanings are constructed relationally. The literature largely argues that these racial meanings are constructed in the wake of 9/11, hate crimes, media representations, and war. But racialized groups are racialized relative to one another and not only events. Therefore, we do not know how this racial meaning is constructed relative to other racial(ized) groups in most of the literature on the racialization of Muslims.

To fill these gaps in the literature, I selected an area with a racially diverse population of Muslims, including blacks, whites, Arabs, and South Asians. Blacks and whites together constitute a large group of Muslims in the US. The inclusion of these groups into this study allows us to see how Muslimness interacts with blackness and whiteness. This study can thus tell us how Muslimness is constructed relationally.

Once in the field, I found that black and white American Muslims' blackness and whiteness, respectively, had a big impact on what being Muslim meant in their lives. I found that the Muslim racialization thesis could not explain some of the most common experiences I was observing. First, I found that many times black and white Muslims were not recognized as Muslim at all unless they had certain markers of Muslimness such as a hijab, or otherwise

indicated that they were Muslim. In contrast, Arab and South Asian Muslims usually did not need to put on markers like hijabs to be associated with Muslimness. They were associated with Muslimness simply by their brown skin. Second, in the moments that black and white Muslims *were* read as Muslim because they were wearing hijab, for example, I also observed that their blackness and whiteness was questioned or seen as different from the blackness or whiteness that is believed to be native to the US. It seemed that some sort of dissonance was arising in those moments, and the notion that black and white people were simply being racialized as Muslim did not explain the dissonance. What was the source of the dissonance? What was expected in these moments when black and white Muslims were identified to be Muslim and that identification was surprising or unexpected? Rather than approaching the data as though looking for a binary outcome – whether black and white Muslims are either racialized as Muslim or not – and rather than looking to see *how* they were racialized as Muslim, I took a step back from the racialization of Muslims perspective and found a different angle. I realized that blackness and whiteness were interacting with being Muslim somehow, so I asked more questions of the data: What are blackness and whiteness? What does race mean in the lives of black and white Muslims when they are not positioned or racialized as Muslim? What role do blackness and whiteness play in the dynamics I am seeing?

Pursuing these lines of inquiry that arose in West City even further, I realized that it was hard to tell the difference empirically between what counts as "race" and what counts as "religion." Because race and religion could not be teased apart, spotting "racialization" became an empirical challenge since the thesis that "religion is racialized" requires us to know what religion is and what race is, and the thesis holds (or assumes) that they are empirically separable. This brought on the realization that I had accepted the assumptions of the racialization concept

and was now being pushed to question them. Specifically, for example, the concept of racialization is defined by "racial meaning." But how do you know "racial meaning" when you see it? How do you know if it is different from "religious meaning" to then be able to say that "religion is racialized?" Empirically, then, it became challenging to be able to know when people are racialized, and to be able to know if that application of racial meaning is something that is separate from religion.

I argue, therefore, that race and religion as *concepts* are entangled in one another, and that racial and religious *categories* are mapped onto one another (i.e. brown and Muslim, white and Christian). This mapping or overlap of categories along with the entanglement of race and religion mean that blackness and whiteness are not only racial but also religious concepts. When implicit ideas of how these categories are supposed to be mapped onto each other are violated, as in the case of white Muslims, dissonance appears. This research makes several contributions. It reveals that religion is a dimension of blackness and whiteness that continues to shape their contours. In other words, religion continues to be part of how blackness and whiteness are defined today, often implicitly. While I find support for the main point of the Muslim racialization thesis that people perceived as Muslims are positioned as foreign and brown, deeper analysis leads to a related finding on what this means for black and white Muslims. Islam has been appealing in black America and I argue that this appeal is better understood as a reflection of Islam's foreignness to the West because it is adopted by those seeking freedom from injustice experienced at the hands of the West. It is in part *because* Islam is constructed as "anti-American" or "foreign" that it initially gained popularity in black America and served as a tool of black protest (Lincoln 1961). It could only be a tool of protest if it is positioned as distant enough from the thing being protested. Similarly, white Muslims sometimes see being Muslim as

an alternative to being white; being Muslim can be an escape or distancing from the meanings of whiteness when whites feel constrained in some way. Being Muslim can only be escaped *to* if it is far enough from what is being escaped *from*. My point here is that these trends among US white and black Muslims mean something for how Muslimness is positioned as racially nonwhite and nonblack, and also how whiteness and blackness are positioned as religiously non-Muslim.

This research engages several major literatures and perspectives that I outline in the rest of this chapter. I begin with a review of literature on the historical origins of the relationship between race and religion. I root my engagement with race and religion in their historical emergence. Next, I review literature on the black-white binary, offering definitions of whiteness and blackness, and scholarly debates on the binary. Third, I review literature on Muslim racialization. A fourth section offers background on black and white Muslims in the US. Finally, I discuss how this dissertation fills gaps in the literature by putting these literatures in conversation with one another.

Religion in the Origin Story of Race

"Rooting our racial theory on the historical experiences of the oldest racial regimes in the world might help us understand things such as the importance of intermediate racial categories." (2015:79)
-Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

In the case of Muslims, most research has argued that we must move "beyond black and white" to understand them racially, which suggests that Muslims may be an intermediate racial category. Therefore, Bonilla-Silva's suggestion that we develop race theory rooted in the "oldest racial regimes in the world" may help us understand groups like Muslims. Most theorists of race see race as a construction of modern Europe, which would make whatever took place in modern

Europe the site of "the oldest racial regimes in the world." So that is where I begin. In this section, I review the emergence of the concept of race, and discuss the origins of the concept of race vis-à-vis religion.

While "race" is traced back to modern Europe for the most part, there is a debate as to *when* race was born. Most scholars say that race is a modern construct that has its roots in the premodern era (Fredrickson 1981; Jordan 2001; Mills 1997; Omi and Winant 2014), and some argue that race is premodern and thus the premodern era was also a "racial time" (Buell 2005; Heng 2011; Lampert 2004; Thomas 2010). My goal is not to choose a side in this debate beyond acknowledging the strong evidence suggesting that the premodern era is important for understanding race. Religion was a major part of how difference in the premodern era worked, which means that religion is important for understanding race. It is also not my goal here to suggest an uninterrupted historical continuity in the meanings, formation, and relationships between racial/religious groups. Rather, by laying out the debate, my goal is two-fold. My first goal is to demonstrate that race and religion have a special connection: no matter where and when "race" began, according to all scholars in this area, religion is a key part of the story. Religion was not only used to lend ideological support to racial thinking and practices, but it was a way of perceiving and creating notions of bodily difference. Debates on the history and definitions of race, religion, and their relationship reviewed below show that there is historical precedent for race and religion to be fundamentally linked. My second goal is to tie this connection between race and religion to the birth of whiteness which, again, scholars in this area agree on. Scholarship reviewed here demonstrates precedent for specific links between race and religion, where the dominant and subordinate groups in the following binaries would often (but

not always) line up across the binaries (Christian/heathen, white/nonwhite, civilized/savage, West/East), cluster together, and live on within the concept of race.

Among those who argue that race is modern, their theoretical and historical works briefly discuss how religion was the primary form of hierarchy prior to race (Fredrickson 1981; Mills 1997; Omi and Winant 2014; Wade 1997). Charles Mills argues that pre- and early modern differences along the lines of religion, civilization, and geography "eventually coalesced into the *basic* opposition of white versus nonwhite." (Mills 1997:21, emphasis in original). Earlier forms of difference did not operate separately from race, but rather, their hierarchies folded into a hierarchy based on race. For example, the notion of "purity of blood" was used to differentiate Christians from others. The idea of blood purity to differentiate religious groups segued easily into the concept of race (Anidjar 2014; Grosfoguel and Mielants 2006; Rana 2011). The Enlightenment and secularism did not upend these ideas based on religion, but instead merely translated "this strategic dichotomization (Christian/infidel)" into other forms like race; "'*Race*' gradually became the formal marker of this differentiated status, *replacing the religious divide*" (Mills 1997:23, emphasis added).

Some argue that what makes "race" distinct from ethnicity/culture, nation, and class is that race was constructed and backed by scientific thinking, initially biology, while other forms of difference were not. For example, George Fredrickson argues that ideas about the inferiority of indigenous people as "savage" provided rationalizations for conquest but, "These beliefs were not yet racist in the nineteenth-century sense of the term because they were not based on an explicit doctrine of genetic or biological inequality" (Fredrickson 1981:7). But race is goal-oriented and justifications for it have shifted over time. The justifications are not limited to

biology or genetics; the outcome has remained while the justifications have shifted, as Michael

Omi and Howard Winant argue:

> [I]mmediate and practical political needs shaped race: to assert control, to police the empire, to take possession of land and to extract labor. Religion provided whatever poor theory was available to explain these initial practices. Only after conquest was assured and slave-trading was an established transnational business, in the 17th and 18th centuries, did 'enlightened' debates take place among whites as to the nature and humanity of the native and the African. Kant and Hegel, Locke and Hume, Voltaire and Jefferson…all the great thinkers in fact, made preposterous claims about race (2014:244-5).

Race was first legitimized using religious explanations (i.e., because God says so), and then

using scientific explanations (i.e., because the data say so) in an unprecedented way. Though

explanations shifted, all of these ways of legitimizing "race" (religion, science, etc.) share a

reference to the body. Race is about somatic difference, and all the ways of legitimizing "race"

focus on explaining perceived differences in the body, whether phenotype, genotype, affect, and

more. This common thread of the body has led some scholars to argue that race is distinct

because it is about somatic difference while other forms of difference are not (Omi and Winant

2014). A closer look at religion challenges this idea that race is distinct on the grounds that race

is uniquely somatic. Research on the premodern era shows that religious difference was framed

as somatic or bodily difference, too (Heng 2011; Loomba 2007; Thomas 2010). In the premodern

era, Jews and Muslims, among others, were at times seen as having fundamentally different

bodies from Christians, which would suggest that race and religion are not so separable. Denise

Buell argues that early Christians even used what could be translated to the term "race" (*genos*)

to describe themselves (Buell 2005). One of the ostensible differences between religion and race

is that one can convert to a religion but not to a race. This may suggest that race is fixed or given

while religion is mutable and involves choice. At times, conversion has changed the social status

of the converted, and at times it has not, due to notions of bodily difference (Mills 1997; Rana 2011; Thomas 2010). James Thomas (2010:1743) argues that Jews in premodern Europe experienced a process of racial formation: in the early medieval period, Jews were constructed as "different vis-à-vis the body and bodily practices" but "up to this point Jewishness was not defined as innate – it was still curable through conversion," which was looked upon favorably and then deemed impossible once their inferiority was seen as inherent, at which point it is racial, Thomas argues.

J. Kameron Carter's (2008) work, *Race: A Theological Account* is worth mentioning here. Taking a theological approach rather than the traditionally historical and sociological approaches of other scholars discussed so far, Carter nevertheless arrives at the same conclusion: "modernity's racial imagination is religious in nature" (Carter 2008:5). He argues that early Christianity underwent a transformation when it positioned Jews as a "race group" and specifically as a race group that is of the Orient, which created Christianity as Occidental and white:

> [W]hiteness is not an essence. It names the conclusion of a history, the history of an achievement. The "strength" by which whiteness became a fait accompli is the strength by which Christianity was quite violently severed from its Jewish roots and subsequently redeployed, again quite violently, as the ground of Western civilization and white cultural nationalism. In short, modern Western civilization is, in the strictest sense of the term, a racial accomplishment, the accomplishment of whiteness. But this accomplishment is a distinctively modern "Christian" accomplishment, an accomplishment rooted in the refusal to understand Christian identity inside Jewish covenantal life…Alas, Christianity became the white man's religion. (2008:285-6)

Analyzing Kant's work on race, Carter argues, "Christianity is made the cultural property of Western civilization. It is here that it becomes clear how whiteness, as the 'biological' underpinning of modernity, proves itself to be a new expression of an older theological

problem," which was the question of Christians' relationship to Jews (2008:82). While Jews were an internal "other" in Europe, Muslims were an external "other" but also rivals (Anidjar 2003; Fredrickson 1981) "whose very being mocked the beliefs of Europe and materially diminished its daily life" (Robinson 1983:89). As Cedric J. Robinson puts it, "The Christian encounter with Islam would have then both racial and economic resonances" (Robinson 1983:89). All this lends further evidence to the claim here that race and religion are deeply connected, and this work also places this connection in context. Through violence and ideas about the fundamentally or innately different bodies (and spiritual states, souls) of Jews, premodern Christians in Europe developed their group identity and consolidated power, defining themselves relative to Jews and Muslims on the path to constructing themselves as white.[1]

The definition of race I use here is informed by these historical origins of race and religion. Combining the definitions of Charles Mills, Michael Omi and Howard Winant, I define race as a political system that emerged from the context of European expansion in the modern era through conquest, slavery, and colonization. Due to this context, race signifies superiority and inferiority with reference to phenotype, geography, culture, and also religion. Focusing on the US, race is a political system structured by a black-white binary created to serve several purposes, including self-definition, for whites (Martinot 2010; Mills 1997). Further, there is an emphasis on the body as the site of difference related not only to phenotype, but also other markers of culture, religion, and more. Emphasizing the body, Omi and Winant argue,

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[1] C. Eric Lincoln, a sociologist who put forth some of the earliest academic work on "Black Muslims," also shows how at least nine of the twenty or so prominent leaders in the church from the 3rd-5th century A.D. who shaped the basic political and theological doctrines of the Western church were African: Clement, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Dionysius, Athanasius, Didymus, Augustine, and Cyril. Lincoln argues that in spite of this, "How ironic it is that so much light should come from an allegedly 'dark continent,' and that it should eventuate in a civilization called the Christian West" (1984:25).

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"Corporeality is the 'fact of blackness,' and in numerous ways, of 'brownness,' 'redness,' 'yellowness,' and indeed 'whiteness' as well" (2014:248).

The historical relationship between race and religion appears to live on in some way today. One example is the way researchers have tried to make sense of what race means in the experiences of Muslims and Jews, since for these groups, it is more obvious to even the casual observer that religion and race play some role in their experiences because they are non-normative groups in the US. Even though Muslims' and Jews' contemporary realities suggest that race and religion may work together in some way, race and religion are typically treated as separate (or separable) variables in empirical research on race and religion today. Sociologists of religion, including Michael O. Emerson and colleagues, call for a "deeper and more creative theorization on the race-religion interplay" in empirical research today arguing that since "religion plays an even more significant role in race relations than commonly recognized." They also contend that scholars must "tease out the specifics of this role, not only in terms of race relations but also for other dynamic social processes such as racial formation" (Emerson, Korver-Glenn, and Douds 2015:355). Still, much empirical research on race and religion conceives of race and religion as discrete categories. Sociological literature examines how particular religious congregations or organizations perpetuate, challenge, or reproduce race and racism; how religion functions in multiracial congregations; how race shapes religious practices; and how religious practices shape racial identity (Bailey and Snedker 2011; Braunstein, Fulton, and Wood 2014; Chong 1998; Edgell and Tranby 2007; Emerson and Smith 2000; Marti 2005; Perry 2014; Rao 2015). In most of this work, religion is treated as a matter of beliefs and practices, or as the location of an organization (i.e. church) rather than conceptualizing religion as (also) a way to organize and categorize bodies. This research is missing a key part of how religion may work if

we take seriously the historical development of religion as also a way to organize and identify bodies.

Research on race and religion examining Muslims has rightly paid more attention to how religion is used to organize bodies perhaps simply because it has had to; that is, post-9/11 anti-Muslim violence has forced us to see how religion is attributed and not only a matter of self-identity, beliefs, or practices. For example, people who are not Muslim but "look Muslim" (Volpp 2002) have been killed in hate crimes as retribution for 9/11. In cases where a Sikh man is killed because he is assumed to be Muslim, it is harder to ignore how religion is also a way that bodies are categorized regardless of the actual beliefs or practices. Literature in the sociology of religion, however, is still mostly about Christians, and in that literature the use of religion as a way to categorize bodies is not taken as seriously as a way that religion works today as it is when the work is on Muslims and Jews. In most work in the literature on sociology of religion, race and religion are conceptualized as largely empirically separable categories that are conflated for some (Muslims) and not others (Christians). In effect, theory on the historical interplay between race and religion is rather divorced from empirical studies of this relationship today. With this review of the historical origins of the relationship between race and religion and empirical approaches to their relationship today, I now turn to defining two of my main concepts within this relationship: blackness and whiteness.

Whiteness, Blackness, and the US Racial Structure

A number of key scholarly approaches to the study of whiteness and blackness inform this project. I combine a range of definitions and theories of whiteness and blackness together in this dissertation to form composite definitions, which I outline in this section. First, however, I

clarify terms that I will use in the rest of this dissertation. I use "white" or "white American" as a label to refer to European descended individuals in the US. This does not include Arabs, South Asians, and other groups who are sometimes positioned as white (see Chapter 4 for an analysis of this phenomenon). I use the term "brown" interchangeably with "Arab and South Asian," because some participants in the field use it, and because of research that conceives of Arabs and South Asians as understood within a logic of "brown" (Silva 2016). "Black" will refer to African Americans unless it is also specified as including black immigrants and second generation Americans of African descent.

Defining Whiteness

Whiteness as an internally diverse racial position. Individuals and ethnic groups have different relationships to whiteness (e.g. unquestioned membership, honorary membership, occasional membership, etc.), different avenues that get them there (e.g. legally, culturally, phenotypically, ideologically, socioeconomically, etc.), and differing levels of material benefits accompanying membership in this racial position. Beyond a core group of people who are always white or never white based on characteristics I will go on to outline here, it has been debatable who else is considered white. In that debate, whiteness emerges as multi-faceted and internally diverse. Some forms of whiteness are positioned as superior to other forms of whiteness, but all remain under the umbrella of whiteness. Explained below, I define whiteness based on scholarly work on how settler colonialism, slavery, and also the law were central to its construction.

The law has played a major role early on in constructing whiteness in the US (Gualtieri 2001; Haney-Lopez 2006; Harris 1993; Jung 2011; Lipsitz 2006; Molina 2014). The law has been a vehicle for constructing and legitimizing US whiteness by defending settler colonialism:

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taking Native land, protecting slavery through property law on this land, and defining the right to this land (citizenship) based on race. Cheryl Harris makes a case for "whiteness as property" in which property rights and race are intertwined with one another. Whiteness is based on one's relationship to property. Comparing US and South African settler colonialism, George Fredrickson argues that whiteness is constituted first through "the common fact of a long and often violent struggle for territorial supremacy between white invaders and indigenous peoples" that was "part of the context…and preconditions for the patterns of racial dominance that had emerged by that time" and "a major component in the emergence of 'ethnic stratification.'" (Fredrickson 1981:4–5). Whiteness in the US began as a racial identity with whites as property owners, Native Americans as land sources, and blacks as objects of labor. Slavery as a system racialized European slave owners and indentured laborers as white just as much as it racialized African slaves as black.

Race-based citizenship also facilitated the construction of whiteness and blackness, and it shows how phenotype, culture, religion, and national origin are factors that construct these racial positions. The first US Congress in 1790 decided that being a "free white person" was a requirement for becoming a naturalized citizen. This intentionally excluded blacks by definition. This requirement was upheld until 1952. Over the course of this law's tenure, immigrants attempted to naturalize as citizens by arguing that they were "free white persons." The back and forth between these cases' arguments and the court system sheds light on how whiteness has been defined.

An early case was that of George Dow, a Syrian immigrant in South Carolina who was ruled as nonwhite and thus ineligible for citizenship by a lower court. In 1915 a higher court ruled that Syrians were white and thus Dow won his case. His case, put forth by his lawyers with

the Syrian American Associations strongly backing him, argued that "[free] white persons" refers to people who are "Caucasian," "white in color," and to those who are "Semites." Dow's case uses "European Jews" as a precedent for counting Syrian Christians as white. European Jews were already eligible for citizenship at this point. The argument for their legal whiteness was based on the argument that they are Semitic, and for some judges, based on the argument that they are European. Using this precedent, George Dow argued that he is also a Semite because he is a Christian. Dow's case illustrates the role of religion in determining whiteness. It is also a moment in which being Judeo-Christian is named as white or white-eligible. It also shows how legal whiteness shapes self-identity since Dow and other cases encouraged Syrians to view themselves as white (Gualtieri 2001:46).

In another case, Takao Ozawa, a Japanese man, filed for citizenship in 1922 claiming that the Japanese are white people. Deeming the Japanese "unassimilable," the court used what it called "scientific authorities" to support its ruling that Japanese people are "Mongolian," not "Caucasian," which makes them nonwhite. In this case, "Caucasian" and "white" are synonymous, and science was the authority. A few months later in January 1923, the citizenship case of Bhagat Singh Thind, a Sikh man from India, was also denied, but for different reasons. Thind argued that he was white because he is Caucasian according to scientific authorities. Though the court had earlier viewed Caucasian and white as synonymous, which would have made Thind white, they struck down Thind's case arguing that even though Indians are Caucasian, they are not white because "the common man" knows that Indians are not white. Whereas the racial science of the time supported a rejection of Ozawa's case, it would have supported accepting Thind's case. But for Thind, suddenly the common man was used as an authority to claim that Indians are not white.

If the above cases are not clear enough, there are direct references to religion in these cases as well that show how religion made the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful citizenship case. In the case of South Asians, for example, it made a difference: in 1910, Bhicaji Franyi Balsara, a "Parsee," was granted citizenship, whereas in 1923, Thind, a turban-wearing Sikh, was not. Religion could make or break a citizenship case for Arabs as well. In Dow's case, his religion made his case, while for an Arab *Muslim* petitioner, his religion broke his case. In 1942, several years after Syrians came to be legally white, Ahmed Hassan, a Yemeni Muslim immigrant, was denied citizenship. The difference between his case and those of his Syrian predecessors was that he was Muslim and they were Christian. Indeed, Syrians pleaded their case based in part on their Christianity (Gualtieri 2001). The judge on Hassan's case wrote, "Apart from the dark skin of the Arabs, it is well known that they are a part of the Mohammedan world and that a wide gulf separates their culture from that of the predominately Christian peoples of Europe" (see Beydoun 2015). For Hassan, like Syrians and others, skin color played a role in the rejection of his citizenship case. However, his status as a Muslim (and the idea that it comes with a "culture") also played a role. This early case constructs whiteness and being Muslim as dissonant, if not incompatible. It also names "Christian peoples of Europe" as those who are rightfully citizens, rightfully American, further suggesting links between whiteness, Americanness, and being Christian. The judge's conflation of Christians and Europe on the one hand, and Arabs and "Mohammedans" on the other hand, is part of a long history in which "Western civilization" constructs itself and "Islamic civilization" as separate and opposing entities where "the West" is superior (Hammer 2013; Said 1979; Huntington 1993). In this conflation, we see clustering of meanings along the lines of race, civilization, and religion in ways that forbid easy teasing apart of these forms of difference from one another. Naturalization

cases like these were foundational in the very construction of whiteness, socially and legally (Gualtieri 2001; Haney-Lopez 2006; Tehranian 2008). Such cases also illuminate structural connections between religion and race in the construction of whiteness in the US.

In these cases, the threads of skin color, culture, civilization, geography, common knowledge, science, *and religion* come together to define and redefine whiteness. In the process, relationally, they also define nonwhiteness. These cases tell us that the boundaries of whiteness are not firm and static; scientific research, the opinion of average people, legal definitions and precedent, and also "congressional intent" (Gualtieri 2001:36) are all factors in determining who is white and even then remain up for debate. These cases further "transformed whiteness into a material concept imbued with rights and privileges," as John Tehranian argues (2008:1206), determining who would thus have access to the material advantages of whiteness. Given its importance in this study, I will once again emphasize the link between being American and Christian that is sometimes explicit in these cases and in the logic of settler colonialism, and as we see later in this study, is sometimes implicit, and other times it is challenged. Even if not explicitly, these cases suggest that being Christian is associated with being American, belonging, and whiteness.

Whiteness today includes economic components that allow groups that were not given legal whiteness above (i.e., Yemeni, Indian, Japanese) some economic benefits as people who are at least not black. Some of these material advantages of whiteness were built through public policy aimed at protecting and augmenting white capital and through "private prejudice" that allowed nonwhites to also access some benefits of whiteness. George Lipsitz argues that "public policy and private prejudice work together to create a 'possessive investment in whiteness' that is responsible for the racialized hierarchies of our society" (2006:vii). Some key policies were

developed in the New Deal era of the 1930s and 40s. The Wagner Act and Social Security Act excluded farm workers and domestic workers – who were primarily people of color – from coverage. The Federal Housing Act of 1934 channeled almost all of the loan money it handed out towards whites and away from blacks, resulting in the construction of the white suburbs. The federal money put into the construction of the suburbs literally and figuratively moved upwardly mobile "European American ethnics" into whiteness. As European American ethnics moved out of cities and blacks moved in, urban renewal projects – also federally funded – in the 1960s and 70s, destroyed 1600 black neighborhoods in northern and southern US cities. Lipsitz's work on the possessive investment in whiteness contributes the consideration of public policy and space into definitions of whiteness along with how nonwhite people can be agents of white supremacy (Lipsitz 2006:viii). For nonblack people of color, economic mobility and distance from blackness helps them access whiteness.

Defining Blackness

According to Steve Martinot (2010:17), "[I]t is from the invention of whiteness that the concept of race emerged." Whiteness created blackness, establishing the black-white binary that structures the US racial order, defining blackness as its opposite. For example, where blackness was synonymous with slavery, whiteness was synonymous with freedom, defined as a state of dominance (Lipsitz 2006:3). Sometimes things are known by their opposite and still, there are paradoxes in how blackness is constructed as all that whiteness is not. For example, blackness is constructed as morally deviant in comparison to whiteness, but, as Su'ad Abdul-Khabeer and others have argued, blackness is also positively valued "as a site of the pleasures repressed by the standards of Whiteness. Accordingly Blackness marks leisure instead of hard work, erotic liberty in lieu of sexual restraint, a womanhood that is super heroic, and a Christianity, free from the

strictures of the Protestant ethic, that talks loud and long to God" (2016:14). Furthermore,

scholars differentiate between types of blackness. There is "the blackness that whiteness

created," and the Blackness that black people created (Carter 2008; Martinot 2010; Shelby

2007). Tommie Shelby distinguishes between thin and thick conceptions of blackness:

> The prevailing (though not uncontested) thin conception of black identity in the
> United States, a conception that has its social heritage in chattel slavery and Jim
> Crow domination, holds that blacks include both (1) those persons who have
> certain easily identifiable, inherited physical traits (such as dark skin, tightly
> curled or "kinky" hair, a broad flat nose, and thick lips) and who are descendants
> of peoples from sub-Saharan Africa; and (2) those persons who, while not
> meeting or only ambiguously satisfying the somatic criteria, are descendants of
> Africans who are widely presumed to have had these physical characteristics.
> Thus, on a thin view, blacks are persons who (more or less) fit a particular
> phenotypic profile and certain genealogical criteria and/or who are generally
> believed to have biological ancestors who fit the relevant profile (2007:208).

Thick blackness, on the other hand, "usually includes a thin component, [and] always requires

something more, or something other, than a common physical appearance and African

ancestry…Unlike thin blackness, thick blackness can be adopted, altered, or lost through

individual action" (Shelby 2007:209). Modes of thick blackness include blackness as a matter of

shared ancestry, nationalism, the cultural production of those who satisfy the criteria for thin

blackness, and a kinship model where black identity is based on the idea that black people are

one another's family. Some modes of thick blackness are part of the blackness that black people

have created. Some of these modes are also what others have called the bases for an autonomous

black identity: although "whiteness depends on defining black people as black for the purposes

of self-definition, white people do not define Blackness…Blackness is a black appropriation of

what has been imposed on black people (by whites) in order to transform it into something of

their own" (Martinot 2010:24).

Christianity is an important example of something that was "accommodated to black

pacification and control in the interest of the most abominable institution ever to challenge

Christian morality…It was a religion that called them to work and to die for the doubtful

aggrandizement of self-appointed Christian masters whose calculated manipulation of the faith

was intended to so confuse the slave as to make his dehumanization seem reasonable and

inevitable" (Lincoln 1984:34). Still, Christianity became a faith that blacks in the US have also

made to speak to their experiences and to fight anti-black racism, as any cursory read of the civil

rights era would suggest, where Christianity became part of the Blackness that black people

created (Carter 2008; Lincoln 1984; Wilmore 1998). As C. Eric Lincoln contends, "[I]n

accepting Christianity in America, the Africans were not necessarily accepting American

Christianity" (1984:59). For blacks, Christianity's "truth was authenticated to them in the

experience of suffering and struggle, to reinforce an enculturated religious orientation and to

produce an indigenous faith that emphasized dignity, freedom, and human welfare" (Wilmore

1998:25). Debates on which of these forms of blackness should be used as a foundation for black

identity in the fight against racism continue. In this dissertation, I use "blackness" to refer to a

composite of all of these definitions – thick/thin, blackness/Blackness – because they are

contested and shape each other, and because my goal is to leave definitions as broad as possible

in order to be able to see different iterations of the relationship between blackness, Muslimness,

and whiteness, as they are defined in the field.

Being American is an important part of how blackness is defined, too. US whiteness is

confidently American. US blackness has a more ambivalent relationship with Americanness.

Some argue that African Americans are not fully American because they are denied the

privileges that come with being American. Others argue that they are American by default

because they were not "black" before being involuntarily brought to the US, which makes the US the origin and home (of the blackness that whiteness created). With these two perspectives, sometimes the conclusion is that blacks should be American, or that they never were and never should try to be. C. Eric Lincoln argues that:

> There was a time, for example, when merely being identified as 'American' was for most blacks a value as far beyond price as it was beyond practical experience. It spoke to a yearning for acceptability, for being included, for being considered a part of a great civilization. It was a wish to deny the ugly implications of color and prejudice in America, to give the whites the benefit of the doubt, to persist in the faith in the American dream. It was not that blacks ever lost the feeling that America was the whites' country and that all others enjoyed it by their sufferance. It was rather the hope that the whites would outgrow their childish assumption of prerogative and mature into a reasonable expression of their humanitarian pretensions. The rise of Black Muslims is evidence of the erosion of faith and the desiccation of hope that white America ever intends to include black America with full force and meaning under what is implicit in "American" (1961:229).

Black Muslims' heroes like Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali, leaders in molding a Blackness created by black people, insisted that they are not the sort of American that whites are. Malcolm X said, "We didn't land on Plymouth Rock; the rock was landed on us." Muhammad Ali refused the draft saying that he would not fight in the Vietnam War on behalf of the US because for him the real enemy is an internal one: that the Vietcong "never called [him] nigger." In resisting oppression, fueling the anti-war movement, and more, figures like Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali also redefined blackness and emphasized that it is not American in the way that whites are, while also showing that it is a product of American oppression. In their work, the Americanness of blackness comes through in these complex ways.

Korla Pandit, a black man who recreated himself as an Indian, is a testament to the Americanness of the blackness that whiteness created. He was born John Roland Redd as the son of an African American preacher in Missouri. He rose to fame as a TV star in the 1940s as

"Korla Pandit," a name and Indian persona he created. Prior to becoming Pandit, he took the name Juan Rolando, but after moving to California and experiencing anti-Mexican racism, changed his name and persona to Korla Pandit, surrounded by the exotica that might come with the caricature of an Indian – he is described as having "dreamy eyes" and was flanked by exotic looking dancers on his television show (Desai 2014; Kramer 2011; Misra 2014). Pandit learned that if he created himself as an Indian man – a Delhi native, specifically – he could bypass anti-black racism. Anti-miscegenation laws were part of that anti-black racism and he was married to a white woman named Beryl DeBeeson, who helped him transform from Juan into Pandit. It is notable that in roughly the same era, Bhagat Singh Thind, an Indian man, was denied US citizenship (1923) on the grounds that he was not white. However, for everyday experience under Jim Crow laws, Indians had some degree of whiteness, which is evidenced in how Pandit's performance as an Indian allowed him to move freely about the US color line.

Pandit is not the only African American man or woman to change their appearance and behaviors to pass for a different race that was not black and also not quite white, though white enough to afford some benefit. His example shows that race is not just a matter of identity and that foreignness is a factor in racial attribution and meaning. It also suggests some relationship between foreignness and the black-white racial binary. Pandit could evade the restrictions of the racial binary as a black person by fashioning himself into a brown, foreign man. In this dissertation and in much other research, findings show that Muslimness is associated with being foreign. In Pandit's story, we see being foreign as something that can free him of what it means to be black, particularly during Jim Crow.

The Americanness of the blackness that whiteness created may be unstable and context dependent. Cynthia Young (2014) writes on how links are made between the civil rights

movement and the global war on terror through examining how black male bodies are used in political narratives. Black men, imbued with the meaning of the civil rights movement and black freedom, are positioned as patriots defending the US nation, specifically against terrorism (a term that almost always implicates Muslims in the post-9/11 era). Blackness becomes a symbol of "North America's allegedly past sins," and by fighting for the US against foreign threats, blackness is made American and the US is absolved of its sins (Young 2014:42). It may be summed up in the opening of Young's article, which begins with a line from hip hop artist Talib Kweli: "Niggas ain't become Americans till 9/11."

From another angle, Sohail Daulatzai (2012) also analyzes how blackness is made American while having a special relationship with what he calls the "Muslim International," or the Muslim third world (Daulatzai 2012). Through an analysis of Malcolm X, cultural production, and representations, Daulatzai analyzes links between black liberation movements in the US and the Muslim International. He argues that the figures of the "black criminal" and "Muslim terrorist" are the twin pillars of US statecraft in the post-civil rights era. These two figures come together to make black Muslims the greatest threats to US empire. Daulatzai traces the connections between the Cold War's goals and black liberation organizing in the twentieth century to show how the Civil Rights Movement came to focus on domestic racism through being pressured by the state to cut off the movement's burgeoning third world ties that the black power movement ultimately retained, particularly through Malcolm X. The Civil Rights Movement, Daulatzai argues, helped to "Americanize blackness." In sum, blackness was born in the US in a way, black people are locked out of Americanness, and their strategies for seeking freedom sometimes seek Americanness and other times reject it.

Imbued with the entanglements between phenotype, religion, citizenship, labor, and national origin reviewed above, the US was built on a black-white binary. Next, I review scholarly approaches to the question of how to study race in relation to this black-white binary.

Approaches to the Black-White Binary

There are three main positions in literature on race on the question of how to study race vis-à-vis the black-white binary, and also what the binary means for the positioning of intermediate or "other" racial groups. The first position argues that research must move "beyond black and white" to understand race today, particularly the experiences of nonblack/nonwhite groups; the second position argues that the US now has a tri- rather than bi-racial system where there is an intermediate buffer group between black and white; and the third approach argues that the black-white binary remains important for understanding the racial positioning of all groups.

The "moving beyond black and white" approach has gained traction in research on race in the United States over the past couple decades out of a desire to understand the racial positioning of those who do not fall neatly into the categories black and white. It is in response to scholarship that has almost solely studied blacks and whites to understand race, so the call is to consider or recognize "others" such as immigrants, Asians, Latina/os, and Muslims (Alcoff 2003; Almaguer 1994a; Perea 2013; Selod and Embrick 2013).

The approach is a variation on the perspective in Omi and Winant's work on racial formation, in which they argue that: "The U.S. has confronted each racially defined minority with a unique form of despotism and degradation…Native Americans faced genocide, blacks were subjected to racial slavery, Mexicans were invaded and colonized, and Asians faced exclusion" (Omi and Winant 1994:1). This quote highlights how racialization is framed as occurring through state level shifts primarily, and each group has a particular "moment." The

strength of this perspective is that it allows for analysis of the most salient issues, such as how the "war on terror" has intensified some things that impact Muslims. However, a weakness of the approach is that it gives less attention to relationality. Each group is racialized by major events but also relative to one another, because race is relational (Molina 2014).[2] Ultimately, this first approach is a call for inclusion and recognition – inclusion into race literature, for the struggles of these groups to be named and recognized, and to be considered a *racial* group (rather than cultural, ethnic, etc.) (Perea 2013). As such, it has the strengths and weaknesses of the politics of inclusion and recognition. The main weakness is that it does not destabilize the frames that structure whatever one is being included into or recognized by. It sees the black-white binary as a way to study blacks and whites, and requires other frames for "others," rather than seeking an integrated framework since other groups have been constructed relative to blackness and whiteness as citizenship cases reviewed earlier show.

The next perspective pays greater attention to relationality, arguing that there is a racial structure with three major positions, not two (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Forman, Goar, and Lewis 2002; Kim 1999a; Tuan 1998). In a tri-racial order, the poles of blackness and whiteness remain. In the middle between them is an intermediate group that serves as a buffer between black and white. In Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's formulation of the tri-racial order, color; aspects of class including education, profession, income; and racial attitudes serve to position people into one of the three groups (Bonilla-Silva 2004). Those previously classified as Asians and Latina/os, for

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[2] For example, the "war on terror" has resulted in more Latina/os in the US being deported than Arabs or South Asians (Golash-Boza 2012), but these deportations are analyzed less often as an effect of the war on terror since the war on terror has been framed as "a Muslim issue," and thus less so as "a Latina/o issue." This is one example of what is missed when relationality is not part of the theoretical frame in most racialization research on "others" and is often but not always missed in research calling for a move beyond black and white.

example, are divided between the three racial positions by ethnicity rather than inhabiting one of them as Asians or Latinos.

Claire Kim's (1999) research on Asian American racialization also calls for moving beyond black and white, but theorizes the creation of an intermediate group. Kim suggests that racial others are racialized relative to the black-white binary and in order to maintain it. She argues that, in the case of Asian Americans as an intermediate racial group, it is foreignness that racializes them relative to both blacks and whites. Superiority-inferiority constitute one of the axes along which racialization occurs, and insider-outsider (foreigner) status is another axis. We see this process at work in other studies. Stanley Thangaraj's research on masculinity and South Asian men, some of whom are Muslim, tracks dynamics around race, sexuality, and gender to argue for how the men position themselves relative to blackness and whiteness. He argues that "the white-black dichotomy is simultaneously *insufficient* and *critical* to identity formation for South Asian Americans. South Asian American masculinities do not transcend the black-white binary but rather directly involve and reconfigure this normative racial logic" (Thangaraj 2012:989, emphasis in original).

The third perspective critiques the call to move beyond black and white. It builds on Orlando Patterson's (1982) work on the centrality of the black-white binary in US race-making. Roy L. Brooks and Kirsten Widner (2013:499) view the call to move beyond black and white as "unintentionally disrespecting a venerable tradition of black scholarship." Most scholars coming from this perspective argue that the position of blackness is unique and not comparable to other positions, whether due to the specificity of anti-black oppression or, relatedly in this perspective, because blackness is a political ontology (Brooks and Widner 2013; Sexton 2010). For the study of nonblack/nonwhite groups, this approach emphasizes blackness, as Jared Sexton argues:

"What is lost for the study of nonblack nonwhite existence is a proper analysis of the true scale and nature of its material and symbolic power *relative* to the category of blackness" (Sexton 2010:48, emphasis in original).

All approaches reviewed above argue that black-white binary logic remains part of how race works but attribute different levels of significance and different temporalities to it. For some, it is part of US racial history, and for others it is part of the racial present. My view is that the hardiness of black-white racial logic means that it has some significance for how Muslims are racially positioned. In contrast, most research on Muslims' racial positioning starts from the assumption that an analysis of Muslims is what lies "beyond" the black-white binary. For example, Saher Selod and David Embrick (2013:648) argue that, for the study of Muslims, the racialization framework provides "a space where race theory can move beyond a Black/White paradigm in order to discuss new racial meanings and new racisms experienced in new political, cultural, and economic contexts." Junaid Rana and Gilberto Rosas (2006:226) make similar arguments about new contexts: "The post-9/11 global racial system emerges from the history of Western conquest, empire, and imperialism; the spread of capitalist accumulation and dispossession; and the exploitation of racialized and gendered labor, gesturing to a politics of race and racism beyond the hegemonic black–white binary." Indeed, research on the racialization of Muslims, reviewed next, is shaped by the call to move beyond black and white.

Racialization of Muslims

There is a growing body of work attempting to understand Muslims in the US racially after 9/11, and a number of approaches to it. Some scholars have conceptualized it as the "racialization of Muslims" where Muslims are a de facto racial group today or at least on their way there (Byng 2012; Elver 2012; Garner and Selod 2014; Joseph et al. 2008; Rana 2011; Selod

2014; Selod and Embrick 2013). Similar to the racialization perspective is the "browning" perspective, in which some argue that 9/11 justified the deployment of "'brown' as an identification," (Silva 2010), meaning that "brown" is a way to lump together and identify people rather than being a self-identity (Bhattacharyya 2008; Bloodsworth-lugo and Lugo-lugo 2010; Semati 2010). Some favor "Islamophobia" as a way to characterize some of Muslims' experiences after 9/11, arguing that Islamophobia is a form of racism (Love 2013), or it includes but is not limited to racism (Hammer 2013). Erik Love (2009) argues that Islamophobia affects "Middle Eastern Americans," who are a racialized group of people, as well as others who are not necessarily Muslim. Research on Muslims' racial experiences comes out of a desire to understand Muslims' post-9/11 experiences. This is because groups like Arabs and South Asians of all religions were lumped together and subject to hate crimes and discrimination ((SAALT) 2014; Elver 2012; Patel 2005; Volpp 2002). Scholars have used phrases with a string of identifiers like "Middle Eastern, Arab, or Muslim" (Volpp 2002) or "Arab, Muslim, and South Asian," sometimes shortened to "AMSA" to capture a sense of the different groups being targeted (Maira 2008; Patel 2005).[3] These perspectives engage the concept of race to different degrees in explaining Muslim experiences in the US, and the racialization of Muslims perspective does so with the most depth.

Studies of Muslim racialization share conceptual frames such as going "beyond black and white," along with shared theoretical perspectives and empirical features. The literature largely frames its theoretical approach as moving "beyond black and white." This perspective does not argue that we ignore the black-white binary, but rather, suggests that the study of "others" means

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[3] This is also evidenced in the title of an online guide put out by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission entitled "Questions and answers about the workplace rights of Muslims, Arabs, South Asians, and Sikhs under the Equal Employment Opportunity laws" (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 2002).

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engaging theories and perspectives that are seen as different from what theory rooted in the black-white binary offers. Theoretically, most employ Omi and Winant's conception of racialization (2014). Scholars of Muslim racialization argue that racial meaning is applied to religion such that Muslims are racialized. Empirically, they focus on the experiences of Arab and South Asian Muslims to come to the conclusion that Muslims are racialized, with the exception of a few recent studies on white Muslim racialization (Galonnier 2015; Moosavi 2014). Notably, there are no studies on post-9/11 black Muslim racialization, in so many words, though some studies do comment on it (Daulatzai 2012; Abdul Khabeer 2016).

Racial formation theory has been the dominant way that scholars have thought about the racialization of Muslims. Omi and Winant's theorization of racialization does not require that a group already be considered a racial group in order to have racial experiences, or to be racialized. This is helpful in the study of Muslims because race appears to play a role in their experiences in some way, but they are not a census-recognized racial group, and the word "Muslim" does not refer to a racial designation in this way. Omi and Winant theorize "racial formation" as a macro-level social process by which racial categories are formed and destroyed. Racial formation occurs through "racial projects," which are also processes that do the ideological "work" of linking structure and representation. Racialization is a process that is part of racial formation and is defined as "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group" (Omi and Winant 2015:111). The racialization of Muslims includes the extension of racial meaning to bodies and interactions, as well as "cultural factors such as language, clothing, and beliefs" (2014:3). The racialization of cultural and religious traits, it is argued, demonstrate a connection between race and religion where religion is racialized

(Bayoumi 2006; Rana 2011). The racialization of Muslims framework thus allows analysis of how the religious becomes racial.

Muslim racialization research is empirically based on analysis of South Asian and Arab Muslims and finds that they are racialized as foreign and brown as the following studies illustrate. Anthropologist Junaid Rana (2011) ethnographically examines the experiences of Pakistani labor migrants and argues that Muslims are a new racial category in the US. Sociologist Saher Selod (2014) analyzes Muslim racialization based on interviews with South Asian and Arab Muslim men and women. She argues that their racialization results in the denial of social membership in society based on findings that their nationality, standing, and allegiance were repeatedly questioned in various ways by neighbors, coworkers, and friends (2014:16). Legal scholar Hilal Elver (2012) traces historical pre-cursors to post-9/11 Muslim racialization in law and policy, focusing on post-1965 Muslim immigrants, who are primarily South Asian and Arab. Similarly, studies of racialization focusing on Muslims often focus on (non-Muslim) Arabs as well (Bayoumi 2006; Cainkar 2009; Naber 2008) and some studies come close to conflating the two (Cainkar 2008). To an extent, this conflation is unavoidable because, as John Tehranian (2008:1215) points out, "Middle Easterners have been irretrievably associated with Islam." Arabs and Muslims are also synonymous in post-9/11 media representations (Joseph 2008). Nadine Naber's (2006) ethnographic study of Arab immigrants after 9/11 in San Francisco argues that an "Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim Other" has been constituted after 9/11. Class, gender, sexuality, religion, and citizenship come together intersectionally to produce "a variety of engagements with 'anti-Arab/anti-Muslim racism'" (Naber 2006:235). All of this indicates that it is difficult to separate what is Arab from what is Muslim. These are all examples of

research concluding that the two are conflated and have similar racial meanings associated with them.

There is some research suggesting that the way these broader processes racialize Muslims varies based on gender, and this research is also on Arabs and South Asians. Muslim men are racialized as violent threats, specifically as potential terrorists (Cainkar 2009; Rana 2011). The racialization of Muslim men is also evidenced in programs like NSEERS (National Security Entry Exit Registration System), a program that ran from 2002-2011, which required non-citizen men from Muslim majority countries (and North Korea) to register with the government. Muslim women, on the other hand, are racialized as powerless and oppressed by Muslim men, and in need of saving. Their racialization resonates with Gayatri Spivak's pithy phrase to describe British justifications for colonizing India: "saving brown women from brown men" (1988). Hijab becomes a symbol of this oppression because it is interpreted as coerced rather than a choice, and is also interpreted as a visible threat to Western values of assumed gender equality (Williams and Vashi 2007). In short, Muslim men are viewed as a "violent threat" and Muslim women as a "cultural threat" to the US (Selod 2014; Selod and Embrick 2013).

Some of these associations existed well before 9/11 in the US and also worked to racially position Muslims (Said 1979). In the antebellum US, for example, Muslims were understood as exclusively Arab or Turkish (Beydoun 2015). These associations in the US were informed by European Orientalism, the US's war with the "Barbary States" in Muslim-majority North Africa in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and the power of the Ottoman Empire (Said 1979). Religion played a role in positioning Muslims, highlighting the fluidity of racial categories. Under the US Naturalization Act of 1790, which required designation as a "free white person" to be a citizen, religion was a deciding factor in whether or not Arab immigrants could

attain citizenship. At the same time, some Arabs have attempted to pass as white (Gualtieri 2009; Tehranian 2008). After 9/11, questions remain about how Muslims are racially positioned. Su'ad Abdul Khabeer (2016:22) says that after 9/11, "to be a Muslim is to be known as a target of suspicion and seen as a threat. To be a Muslim also means to be racialized as 'Brown' and not Black." Also reckoning with post-9/11 racial and color labels, Moustafa Bayoumi (2009:133–4) asks, "Are [Muslims] white, brown, or black (all of these, actually), or are they their own novel category?...And what relationship does being Arab or Muslim in America have to blackness…have Arabs and Muslims today become less "white" and more "colored" - that is to say, have they in some sense become more "black" than blacks?"

Muslim racialization literature includes some attention to broader processes that racialize Muslims. Researchers in this area theorize the connection between Muslim racialization and the "War on Terror" in particular (Bayoumi 2009; Bhattacharyya 2008; Byng 2012; Daulatzai 2012; Elver 2012). Selod explains that the "'War on Terror' targets terrorism rather than individual nations, resulting in a myriad of ethnicities and nationalities being classified into a monolithic category of Muslim" (Selod 2014:4). It is also argued that the racialization of Muslims, particularly as terrorists, serves the purpose of building public support for the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan (Cainkar 2009; Rana 2011; Selod and Embrick 2013). Legal scholar Hilal Elver argues that racializing Muslims has a connection to the "American project of global empire building" similarly to how slavery racialized Africans as black in the US, and how settler colonialism racialized Native Americans (Elver 2012:154). Rooting Muslim racialization in broader processes is important for making sense of the significance of attributed racial meanings. The Muslim racialization literature places the process in a broader context vis-à-vis post 9/11 changes but it does so less often on pre-9/11 moments and factors connected to blackness and

whiteness. In the next section, I address the pre-9/11 period, covering necessary background on black and white Muslims. This discussion throws into sharp relief the call that we must move beyond black and white to understand Muslims.

Background on Black and White Muslims in the US

Muslims have been in the US as long as Africans have been in the US. Some historians trace Muslims' origins in the US back to African Muslims brought as slaves (Gomez 2005), where an estimated 15-30% of slaves were Muslim (Diouf 1998a). African slaves' religions had an impact on how they were racialized as black. Sylviane Diouf argues that Muslim slaves were often treated better than non-Muslim slaves, because some Muslims were literate and were regarded as superior. At the same time, Muslim slaves often led slave rebellions, including the first slave uprising in 1522, which was led by the Wolof. Following that was a royal decree that "specifically forbade the introduction of 'Gelofes' (Wolof), *negros* (blacks) from the Levant (or Middle East), those who had been raised with the Moors, and people from Guinea…All of the groups that the decree prohibited were either completely or mostly Muslim. Within fifty years, five decrees were passed to forbid the importation of African Muslims to the Spanish colonies" (Diouf 1998b:18). For Muslim slaves to hold onto their Islamic practices was nearly impossible, and some accounts of African Muslim slaves who memorized and wrote sections of the Qur'an remain (Diouf 1998b; Lincoln 1984). But Christianity was not uniformly imposed upon slaves immediately. In fact, initially, forced conversion was not the policy in Protestant colonies, Diouf reports, and slaves who tried to convert to Christianity were punished. It was in the early nineteenth century that Protestant slave owners imposed conversions on their properties (1998:54). Some argue that Christianity then functioned as an opiate for slaves, used to make them acquiesce, and that descendants of slaves later "came to understand the faulty historical

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foundations on which the plotline of American manifest destiny rested" and created a way of

being Christian that spoke to their experiences (Carter 2008:147). More and more research brings

to light the history of Islam in the US in the lives of slaves. The 2015 TV series version of Alex

Haley's *Roots* is a testament to this. Muslim traditions appear but with less emphasis in the 1977

version of the series, but the 2015 version is full of Islamic symbolism, practices, and language.

The 2015 version also emphasizes the loss of specifically Islamic traditions from earlier

generations of Africans brought to the US to the later generations. It also emphasizes how some

of these practices remained but were not called Islamic, as the Islamic label on those practices

had been erased by the stealing and selling of children, away from parents who might have

passed traditions on.

The twentieth century brought a revival of Islam in black America. Black Muslim groups

like the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, the Moorish Science Temple, the Nation of Islam, the

Five Percent Nation of Gods and Earths, and Sunni, Shi'a and Sufi groups emerged beginning in

the early twentieth century. Interestingly, according to Gayraud Wilmore, the Moorish Science

Temple:

> [G]rew up around the concept that salvation for blacks lay in the rediscovery of
> their origin outside America and white Christianity. These groups repudiated the
> name 'Negro,' 'colored people,' and even 'black people.' They referred to
> themselves simply as Asiatics, or Moors, and introduced into the traditional
> stream of black Christian theology an entirely new, non-Western perspective that
> was to become a tenacious element in the further development of black religion in
> the United States, offering a powerful attraction to many black youth. (1998:188)

Their rejection of being called "black" or "Negro" in favor of "Asiatic" hints at the existence of

shifting racial/religious meanings for African Americans who are Muslim. This suggests that we

cannot take blackness for granted as a stable concept.

The Nation of Islam (NOI) is a sect of Islam that began in 1930 in the United States by W.D. Fard. It is one of the earliest foundational institutions of African American Islam that was led by Elijah Muhammad and by Louis Farrakhan upon Muhammad's death, at which point Warith Deen Muhammad, Elijah Muhammad's son, led a significant portion of former NOI members into Sunni Islam. Malcolm X served as a prolific institution and movement builder for the NOI. Through such institution building and cultural shifts, Islam became well established in African American communities (Gibson and Karim 2014; Jackson 2005; Lincoln 1961; McCloud 1995). Black Muslim cultural production developed and spread, including food (i.e., bean pies), arts and culture (i.e., hip hop), and clothing (i.e., suit, bowtie, fez, particular hijab styles) (Alim 2006; Khabeer 2016).

The flourishing of Islam in black America is heavily associated with protest against white supremacy, a "folk oriented, holy protest" against anti-black racism (Jackson 2005). The association is so strong that some argue that the Nation of Islam is a mostly political rather than religious organization that could have taken on any nonwhite religion in its resistance to racism – that Islam was not central to the Nation's project (Turner 2003). In an early documentary on black Muslims and nationalism called "The Hate that Hate Produced," the film argues that "orthodox Muslims" have no "hate" in their religion but black Muslims do. This argument reflects the fear that whites had of black Muslims and shows that at times, black Muslims were viewed as a bigger problem than brown Muslims, who in the film, are called "orthodox Muslims." Given this deeply rooted marriage of Islam and black protest, Edward Curtis argues that "The Black Muslim Scare of the 1960s was the pinnacle of pre-9/11 fears about the Muslim threat to the American nation-state" (Curtis 2013:98). Some interpret the flourishing of Islam in black America as evidence of Islam becoming a truly "American religion," or that it has always

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been an American religion since it can be traced back to the earliest African slaves (see Grewal 2013). The distinctly Muslim character of the mid-twentieth century black power movement challenged the popular idea that Muslims are only Arab and nonblack, but the movement did not do away with the idea completely.

Islam flourished and "indigenized" in black America (Jackson 2005), but there is no such history of Islam becoming as well established among white Americans. However, C. Eric Lincoln mentions whites briefly in his foundational work on black Muslims. He writes that there have been "small enclaves of European Muslims in America for many decades [and] their presence has been characterized by clannishness and quietism, not by proselytism or public postures" (1984:157). A handful of white American Muslims are peppered through US history texts. The first recorded white American convert, known as "Reverend Norman," went to Turkey to do Methodist missionary work and returned a Muslim in 1875, now to do Islamic missionary work in the US (Abd-Allah 2006). Muhammad Alexander Russell Webb, who converted in 1888, is the most prominent of early white converts since he propagated Islam at the First World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 (Abd-Allah 2006). Trained as a journalist, he served as American consul to the Philippines. He studied "Eastern religions," beginning with Buddhism, but converted to Islam through study and correspondence with Muslims in India. Webb began several study circles and an Islamic organization, all short lived. As Patrick Bowen argues, early white conversion to Islam is directly connected to the study of Eastern religions through the "occult revival" beginning in the mid-1870s, in which there was a proliferation of organizations dedicated to the practice and study of "esoteric and non-Christian religious teachings" (Bowen 2015:17).

Most estimates today suggest that roughly one-third of Muslims in the US are black (Pew Research Center 2007, Gallup Center for Muslim Studies 2009). The most recent estimate of Muslims in the US holds that there are 3.3 million total, or 1% of the US population (Muhammad 2016). Estimates of the number of white American Muslims today, however, are undermined due to the challenges of defining whiteness.[4] For example, Arabs have been considered legally white on census documents since 1944.[5] Since the vast majority of white American Muslims today are converts, estimates of converts can be a possible way to estimate the relative size of the white Muslim population. According to Pew Research Center, 23% of Muslims in the US are converts. Of US converts, 60% are African American, and 77% were previously Christian (Pew Research Center 2007). Given these numbers, we can roughly estimate that white Muslims are less than 40% of the total non-African American convert population, which would make them less than 9% (303,600) of Muslims in the US, which is still a very high estimate. These numbers illuminate how white Muslims are overrepresented in leadership and spokesperson positions of national Muslim organizations (Dickson 2010).

Research on white Muslims emphasizes conversion narratives, spirituality, transition, and experiences in a new identity (Anway 1996; Franks 2000; Galonnier 2015; Hermansen 1999). Few studies examine whiteness directly (Galonnier 2015; Jackson 2005; Moosavi 2014; Tourage 2012). Studies that do argue that whiteness is commodified as a fetish in Muslim communities

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[4] According to the Pew Research Group, 26% of Muslims in the US are black, 38% white, 20% Asian, 16% other or mixed race (Pew Research Group 2007). Another survey shows that 35% of Muslims in the US are black, 28% white, 18% Asian, 18% other, and 1% Hispanic (Gallup Center for Muslim Studies 2009). These numbers are some of the few available and still tell us little. The largest sub-groups of US Muslims are African Americans, South Asians, and Arabs. South Asians and Arabs may be divided between black, white, Asian and other in the categories that Pew and Gallup used, along with whites and African Americans. For the purposes of this study, these numbers are not particularly insightful.

[5] Starting in 2020, a new racial category will be on the census for the Middle East and North Africa.

where those with roots in former European colonies have internalized white supremacy and thus value white (male) converts as validating Islamic beliefs, and devalue nonwhite converts, especially African Americans, who cannot serve this validation purpose (Jackson 2005; Tourage 2012). Some researchers argue that white Muslims lose aspects of their whiteness because they are Muslim; Leon Moosavi (2014) argues they are "re-racialized" as "not-quite-white" or as "nonwhite" and Juliette Galonnier (2015) argues that white Muslims are "non-normative whites." This loss of whiteness occurs because white Muslims, like Muslims in general, are assumed to be foreign and thus nonwhite and non-American. Physical presentation greatly facilitates these associations, particularly for women, as hijab is a "particularly efficient factor of racialization" as foreign (Galonnier 2015:15). In all research on white Muslims, findings show a dissonance between whiteness and being Muslim. In an ethnography of white Muslims in the US, Galonnier argues that the dissonance is resolved by a shift in their racial status away from whiteness (2015). In literature on Muslims, black and white Muslims are typically studied in isolation or each relative to Arab and South Asian Muslims (Chan-Malik 2011; Karim 2008). Few existing studies compare black and white Muslims in the US, but they focus on reasons for conversion to Islam, the Muslim racialization perspective, and race relations (Jackson 2005; Maslim and Bjorck 2009; Moosavi 2014). This is notable because studies of race in the US otherwise consistently study blacks and whites, and the US racial structure is built on these groups, which would suggest that it is important to study them together.

Conclusion: Contributions and Roadmap of Dissertation

In this chapter, I have reviewed research on the historical relationship between race and religion, the black-white binary, and the racialization of Muslims, and offered background on black and white Muslims. I have argued that these literatures complement one another. I began

with a review of the literature on the historical concepts of religion and race, and discussed the absence of this history from empirical research on religion and race today. I anchor my definitions of race and religion in this historical context and argue that most empirical scholarship today does not anchor its definitions of these concepts in this context. As a result of the absence of this context from empirical scholarship in these areas today, there is a gap: scholars assume that race and religion are empirically separate concepts. This assumed empirical separation may skew findings since there is reason to believe that race and religion are actually not easily separable.

Second, I offered definitions of whiteness and blackness used in this study and reviewed literature on the black-white binary, specifically on three different approaches to the binary. My view is that there is some usefulness in all three approaches, but they all miss how religion has shaped the binary. Religion has not been a major contention in this literature on the binary, except for in a related body of work on the racialization of Muslims, in which most scholars argue that we must go "beyond black and white" to understand how race figures into Muslims' experiences. In contrast, I argue that it is valuable to analyze Muslims' position relative to the black-white binary because the binary structures the context into which Muslims are racialized. Therefore, there is a gap in our knowledge of how religion is part of blackness, whiteness, and the binary. I argue an analysis of Muslims can help fill this gap. The third section reviewed research on the racialization of Muslims in the US. I outlined the strengths and weaknesses of this literature: I showed that it has made a strong case that being Muslim is imbued with meanings of foreignness and brownness, but that a weakness of this literature is that it has reached this conclusion based on the study of Arab and South Asian Muslims, which may limit the scope of the racial meanings of foreignness and brownness. I argue for a study that includes

black and white Muslims to refine our understanding of what racial meanings are applied to Muslims, and to better understand how their racial positioning takes place in a context where blackness and whiteness still constitute the two poles of the US racial hierarchy.

In the fourth and final section, I also offered background on black and white Muslims. Analytically, this brief history of black and white Muslims in the US shows why it is important to study them to understand the racial positioning of Muslims in the US and what Muslims' positioning means for the racial structure. Specifically, black Muslims' experiences and history show how they have been an influential minority: black Muslims have played a major role in movements pushing black power and civil rights, they have shaped the development of black consciousness, and prisoners' rights struggles, and have been key players in developing hip hop culture, which is now a worldwide phenomenon and industry (Alim 2006; Daulatzai 2012; Jackson 2005; Khabeer 2016; Moore 1995). The reach of the influence of black Muslims suggests that studying them to understand race and religion means that analysis may engage and have implications for these areas (black power, civil rights, hip hop, etc.) which are different from the areas that an analysis of South Asian and Arab Muslims allow us to analyze (most commonly, immigration and citizenship). However, by including all of these groups in a case study, this dissertation engages all of these areas. While black Muslims are numerically small in the grand scheme of things, they have been influential. Black and white Muslims also offer significant analytical purchase for the study of Muslim positioning relative to the black-white binary. It becomes perhaps misleadingly easier to say that racial and religious categories are mapped onto one another when studying groups like Arab and South Asian Muslims whose race and religion are commonly conflated in our post-9/11 moment. White and black Muslims, on the other hand, are not the dominant image of a Muslim, so we may at least test the possibility that

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race and religion are separable. *Religiously*, as black and white *Muslims*, post-9/11 anti-Muslimness impacts them. *Racially*, they are members of groups that are central racial positions in the historically black/white US racial order. They are most often associated with Christianity and/or secularism (Carter 2008; Kahn and Lloyd 2016; Tranby and Hartmann 2008), but very little is known about what their Muslim religious identity means for them racially as whites and African Americans or what their position can tell us about what being Muslim means relative to the black-white racial order.

In this dissertation, I show that the black-white binary is still relevant, and there is still more to learn. I also show how religion helps construct the binary and its boundaries. This research offers empirical insight into the relationship between race and religion, illustrating how they are entangled and help shape one another even when they are named as separate. Most race theory works from the perspective that religion is no longer fundamental to producing race as a form of difference and thus at times religion is seen as epiphenomenal to race today. However, the analysis offered here on the relationship between race and religion as mapped onto one another challenges this perspective and has implications for a broad swath of race scholarship. The study of structural racism, for example, requires an understanding of the working categories, which include at least black and white. It is argued that the US is moving toward a tri-racial system like Latin America in which there are three racial positions: whites, honorary whites, and collective blacks (Bonilla-Silva 2004). In line with the tri-racial thesis, I argue that blackness and whiteness remain critical poles of this new arrangement, but add that religion will continue to play a role in organizing the structure in ways that the thesis does not yet factor in. Whether in a bi- or tri-racial system, there remains a major gap in our knowledge of the maintenance of structural racism due to underestimating the role of religion in race-making in the US.

<u>Outline of the Dissertation</u>

Following the introduction and review of relevant literatures in this chapter, the second chapter outlines the research methods, including data collection and analysis. It also offers a description of the West City metropolitan area and its Muslim communities. Chapter 3 begins with an examination of the everyday dissonance that black and white Muslims experience as a result of their identities and physical presentation in majority non-Muslim spaces (e.g. on the street, grocery stores, etc.) as well as in Muslim spaces. I discuss how they negotiate belonging in Muslim communities. Through a deep dive into what it means to them to be black and white as Muslims, I argue that being Muslim as blacks and whites involves a rejection of whiteness, and that the nature and implications of this rejection differs for blacks and whites.

Chapter 4 examines how Arab and South Asian Muslims are racially/religiously positioned. I find that they are mostly positioned as brown and that they are sometimes positioned as white. I present data on how these complex and seemingly contradictory positions are a result of Arab and South Asians' own efforts and also external attribution, and I argue that Arab and South Asian Muslims experience all types of whiteness (i.e. economic, phenotypic, affective) but not nationalist whiteness (i.e. being American).

In Chapter 5, I analyze how gender appears in the lives of black and white Muslim women. I look at how they negotiate Orientalist stereotypes of Muslim women in complex ways. Many will reject stereotypes while also being attracted to a patriarchal read of Islam. I argue that their perspectives and behaviors in terms of gender and sexuality reveal where the racial/religious lines lie between blackness, whiteness, and Muslimness.

Chapter 6 considers how political activists and organizers in West City bring blackness and Muslimness together in their work. I outline two major ways that political activists and organizers do this. One way is inspired by the black radical tradition, and the other way centers Islamophobia. Through an analysis of participants' responses and engagement with the "Chapel Hill Shootings" and the Black Lives Matter movement, I show how these two ways of bringing blackness and Muslimness interact with one another. And lastly, in the concluding chapter, I summarize my findings, discuss contributions, and offer directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODS AND DESCRIPTION OF FIELD SITE

Ethnography allows researchers to examine the complexities of lived experiences. Meaning making is a central concern of ethnography, which shifts the construction of meaning to the center of analysis. The central concern of my dissertation is meaning making; specifically, I analyze the meanings that situate blackness, whiteness, and Muslimness relative to one another. This study is based on participant observation and in-depth, semi-structured interviews in various Muslim communities in the West City metropolitan area on the US west coast over 12 months (August 2014-2015). The goal of interviews was to understand the relationship between Muslims' racial positioning and the black-white binary. In this chapter, I offer background on the West City metropolitan area, recruitment of participants, data collection including participant observation and in-depth interviews, data analysis, and positionality.

Research Site

My research is situated in West City. I selected West City because it is a racially diverse city and because there are not as many studies of race and Muslims on the west coast as there are of other geographic regions in the US. This is partially for good reason: there is a lot of Muslim American history on the eastern half of the US. For example, the Moorish Science Temple began in Newark, New Jersey in 1913, and the Nation of Islam (NOI) built its first mosque, Temple No. 1, in Detroit. Though the NOI expanded to the west coast, it boomed in cities like Chicago (Temple No. 2), Philadelphia, and New York. Some west coast branches of the NOI emerged later. Perhaps for this reason, there are more studies of African American Muslims in general on the eastern half of the US (Abdullah 2010; Karim 2008; Khabeer 2016). The Islamic Society of

North America (ISNA) and the largely Arab and South Asian Muslim communities attached to it are the subject of a literature that was popular in the 1990s and early 2000s on Muslims and integration into the US, and ISNA began in the midwest (Indiana). Though there is a lot of east coast Muslim history that justifies the significant amount of research there, the conclusions drawn about Muslims and race in the US based on this may not apply to the west coast, which is one of the reasons I chose the area.

The Muslim communities in West City are arranged in what one participant called "clusters" or rough networks of racial groups. Networks consist of mosques, Muslim organizations, and social groups. There are three major clusters: a sizeable, largely affluent South Asian cluster, an Arab cluster, and an African American cluster. The South Asian cluster is comprised by mostly suburban families and young urban professionals who live in a city I call Stone Heights and another city I call North Hill, respectively. The Arab cluster is mostly working or lower middle class. Arabs are more often in community with African and African American Muslims than those in the South Asian cluster. The Arab cluster has pockets in Stone Heights and a city I call Waterville. The African American cluster is also largely working or lower middle class. African Americans have been in the area longer than the other clusters, specifically in Waterville. Clusters are not racially/ethnically homogenous, but refer to the dominant group, since most Muslim spaces in the field were multiracial with particular racial/ethnic groups in positions of power. White Muslims are interspersed throughout the African American, South Asian, and Arab clusters.

Clusters are shaped by local context. The West City metropolitan area has a population of over seven million people and is made up of a number of cities in which I spent most of my time:

Waterville, North Hill, and Stone Heights.[6] In the metropolitan area as a whole, about fifty

percent of residents are white and less than ten percent are black, according to the 2010 US

Census. I spent most of my time in Waterville, which is home to most of the African American

Muslim cluster. In Waterville, over one-third of residents are white and less than one-third are

black. Waterville has a smaller proportion of whites compared to the national numbers. In

Waterville, there is also a significant number of people who, on the last Census, marked more

than one racial category; there are twice as many multi-racial people in Waterville compared to

the national proportion.

Twenty percent of residents in Waterville are in poverty, and the median household income

in 2015 was less than $55,000. In Stone Heights, the median household income in 2015 was over

$80,000. Significant yet contrasting features of the metropolitan area are a booming technology

sector and a long history of black radical politics. In recent decades, deindustrialization has

produced high unemployment for the black population in the area, which is also increasingly

displaced by gentrification connected to the demands of the technology industry.

Recruitment and Access

Following Jeffrey C. Johnson (1990), participants were chosen using two strategies which

are not mutually exclusive: an a priori, theory-driven framework and an emergent, or data-driven

framework. To produce a sample that allows for both depth and comparison, interviewees were

recruited based on their ability to strengthen understandings of theoretical relationships between

race and religion. Snowball sampling techniques allowed me to reach participants, and the

maximum variation sampling method allowed me to strengthen the theoretical approach to data

collection. John Lofland and colleagues (2006) describe maximum variation sampling as:

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[6] All are pseudonyms.

> a Darwinesque strategy in which the aim is to discover the diversity or range of the phenomena of interest, [and that also] provides a useful antidote to error and bias that emanate from singular research roles or role relationships by pushing the researcher to consider ways of looking beyond the most convenient contexts or those to which his role grants him primary access (2006:93).

In order to maximize diversity among respondents, recruitment for the study began with several mosques that differed from one another based on the primary race/ethnicity of attendees and location. Muslim community centers and non-profit organizations with different interests (e.g., convert education and support, soup kitchen, LGBT rights, Islamic school, political awareness) were also recruitment sites. This resulted in a sample with maximum variation on key characteristics such as class, political beliefs, sexual and gender identity, and degree of religiosity.

Data collection began with a focus on Sunni Muslims because they constitute the majority sect of Muslims in the US. As data collection progressed, Shi'a and NOI respondents were included to maximize diversity but also, in the case of the Nation of Islam, because they are a key part of how Islam developed in black America and are thus important for understanding blackness. Participant observation of Shi'a and Nation of Islam social spaces, along with mixed spaces with these groups represented, adds another layer of understanding to interviews I conducted with eight Shi'a and NOI members.

I have several key participants and starting points for snowball sampling in order to diversify the sample. The starting points for snowball sampling varied by local region, race, sect, gender, degree of religiosity, religious beliefs, sexuality, and class.[7] This strategy has allowed for the selection of "informants who are themselves positioned differently within the group or

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[7] Some of these starting points for snowball sampling were main participants, and some led to main participants.

setting studied, and who might therefore provide access to different kinds of information"

(Lofland 2006:93). Key participants were people who are familiar with the Muslim communities

in the area. They are differently positioned within these communities, and some participate in

multiple mosque-based communities and organizations. I diversified who the key participants

were as much as possible. By interviewing people of different racial/ethnic groups in Muslim

communities, I can unpack race, religion and social position within Muslim communities by

making comparisons. This ultimately yields a more robust understanding of racial positioning.

Further, a maximum variation approach yields "access to different kinds of information" based

on characteristics such as class, sexuality, religiosity, and beliefs.

To facilitate my entry into the community, I joined seven mosque and community

organization listservs and fourteen Facebook groups to stay informed of events and schedules.

As I learned about more mosques, organizations, and Muslim groups over the course of

fieldwork, I added myself to their lists. Initially, this was my primary means of learning about

community events. I also contacted Muslim friends in the area to solicit their help finding

interviewees. This strategy took several months to be fruitful. Over the next few months, friends

invited me to spend time with them and their Muslim friends or made introductions via e-mail or

Facebook. Some of these friends no longer live in the area but good character references on my

behalf made a big difference. I asked their permission if I could say that I know them or that they

referred me, and it became the difference between getting some interviews and not getting them

at all.

I employed a different strategy to recruit white and black Muslims. I began looking for

white Muslims early on in fieldwork since I anticipated they might be challenging in a few ways.

I expected that they would be the most difficult to find, or perhaps the least likely to want to

speak with me, which could be remedied with extra time to build rapport. They also are less concentrated than other racial/ethnic groups within Muslim communities – there are no white-Muslim-majority institutions, mosques, or areas that I could go to in order to find many possible people to interview – so I had to recruit them individually. In some ways, looking for white Muslims was both enlightening and confusing as phenotype is a durable but often unreliable predictor of racial identity. The process of recruiting white Muslims relied on something resembling racial profiling. Like all racial profiling, my calculations were made based on features that are associated with a particular group. Also like racial profiling, I sometimes missed the mark, as the following moment demonstrates.

One afternoon at Friday prayer, the mosque was too full for me to be selective about my seat and attempt to sit next to individuals I specifically wanted to speak with. At the end of prayer, however, I saw a woman standing in the hallway next to the rows of shoes taken off before people entered the prayer room. She was light skinned and based on her features, I guessed that she might be white or Arab. She was waiting for someone to come out of the prayer room, it seemed. I scrambled out of the prayer room as though in a hurry to find my shoes and while looking for them, began talking with her. She responded with stiff and monosyllabic answers to my small talk questions. I casually observed aloud to her that there seem to be a lot of interracial couples at this mosque. I asked her what she thought about that. "Don't ask me," she said, waving her hand dismissively and smiling slightly. "I'm a hater." Her smile widened. I was intrigued. "I'm not the biggest fan of interracial marriages," she said in an even monotone. I said that I have been called a hater before as well and would love to hear more of her perspective, but she shook her head and continued smiling. Knowing that neither rapport nor an interview would be achieved here, I figured that I might as well continue to ask her questions as long as she

would engage me. I asked her how she identifies racially or ethnically. "I identify as black," she said, then explained that she is multi-racial, and that her parents are also multi-racial, but that she chooses to identify as black because she identifies with the struggles of black people politically. I then learned a lesson about West City that I would see repeatedly: looks can be deceiving, many people are multiracial, and multiracial people are not typically anxious to pass for white even when they can.

Participant Observation and In Depth Interviews

Participant observation occurred in a variety of spaces. On average, I spent five out of seven days each week at mosques, participants' homes, places of employment and education, and various public spaces (discussion of participant selection follows below). I followed participants anywhere that they invited me or agreed to accompany me. I attended *jumah* (Friday prayer) and other events at mosques, along with private social gatherings at participants' homes. I also attended regular events hosted by Muslim community organizations including "open mic" nights, hiking trips, and volunteering at food pantries.

My first day in a Muslim space in West City was my first day at Mustafa Masjid in Waterville. It is a mosque (another word for masjid) that is a major hub in the African American cluster, and a key site in this research. It is majority African American and Sunni, and most white participants in this study are connected to Mustafa Masjid in some way. The masjid has a sparse, clean prayer room in a building that was once a store front church. It does not have a parking lot but street parking is not very hard to find. In the masjid, fans above would circulate air on stuffy Friday afternoons. Members joke about the creepy-crawly horrors that may be found in the hallway leading to the bathrooms. Donations are commonly solicited and given when individuals "take the *shahadah*" (recite the testament of faith to become Muslim) and when families need

funds for funeral costs, for example. Calls for donations are accompanied by an acknowledgement that theirs is a community that is both poor and generous. Members are mostly converts and the adult children of converts. The congregation is mostly African American, with the remainder being white, Latino, and multiracial. Many are former Nation of Islam and/or Black Panther Party members, among others who are also further left on the political spectrum. Members represent a range of ages.

One of the first things that struck me about Mustafa Masjid was the racial breakdown. The men's section of the one room mosque was overall darker skinned, and the women's section lighter skinned. It was striking. Many of the lighter skinned women were white or multiracial (black and white) and married to black men. There were also some African immigrants and second generation Americans. All the whites there were converts. There are many African American converts and "born Muslims." No white-white couples regularly attend this space, and I observed or heard of only three such couples during my time in the field. All married white Muslims in this mosque were thus married to nonwhites, and in the case of this mosque, typically African Americans. At a micro-racial level, it is an interesting organization of black and white people in which Friday, the Muslim equivalent of Christianity's Sunday, is not quite the most segregated day of the week. Muslims are an incredibly multiracial religious group in the US, but still have significant racial segregation. Again in the context of Mustafa Masjid, I observed and heard participants describe greater affinity *across* the color-line - between black and white Muslims – than *along* the color-line – between black, Arab and South Asian Muslims as people of color.

Many members of Mustafa Masjid also see Imam Warith Deen Muhammad as an important leader for them. He was the son of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad that brought a

significant portion of Nation of Islam members into the Sunni sect of Islam in the years after

Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975. Black Sunni mosques and communities then popped up in

major cities around the country. Colloquially they are often referred to as "the Warith Deen

Community," so I call the mosque Warith Deen Community Mosque (WDCM). Mustafa Masjid

is also Sunni, and many of its members shuffle between Mustafa Masjid and WDCM, which is

also in Waterville. At WDCM, women who ordinarily do not wear hijabs in everyday life do not

wear a hijab in the mosque unless they are praying, whereas in all other mosques in the area,

women wear a hijab in all parts of the mosque and even if they are not actively praying. The

regular attendees at WDCM are mostly in their fifties and older. Friday prayers occur in a

spacious hall in which the women pray behind the men, and most other days are spent in a dining

room close to the mosque's kitchen. WDCM ran a full time school for many years, and the meals

they cooked for the students were one of the highlights that multiple graduates of the school

remembered fondly.

The Islamic Center of Stone Heights (ICSH) is a suburban mosque in Stone Heights. Most

of the attendees are South Asian and Arab. Its parking lot looks like it belongs to a shopping

mall. My first day there, I saw many cars, and many people walking both to and from their cars.

Friday prayer occurs in two shifts here because of the number of attendees, and I arrived as the

first shift was ending and people arrived for the second. I asked an Arab woman where the

women's entrance is and she said she would walk with me. She was looking for her husband,

who prayed in the first shift of Friday prayer and may want to stay for the second.

ICSH is a big mosque that takes up as much space as a large city block with a dome and

minarets that draw the gaze upward. After spending most of my time in Waterville, the contrast

between the former-church-turned-mosque or store-front mosque model in Waterville and this

type of building was jarring. This building was built from the ground up with the intention of making it a mosque, but in Waterville, most mosques are the result of purchasing and renting buildings that were already standing to turn them into a mosque. When I first walked in, I saw women selling hijabs, shawls, and abayas (long dresses). I saw some dark skinned women who were working at the booths who I assumed may be African immigrants based on the prints, colors, and styles of their clothing. Otherwise, the women were largely South Asian and Arab.

Marble floors shine, reflecting high ceilings, and people sit on benches built into the wall, chatting in the hallways. This is one of the largest mosques I have ever seen in the US. The mosque offers a full-time school, shopping, a restaurant, and a sprawling prayer hall. It is funded by local members who work in the medical and technology industries. Dedicated institution builders in the community will work hard to start and build a wide range of Muslim-led initiatives. A common complaint in this community is that Muslim institutions are being managed poorly, and that too many fundraising dinners for local Muslim organizations lead to "donor fatigue."

The men and women prayed in two separate rooms: the men in the room in front of the women with a window in between that allows the women to see into the men's room. The men sit with their back to the window. The women's prayer hall had high ceilings and a neutral colored, striped carpet delineating rows where people stand for prayer. There were three TVs in the women's section showing an empty seat that the *khateeb* (man giving the sermon and leading prayer) would momentarily inhabit. After prayer – as I got lost looking for the restaurant within the mosque - I poked my head into the men's prayer hall and saw that it was similar in size, type of carpet, and ceiling height.

These mosques are hubs for the community, and still they are not the only major Muslim organizations in the area. A range of convert support groups and non-profits were also social hubs for the local Muslim communities that served as important sites for this research.

In-depth interviews complemented participant observation. In interviews, I asked participants questions about their daily life and interactions, as well as questions about experiences with race, gender, class, ethnicity, and culture.[8] I had social interactions with most interviewees prior to setting up interviews, which helped build rapport during the data collection process. In addition to an in-depth account of individuals' experiences, interviews provided an opportunity for me to ask participants for their own commentary on what we experienced together in social spaces. For example, after attending an event at the mosque and noting who was there, I would ask those I saw there what they thought of the event when possible.

Interviews often extended over two sessions. Initial interviews focused on background information including their childhood, education, religious life at home, social life and networks, and socio-economic status. The questions asked in the second session focused on experiences in Muslim communities: participants' Muslim social networks, what is important to them in Islam, what it means in their everyday lives, their experiences as members of their racial group, and their experiences of discrimination based on any aspect of their identity. Both sets of questions were asked in one sitting if the participant was in a hurry or if they offered short answers to each question.

Table 1 shows the racial/ethnic groups represented by the 68 Muslim interviewees in this study. The racial/ethnic identities listed below were determined based on interviews and a

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[8] See Appendix B for the interview guide.

demographic sheet respondents were asked to fill out.[9] In interviews, I asked respondents open-ended question about the racial/ethnic identities they wrote on the sheet, such as "Can you tell me more about how you identify racially or ethnically?" Their responses included US racial labels including black, white, and Latino; and they also included ethnic group labels such as Arab, South Asian, and Iranian. In some cases, they included a long list of European ethnicities. Several participants were white but felt uncomfortable identifying that way as I asked more and more questions about race in their interview. One white man, for example, wrote "purple people eater" as his race on his demographic questionnaire, but from his interview I learned that he is white so he is listed as white. Of the 14 black participants, all but two are African American: one is an Afro-Caribbean immigrant, and one is the child of African immigrants.

Table 1: Interviewee Race/Gender Demographics

	Women	Men	Trans	Total
Arab	4	3	0	7
Black	7	7	0	14
South Asian (Indian, Pakistani)	7	8	0	15
White	7	7	0	14
Latino	3	4	0	7
Multi-racial	3	3	1	7
East Asian	2	0	0	2
Iranian	1	0	0	1
Afghan	0	1	0	1
Total	34	33	1	68

Respondents represent various socioeconomic status positions: 31% of respondents identified as working class, lower class, or lower-middle class, and 26% identified as middle class. The remainder did not respond to that question on the demographic sheet. Those who identified as working, lower, or lower-middle class had an income range of $12,000-$51,000.

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[9] See Appendix A for the demographic questionnaire that all interviewees completed.

Those who identified as middle class had a very wide income range of $7,000-$250,000 and an average income of about $84,000. Forty-three percent of those who identify as middle class had an income over $100,000. Many participants chose to not report their income, but interviews helped triangulate data to understand participant's class position. The age range is 22-70. Four participants identified as queer or LGBT.

In terms of religious beliefs and practices, most participants belong to the largest sect of Islam, Sunnism. Seven are Shi'a, which is another sect, and one participant is a member of the Nation of Islam.[10] Most black and white participants attended more than one of three Sunni-majority mosques or Muslim community organizations with a significant convert population. The names of all participants, organizations, and mosques in this dissertation are pseudonyms. Further, following ethnographic best practices to preserve the anonymity of respondents, I have created composite stories for some individuals by intentionally mixing details (Chetkovich 1997). This ensures that their anonymity is preserved while also allowing analysis of important data.

Conversion is an important part of demographics in Muslim communities. Six of the black participants converted as adults; the remaining eight were raised Muslim. All white participants converted as adults and either identify as white or are US born. Forty-three percent of all participants are converts. Participants provided many reasons why they converted. Their answers are related to different aspects of their lives and are not based on Islamic beliefs and practices alone. Their reasons included a desire for transcending something holding them back (e.g. drug use), a rejection of political forces that have shaped their lives (e.g. white supremacy),

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[10] The snowball sampling process in the Nation of Islam began later than it did in the Sunni and Shi'a Muslim communities since I began with a focus on a black Sunni community and worked to build contacts there. By the time my one contact at the Nation turned into three contacts, I ran out of time in the field to conduct interviews with the other two and those that they might have been able to refer me to.

seeking a space for community, a desire for a particular type of family set up they felt that Islam could offer them, and more. This study, however, is less concerned with why people convert and more about how respondents make sense of their conversion, and what it means for race and religion.

Converts' point of entry into Islam is a significant contextual detail. Converts often speak of the community or person they "came [to Islam] through." It shapes which Muslim community they transition into, which social and religious values they adopt, and their initial impressions of Islam and Muslims. It is important to note because it shapes what they come to hold as priorities within their own religious practices as well as political views and cultural practices. Because African American participants consist of both converts and "born Muslims," as respondents say, a question may arise about the role of conversion or non-conversion in their experiences of their racial/religious positioning. The difference is not always neat. Aside from an East African second generation participant, the remainder who are raised Muslim are raised by Muslims who are converts. At times, African American Muslims who are raised Muslim still talk about "convert communities" and include themselves in that designation, showing how conversion is not only an individual level variable, but something that shapes and is associated (racially and otherwise) with groups and communities.

Data Analysis

My analysis is based on interviews and observations of the mosques and Muslim organizations in which participants are involved and participants' social circles. I compared participants' interviews to one another, within and across racial/ethnic lines. Participants addressed the relationship between their race and religion directly at times but also indirectly at other times. For example, they discussed issues that they do not name as racial but my observations show they are particular to their racial group.

A key strength of ethnographic research is the ability to compare what people say to what they do. During data analysis, I compared participants' accounts to my observations to construct a comprehensive picture of how race matters for black and white Muslims. Following Linda Burton and colleagues' (2009) process of "structured discovery," data analysis proceeded along several stages. Analysis always began with transcripts on the within-case level: that is, with individual participants. Beginning intra-case allows the ethnographer to develop a comprehensive understanding of the individual's experiences. Once the within-case analysis was complete, the analysis proceeded to a within-group examination by race (e.g., reading all transcripts and notes on white Muslims, then all transcripts and notes on black Muslims). Similarities between the within-case analysis and the between-case analysis result in more robust findings than from the within-case examination alone. The final phase of the analysis involved cross-group analysis examining similarities and differences between various groups (e.g., between black and white Muslims).

To categorize data, I developed an "open coding" schema focusing on the key analytic variables of blackness, whiteness, brownness, and Muslimness to incorporate aspects of meaning-making that respondents indicate are important but cannot be derived from extant research (Charmaz 2006). The second phase of coding involved axial coding (Strauss 1987) which allowed me to discern the key relationships between variables. The final phase involved selective coding, during which I chose the main "storyline" (Charmaz 2006) of the analysis.

Key themes of interest for data analysis include boundary making based on factors such as class, gender, phenotype and physical presentation, education, language, citizenship status, racial and political attitudes, religious beliefs and practices, moral approval and disapproval, and experiences with institutions (e.g. schools, housing, social services, immigration, police, and

airports). I also coded analyses based on gender as research shows that people experience

gendered Islamophobia (Hammer 2013; Rana 2011; Selod 2014). Because class and race

influence one another (Pattillo-McCoy 1999; Roediger 1999; Wray 2006), I also examine class

as a key point of analysis; it is particularly significant for understanding racial dynamics in West

City where gentrification is one of the most salient everyday issues.

Reflexivity, Distance, and Immersion

Lofland et al (2006) recommend that researchers strike a balance between distance from

and immersion in conducting fieldwork rather than situating themselves entirely as outsiders or

insiders. They have found that most researchers "experience ongoing tension" between the two

positions and further believe such tension can be used as an indicator that one is "getting it right

from a social scientific standpoint" (Lofland et al 2006:63). Specifically, without this tension,

there could be extreme distance or extreme surrender – each of which are associated with

analytical biases. This suggests that there are benefits and drawbacks to each position, and that

researchers are not necessarily one or the other entirely.

While distance and immersion are to some extent a strategic choice that the researcher can

make, there is also the matter of how the researchers present themselves in the field and how

they are interpreted. I presented myself as both an insider and outsider. I am an insider in the

sense that, like my participants, I also identify as Muslim and participate in prayers and other

rituals (e.g., fasting in Ramadan) with them as that is something that I would do even if I were

not an ethnographer. One benefit of this position is that my presence in Muslims spaces may

appear natural and unquestioned, and comfortable assumptions may be made about why I am

interested in this research area to begin with. Another benefit is that some people are only willing

to talk to me because we have mutual friends and a shared trusted network. At times, people are

willing to participate in the study simply because we know the same people, who I would likely not know if I was not an "insider" in some fashion. The perception of insider or outsider researcher status appears in other ways. For example, moments after sitting down to begin an interview, a key participant who is African American asked if I wanted "the official story" that he tells "white liberals," or "the real story." I asked for both, and as a result of my perceived insider status, collected rich data on the participant's views on research, race, power, and knowledge construction.

There are a number of drawbacks to my position. One is that people may assume that I already "know the drill" and thus not feel the need to explain things that they see as the norm, which meant that I needed to be vigilant about asking certain questions about things that it may be assumed that I simply know. Another drawback is that my asking about these things may be perceived as strange or threatening as a result of the high levels of mistrust in Muslim communities. Seven people in the field openly suggested that I was an FBI informant either in conversations with me in which they seriously explained their distrust or through jokes. Although I am an insider in some ways, I am an outsider because I am not from West City and thus not part of the Muslim communities there. A benefit of this is that my lack of familiarity with their communities' dynamics allowed me to convincingly play the role of "the student" for whom even the seemingly basic needs to be spelled out. This made it easier for participants to explain to me what they consider to be normal or routine in their communities.

CHAPTER 3: EVERYDAY DISSONANCE BETWEEN BLACK/WHITE AND MUSLIM

"So no matter how I felt about my identity, Muslim or not, I've been treated like a black dude. And until I have this conversation of 'well actually, before you say this about those people*, you should know sometimes they could be sitting around you and you wouldn't even know it.'…I would say things in Arabic…[and the response would be] "Oh, how'd you learn that?" because [I'm] not always what you were looking for."*

-Nadeer, 35, African American Muslim man

Nadeer, like almost all African American Muslim participants in this study, describes a mismatch between his religious self-identity and how he is viewed by others. . Unlike some African American Muslims who are frustrated by this, Nadeer plays with this. He explains that he sometimes enjoys the challenge and the mystery and the shock and discomfort on the faces of non-Muslims who learn that he is a Muslim after assuming that he is not. Nadeer says that it is his race that leads to the assumption that he is not a Muslim, along with the fact that he does not have other visual cues that signal being Muslim like prayer beads, certain types of caps, and other types of clothing. Though Nadeer does not display those markers, he does have a beard. Arab, South Asian, and Latino men who otherwise look like Nadeer – no "Muslim garb," no prayer beads, no caps, but have a beard – have been profiled as Muslim, whether they are Muslim or not. When asked if he thinks that his beard signals to people that he is Muslim, Nadeer responds, "I don't know that anybody looks at me and sees 'Muslim,' which I think is just an advantage. The profiling, et cetera, I just don't get. I'm just a black dude with a beard. Until they learn more and they say, 'oh that's why, I knew there was something,' but no." Nadeer suggests that people view him as "different" in some way but do not attribute it to him being Muslim. The assumption that one is not Muslim *because* one is black is a consistent theme

in other black Muslims' accounts. This positions blackness and Muslimness as separate. It also suggests that race influences religious attribution. This chapter examines everyday dissonance that black and white Muslims experience and argues that, for these participants, being Muslim involves a rejection of whiteness.

This chapter helps to fill gaps in two literatures that complement one another. Literature on the racialization of Muslims has not engaged blackness to try to understand how Muslims are racialized. The literature argues that Muslims are positioned as foreign to what it means to be American (Elver 2012; Selod 2014; Volpp 2002). It shows that religion is a factor in race-making today and that there is an association between being Muslim and being brown. However, this finding is based on the study of Arab and South Asian Muslims. The other literature on the US racial structure has argued that the two fundamental positions in the racial structure are black and white. Some argue that the US has three racial positions, but these scholars agree that black and white are two of the three positions (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Kim 1999a). In this racial structure, blacks and whites are largely positioned based on their color, class, and other factors. Though historical precedent provides reason to believe that religion may also help position blacks and whites (Fredrickson 1981; Mills 1997), religion is largely absent as a factor in research on racial positioning. I bring these literatures together in this chapter to address their complementary gaps by examining black and white Muslims' racial/religious identity and positioning, as they have one foot (identity-wise) in each of the two literatures.

In this chapter, I examine how black and white Muslims see themselves (self-identity) and how others see them (how they are positioned). Nadeer, for example, identifies strongly as Muslim and as black, but is positioned largely as black in everyday life. In both their ascribed identity and self-identity, black and white Muslims experience dissonance because of the implicit

religious meanings of blackness and whiteness as non-Muslimness. Identity and position influence one another, but I focus on position in this chapter. And as the rest of this chapter argues, whether we call it identity or position, there is dissonance between blackness, whiteness, and Muslimness. I examine how black and white Muslims see themselves, and how others see them, and I show that in their self-identity and ascribed identity, there is dissonance. In this chapter, I unpack the dissonance and show that being black or white and Muslim generates dissonance because blackness and whiteness have implicit religious meaning that positions them as separate from Muslimness.

This chapter proceeds in four sections. First, I examine how black and white Muslims are positioned in majority non-Muslim spaces, or public space.[11] I find that they are only sometimes positioned as Muslim. They are positioned as Muslim *or* as US blacks/whites. This finding is interesting because it is one area where blacks and whites have something in common, whereas most literature is about the differences between them (Krieger 1987; Massey and Denton 1994; Oliver and Shapiro 2006; Pager 2003; Royster 2003). The second section goes into greater depth on Islam in black communities, and the third section addresses how whites deal with their whiteness in a majority nonwhite religious community. In the final sections, I argue that for both blacks and whites, being Muslim involves a rejection of aspects of whiteness. I show how both groups negotiate their belonging as black/white and Muslim in light of this rejection and argue that the fact that they even have to negotiate their belonging says something about who belongs and who does not.

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[11] I use public space to refer to spaces that are not majority Muslim, rather than using it to engage a public vs. private divide.

The Importance of Looking Muslim

Looking Muslim involves certain markers for blacks and whites. Aleem is a 40-year-old African American man. Sent to prison as a youth, he returned a Muslim two decades later after trying to change his life while in prison. Aleem's account about walking home from the mosque after *fajr*, the pre-dawn prayer, in a majority white neighborhood is revealing. He was wearing a black hoodie with the hood on. He noticed a police officer looking right at him from his car. Aleem says, "I snatched my hood off, and I had my kufi on [under it], and he pulled off. [The officer] just went on his own way. And I said phew, wow, I did not want that at four in the morning." I asked if he thought his kufi made a difference. He said, "I do. I wear my kufi everywhere…When I don't wear it, I feel uncomfortable, because in that way I do feel I will be identified as something else other than Muslim." For Aleem, his kufi signifies his new identity: "This is my identity, this is who I am, and this kufi is a part of that identity…I just wear it everywhere I go, because…we recognize each other when we see people in certain garb and we say, ok, spiritual person, religious person, or whatever." For Aleem, "looking Muslim" by wearing a kufi shifts meanings in how he is perceived, away from the meanings of blackness and toward being Muslim. This time, he was spared what is otherwise a common and defining experience for black people – being stopped by the police.

Muslim women across racial groups who wear a hijab are perhaps the most visibly Muslim. Their experiences and accounts illuminate the specific meanings attributed to whiteness, blackness, and being Muslim. Soon after Allison, a 30-year-old white Muslim, started wearing a hijab, she began to face assumptions from others that she is not from the US. Once in a public restroom as Allison was washing her hands, a white woman standing at another sink turned to her and said, "You have to wash everything, you know?" Allison was puzzled and wondered

briefly if the woman was also Muslim and instructing Allison how to do *wudu* (ritual washing before prayer) before realizing that was not the case:

> And then it slowly unfolds that she's giving me instructions on proper hand hygiene and telling me that I need to wash basically up to my elbows…this experience is just baffling to me…I'm doing a very good job of washing my hands (laughs)….and then eventually in the conversation, she says, "Where are you from?" Suddenly all of the sort of slow, deliberate language she was using starts to make sense. She thinks I'm from some foreign place where people don't wash their hands properly. I was like, "Wow, that's fascinating! There it is."

Allison did not face assumptions of foreignness prior to wearing hijab, which she wears pinned under her chin, covering her hair and neck. She says that if she did not wear hijab, "you would never dream in a million years that [she] was Muslim." Allison is perceived to be Muslim because of her hijab. With it, however, comes an assumption of foreignness that does *not* match her racial identity. She was not perceived as a white American *because* she was perceived as a Muslim, which suggests a separation – if not opposition – between whiteness and being Muslim.

Allison's 10-year-old son, who she is raising Muslim, also has some ideas about what looking white and Muslim means. When I interviewed Allison the first time, I complimented her on her hijab, a jewel tone color with paisley print. She thanked me and added, "Also this is a racial story, too." She continued:

> I bought these cowboy boots. And my family, they, on the one side, are from Oklahoma, and you know, ranchers, although my grandparents (unclear) were school teachers, and then on my dad's side they were ranchers in Montana, and engineers also…So growing up I felt like I had a sort of connection to the midwest, we would travel back there by car…Anyway, so I bought cowboy boots and they reminded me of my family. And I bought a paisley hijab to match the cowboy boots, 'cause you know how cowboys wear those paisley things? My son tells me I'm not allowed to wear a cowboy boots and a hijab at the same time. I disagree. I haven't really put it to the test though. (laughs)

Allison's son does not see cowboy boots as going together with hijab, and Allison argues that it is racial. Cowboy boots might otherwise be appropriate or unassuming on a white woman, but her son argues that they do not go with a hijab. Cowboy boots and hijabs send different racial signals, one white and one Muslim. Sara, a 40-year-old white Muslim, explicitly addresses this separation:

> I was actually just talking to [Stacy] about this…since she's black and she wears hijab, I feel like non-Muslims will not see that as strange…cause being black and wearing hijab, it's more normal, or being brown, but then if you're white and you're wearing hijab you must be really weird, you know?...It doesn't run in those cultural lines at all, you know? It's more almost acceptable to do things like wear hijab when you're black because you, you know, maybe, who knows what your past or whatever cultural stuff is, but when you're white it's like really unusual, you must just be like some crazy person, you know?

Sara's perspective was confirmed by every other white participant: to be visibly Muslim as a white person comes across as odd at best and dangerous at worst, where they can be seen as uniquely traitorous for being Muslim since they are white – a phenomenon Sherman Jackson (2005) has called "cultural apostasy." Visible Muslimness symbolizes a fall from whiteness and perhaps a challenge to it as well. As for black Muslims, there is nowhere further to fall from whiteness because blackness is already positioned as the opposite of whiteness. To be black is already far outside of whiteness and already comes with grave consequences that have been well documented in scholarly literature (Alexander 2010; DuBois 1899; Pager 2003). For Aleem, for example, being visibly Muslim elevated his status in the eyes of the police on the street away from blackness.

It is a specific foreignness that is assumed of those who are visibly Muslim via hijab or some other article of clothing like a kufi, as Valerie says. Valerie, a 33-year-old self-identified multiracial (white/Mexican) Muslim woman, says: "In public, people think I'm Arab now, but

before [becoming Muslim and wearing a hijab], they thought I was mixed. I don't think they thought I was Arab before I became Muslim." When another participant, Salimah, who is African American, is asked, "Where are you from?" those who ask her this question guess that she is African – *not* African American – as a result of her hijab when she wears it pinned under her chin. By being asked where she is from, there is an assumption that she may not be native born. It is not a question that non-Muslim African Americans are routinely asked.

Hijab styles have meanings that vary based on race. Non-Muslim black women, for example, often wrap a scarf around their heads with a bun-like twist at the nape of the neck, the top of the head, or at an angle on the top or side. Black Muslim women also often wrap their hair this way but with the intention of observing hijab. Su'ad Abdul Khabeer (2016) calls it the "hoodjab" in a compound term of 'hood and hijab. It is for political reasons that Karimah, a 30-year-old light skinned African American Muslim woman, intentionally wears her hijab as a scarf in this style. She says that she would "rather be associated with the baggage" of being black American than "the baggage" that comes with wearing a hijab pinned under her chin, which is associated with *brown* Muslims. By wrapping her scarf as non-Muslim black women do, Karimah is not attempting to hide that she is Muslim; instead, she is signaling her connection to blackness. Indeed, Karimah is proud to be a Muslim. In contrast, when Sara, who is white, wears her hijab as Karimah does, Sara jokingly says that people might think she is wearing a scarf because she has cancer due to her pale skin. The same hijab style, worn by a black and a white woman, are associated with meanings that differ based on race but share one thing: they are meanings other than being Muslim. When whiteness and American blackness are signaled, being Muslim is *not* assumed.

On the same black woman, there are differences in reception based on the type of hijab style. Salimah, a dark skinned African American woman who is 26 years old, wears her hijab in one of these two styles depending on the day and depending on how she is feeling. Fashion is important to her. I observed very different reactions to Salimah depending on her clothing. When I interviewed her, she was wearing her hijab such that the cloth covered the back of her head and was twisted into a bun on the top of her head near her hairline. Salimah and I were sitting outside a coffee shop in a particularly white liberal part of town around 9pm. A white woman with wispy gray hair walking a dog passed us slowly, lingering by our table, smiling, perhaps listening. She lingered until we looked at her, and then said to Salimah, "I love your turban. I can never get it to look right when I try to do it, it looks great."

Contrast this with an experience we had on another evening, also around 9pm, in another mostly white liberal part of town, when Salimah was wearing her hijab pinned under her chin, wrapped around her head so that her neck was covered, and the corner of the cloth came down to a point, lying at the middle of her back. She also wore an *abaya* (a long loose dress that is also long sleeved). We were eating ice cream outside, sitting in rocking chairs outside the ice cream shop. A blue pick-up truck pulled up and was waiting at an intersection right in front of us. Four white men were inside, and two were hanging out of the window looking alternately at Salimah and the traffic light. As soon as the light turned green, they yelled "towelhead" and sped away. Salimah and I laughed about how outdated their racial epithets were and how they may want to update their catalog. Two minutes later, they came back again in their truck, and this time yelled something we couldn't discern. At that point we considered that we might be unsafe and decided to leave. From my parked car, we saw them come back a third time. We took a route back to her apartment that was not on that main road to make sure they didn't see us, just in case, and ended

up seeing them circle past a fourth time. Comparing these two experiences, you can see how there can be a difference in the significance of hijab styles on the same black woman's body. Where one style is warmly fetishized or otherized through compliments, another symbolizes a specifically foreign threat. Of course, there are negative meanings associated with both styles of hijab, and sometimes seemingly positive meanings as well. But what remains is that the racial/religious meanings attributed to her change based on what each style signifies. Black women with their hair wrapped are not typically called "towelhead."

Another moment I observed with Salimah in public space is telling. It was the middle of Ramadan, and we were in the "college town" part of West City. We had just finished having iftar (fast breaking meal) before we went to the mosque. Waiting for the pedestrian crossing signal to change for us to cross the street, we were having the type of conversation that was typical of my and Salimah's interactions: conversations that speak to our rapport, and that are not for the faint of heart. This time, the conversation was about menstrual cycles and bowel movements. Her voice grew louder and louder as she became more excited and energized by my laughter at her stories. She was in a good mood, and she was wearing an outfit that she particularly liked and tended to wear when she was in a good mood: a long black abaya with some sequins, a black hijab, a colorful feathered string wrapped around the top of her head that is offset by the otherwise black clothing, and black eyeliner. Visibly Muslim if not fashionably so. While we waited at the intersection, a South Asian man stood in front of us holding his cell phone to his ear. He looked to be in his early twenties, and I would not have been surprised if he were a student at the university. While we were speaking, he half turned around and then did a double take at Salimah. Salimah and I exchanged glances. He then hurriedly and awkwardly said "As salaam alaikum," looked up and down at Salimah, and then looked down. He seemed

embarrassed. Then as if explaining himself, he said, "Sorry, I didn't expect you to look like that." We responded to his greeting and exchanged glances again. "How am I supposed to look?" Salimah responded. He faltered and mumbled something we could not discern. The signal changed, and we began to walk, the man still in front of us and still with his phone to his ear. He half turned around again and asked, "What are you guys talking about?" I looked at Salimah. She paused, and looked at the ground as she decided how to answer. A laugh escaped her as she said quietly and as matter of fact a tone as she could muster: "Poop and periods." The man again faltered and mumbled; all I heard was "that's nice" and "sisters." Salimah shrugged, "Well, you asked." This conversation had a light feel to it and ended with wishes of Ramadan Mubarak (a blessed Ramadan) and again an exchange of salaam alaikum / walaikum salaam.

Based on how embarrassed he became upon hearing what we were talking about, the South Asian man, a fellow Muslim, did not seem to know what we were talking about before he asked, but he could hear our voices. In this encounter, he did not expect someone who speaks the way that Salimah speaks to look as she does, where a key part of how she looked in this moment was her style of dress, which signaled Muslimness. Her blackness – signified by her accent and style of speaking - and her Muslimness were a contradiction in the eyes of this man. Perhaps he also did not expect "Muslim sisters" to speak this way, whether in terms of accent or content. The content of Salimah's and my conversation may also have been unexpected to him, crossing gendered boundaries, where perhaps the more appropriate thing for Salimah to say would have been anything except "poop and periods." But he did ask.

In the context of these meanings, where whiteness, blackness and being Muslim are positioned as separate from one another, black and white Muslim participants have different desires around being visibly Muslim that further point to this positioning. Being visibly Muslim

was important to 11 out of the 14 total white Muslim participants. Of the 11, all wanted to be visibly Muslim in Muslim spaces; all but one wanted to be visibly Muslim in public space. Four out of seven white Muslim women participants and *all* of the black Muslim women participants wore hijab in their everyday lives. Differences between black and white women in this study who wore hijab are connected to the specific Muslim communities they came through or are part of. All black Muslim women participants wear hijab. Only the white women who came through the African American and other convert majority spaces wear hijab. The white women who came through brown Muslim communities do not wear hijab, except one, Sara, and she is uncomfortable and does not feel confidence or pride in it. This suggests that white women who became Muslim in communities that do not feel the need to signal their Muslimness (and who also at times do not have a choice over whether or not they signal Muslimness since it is their skin tone, features, and names, for example, that signal it) reflect the norms in the communities they join. White women who became Muslim in communities that do feel the need to signal their Muslimness will also more frequently wear hijab than those who came through other communities. This differential emphasis on wearing hijab occurs in a context in which white and black people are not assumed to be Muslim, it is more common for blacks to be Muslim than whites, and Arab and South Asian Muslims are more likely to be assumed to be Muslim even when not wearing clothing that marks them as such. These patterns illuminate the specific ways racial and religious categories link up in Americans' imagination.

Participants cite several different reasons for desiring visibility. One reason is to be taken seriously by fellow Muslims as authentic and legitimate. Another reason is for participants' presentation to reflect their transformation or for it to remind them of their commitment to being Muslim. Allison says, "As much as I would like to say that I have purely Godly motives, I think

at some level [looking Muslim is] also part of my choice to wear hijab." "Looking Muslim"

requires effort on Allison's part due to her whiteness. For black and white Muslims to be

recognized as Muslims, they must make an effort to signal their Muslim identity to others, due in

part to their race not announcing their Muslimness for them. This is what Allison means about

not having "purely Godly motives." Her wish to look Muslim requires effort on her part. This is

not a concern that brown Muslims in this study expressed.

The data presented here on moments that blacks and whites are positioned as Muslim

resemble the accounts and stories that the literature on the racialization of Muslims is also trying

to explain (Elver 2012; Moosavi 2014; Selod 2014; Tehranian 2008). These accounts include

Muslims being called racial epithets like "towelhead," Muslims being assumed to be foreign, to

not know English, and more. In this section, I have shown that when black and white people are

perceived as Muslim, it influences the race that is attributed to them. The literature on the

racialization of Muslims may argue that these are examples in which black and white Muslims

are racialized as Muslim and that they are having the same experiences as brown Muslims. But

that literature cannot explain why or how black and white Muslims' race is perceived differently

when they are perceived as Muslim. It cannot explain the dissonance between black, white, and

Muslim. I argue that this dissonance is explained by the implicit religious meaning contained in

each of these categories, which are made explicit in moments like the examples I describe.

Sometimes we can see what is implicit when things do not go as expected.

In this section, I have shown that both black and white Muslims are assumed to be non-

Muslim when they are positioned as black or white. This is a similarity that they share. In the

next two sections, I explore the experiences of black and white Muslims in greater depth to

examine some of the differences between them in how they negotiate belonging in Muslim communities.

To be Black and Muslim

Even though black and white Muslims both are positioned as either black/white or as Muslim, they have different experiences of belonging in Muslim communities that highlight how these positions are produced. This is due in part to the organization of Muslim communities. Kelly and Ayesha, for example, both attend Mustafa Masjid. Ayesha is a 45-year-old African American Muslim woman who was raised Muslim. Her parents were part of the Nation of Islam before becoming Sunni Muslims. Kelly, a 40-year-old white Muslim, converted as an adult. Kelly feels anxious as a member of Mustafa Masjid where she converted to Islam just days into my fieldwork there. She confided, "I am nervous about people being like, 'what's this white lady doing being Muslim or wearing a scarf? She has no right'…If you can't tell, I don't like the fact that I'm white." In a way, Kelly is in good company: Mustafa Masjid is seen as a safe space for converts with similar concerns. But she still feels insecure, which she attributes to her whiteness.

Ayesha, on the other hand, feels secure as a member of various mosque-based communities. She is a fixture at Mustafa Masjid. She is also active in the local Warith Deen Muhammad Community Mosque (WDCM), and maintains close ties and respect for the local NOI mosque. The NOI and WDCM communities often clash ideologically and politically. Some NOI practices have shifted since its inception, but the iconic suits and bowties remain a symbol of black power and strength, even as they have various other associations as well. Ayesha maintains that it is this power that keeps African American Muslim women safe in everyday life. She believes that "no one messes with us" because they do not know whether it will be "turbans" – referring to Sunni Muslim men – or "bowties" – referring to NOI men – who will show up to

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defend them. Ayesha's shorthand for these groups as iconic imagery (bowties and turbans) is telling. It yields, at the very least, the basic conclusion: there are established ways of being an African American Muslim. There are African American Muslim communities and culture. But there are no white Muslim communities or established white Muslim culture. Kelly's insecurities and Ayesha's confidence exist in this context: the majority of Muslims in the US are nonwhite, where whiteness developed historically in opposition to Muslims (among others), and where the local Muslim community has a black contingent that can serve a protective function for black Muslims caught between anti-blackness in Muslim communities and in the rest of society.

How Being Black Influences What Being Muslim Means, and Vice Versa

Nadeer has a lot to say about the struggle of simply being black, aside from being Muslim as well, when I asked him what he thinks about how his experiences compare to those of African Americans who are not Muslim:

> If you don't have *la ilaaha illa Allah* (there is no god but God) I feel like you are at such a disadvantage as far as your humanity goes that it's impossible to catch up. That's just how I feel. People spend their whole lives trying to find out, if they're fortunate, they spend their lives trying to find out why they're here, what their purpose and etc. Accepting Islam, believe in Islam, taking *la ilaaha illa Allah,* believing that we were created and we have all this creation around us to tap into. It's very liberating from the conditions around us. To be African American, 25 to 33% born into poverty, that's just the way it is. Violence internally, violence from the police, violence from the state, poor education systems, white supremacy, you got every system around you kind of conspiring to oppress you. *La ilaaha illa Allah* is a solution. It's like *la ilaaha illa Allah* solves everything.

For Nadeer, being human is part of what being Muslim allows. It is a specific kind of human. The oppression blacks face including poverty, police, and other state violence and poor

education systems is "solved," he says, by *la ilaaha illa Allah*, also called the shahadah or basic testament of faith for Muslims. "What does it solve?" I asked:

> Nadeer: Everything.
> Atiya: How?
> Nadeer: From a superficial standpoint, it solves drugs, alcohol, diet, gambling, every superficial thing. Those are extreme oppressive things, but we're talking about from an educational standpoint. The white man's not God. Whatever system that exists outside of here, it's not God, it doesn't have any power other than the power that we give it… It just removes the false deification of these systems that dominate us...It's a conceptual thing, but once you accept that, whatever things are happening are not happening because that's just the way it is, it's not happening because it's some kind of…the white man's not God. It is what it is, but God is one. If you add *Allahu Akbar* (God is the greatest) and every other part to it, the only thing missing is, what are we doing with that belief? ...It's what it is. In real life, what are we doing about it? We accepting it. From a systemic point of view, we accept it as divine, we accept it as more powerful than we are. [The system is] insane if you believe *la ilaaha illa Allah*. It's the o*pposite* of what God tells you about himself or about us. That's *insane.* But it's what everybody will tell you: "Oh no, you can't do anything. It's racism," (and Nadeer's response is) "One day they decided to make it this way, so why do they have the power to make the world this way, but we can't? Cause they believe that about themselves and *we believe that they're God.*" That's how I feel.

Nadeer's reference to the "superficial things" that the shahadah solves is a reference to the Nation of Islam. The Nation of Islam is known for how it helped clean up problems related to drugs and alcohol that black communities were experiencing. Nadeer then connects the shahadah to fighting white supremacy. The fight has spiritual dimensions that position Islam as a cure for the psychological and material impacts of white supremacy. Believing in the testament of faith, he says, also helps black people understand that the system that whites created is not divine and does not have a right to have power over them, since rights are God given. Believing in the testament of faith also means that the system can change since it was created by whites, and the "white man's not God." I frequently came across this analysis at WDCM and NOI, and it shows

how race and religion come together to define what it means to be a black Muslim given experiences of oppression as a black person and the tools within Islam to make sense of it.

For Nadeer and many other black Muslims, being Muslim as a black person is connected to how he understands the racial system around him and the conditions of poverty in which many black people live. Being Muslim and black fit together in his identity even as they do not fit together in how race and religion are ascribed to him. In his identity, they are not incompatible things that then need to be made compatible. Being Muslim helps him understand where black people stand relative to white supremacy and not just relative to it but in terms of what they can do about it. Believing in the shahadah, he says, gives black people the understanding that they are not subordinate to white people; the idea of the oneness of God challenges the internalized idea that systems of domination over black people have a divine power. "It is what it is," Nadeer says, "but God is one," and that "removes the false deification of these systems that dominate" black people.

Nadeer's reference to humanity, that black people who are not Muslim are at a disadvantage "as far as their humanity goes," resonates with Frantz Fanon's (1967) articulation of being human. Fanon argues that "to racialize" and "to humanize" are opposites. Participants frame being Muslim as a rejection (or attempted rejection) of (some aspects of) whiteness. Being Muslim for blacks, as Nadeer's example suggests, is tied to a desire to be human. This does not mean ignoring the impact of race or being "colorblind." Instead, for black Muslims, it means changing how much importance they give to whites to construct their realities. As Nadeer suggested, whites have constructed blacks as objects – explicitly not human. Black converts see Islam as giving them respect and dignity that whiteness has denied them: dignity as a woman or as a man, respect for their bodies, valuing themselves as intelligent, as agents of their own

destiny, and more. There are well-established black Muslim spaces and institutions where these cultural meanings are normalized and common in West City and in other black Muslim communities (Gardell 1996; Gibson and Karim 2014). WDCM is one of these institutions.

Like Nadeer, Karimah's family members are also longstanding members of WDCM, where I often saw black Muslims challenging the idea that white people are gods. Participants and scholarship argue that fighting white supremacy is a spiritual act in black American Islam (Jackson 2005; Lincoln 1961; Wilmore 1998). Even when this is not said in so many words, as Nadeer says by linking the shahadah to fighting white supremacy, there is evidence of this orientation in participants' stories. Karimah told me several stories about her thoughts on whites and white privilege that are similar to how Nadeer and others at WDCM talk about what it means to be black. She told me about how one of her white Mormon friends is nonresponsive to conversations that Karimah tries to have with her about how Mormonism views people of color. Karimah said that she wonders what goes on inside of people, specifically white people, who shut themselves off to how people of color are treated. She said that people of color, specifically black people, have been trained to view white people as better, as their masters, when they were slaves and still now. She gave the example of herself and this Mormon friend who she has known for 20 years. When they were in high school, Karimah's mother had cancer and her grandmother was helping take care of Karimah and her siblings. Whenever her friend would call her, Karimah would rush to get together with her friend and pick up the phone immediately. She would "attend to her friend's needs quickly," she said. Karimah's grandmother gently reminded her that her mother needs her, that she needs to pay more attention to what is going on with her own mother. What is notable here is that Karimah interpreted attending to her friend as serving her white master. She offered this story as an example to illustrate how even today, some black

people view white people this way, and that it is internalized. She said that she thought her friend had nice hair because it grew long, that her light skin was beautiful, and she would notice how her friend's family is intact and that they live in a big house. Karimah's story resonates with what Nadeer and other WDCM members assert: some black people believe that white people are their masters, and still further, their gods, and rejecting this is a big part of black Muslims' racial/religious lives. WDCM members' approach to racism emphasizes removing the internalized divinity of whites. This emphasis is evidence of how blackness and Muslimness come together not as add-ons, but in synthesis, in the identities of black Muslims.

While WDCM is mostly African American, white Muslims sometimes attend, which raises questions about how black Muslims like Karimah and Nadeer view white Muslims. Clues about this are found in several of my experiences in the field. At the end of almost all interviews, I asked if the interviewee might be able to recommend others I could interview, and earlier in fieldwork when I had few white respondents, I sometimes specified that I am looking for white respondents. Knowing that there was not one mosque that white Muslims attended, I wanted to make sure that I talked to some white Muslims from all the major congregations that they may attend in the area. I asked this of Zain, one of the first WDCM members I interviewed. Zain is a 32-year-old black man who was raised in the WDCM mosque community. He is one of the few younger people in the community and is held in high esteem by the elders in the community because he has a good job as a post office worker. I learned through the process of conducting his interview that he has a wry sense of humor that was not always easy for me to detect. When I asked for help with snowball sampling, particularly to find white Muslims, he was amused. He smiled and asked, "How's that going?" I also smiled and said that it was going all right. "I can imagine," he responded, now laughing.

A week later, Inaya, a 35-year-old African American Muslim woman and I were waiting for a lecture at WDCM to start. We sat at a long table with our notebooks and laptops out. Zain walked up to our table and stood next to us. "She's studying white Muslims," Zain said to Inaya, as I looked on. His smile grew wider. He was about to start laughing, and was looking for her reaction. Inaya is trying to be a good Muslim and to have a good opinion of others, as Muslims are encouraged to do. She speaks slowly and intentionally. She smiled slowly, her lips curling, clearly amused but trying to suppress it. "We should be kind," she said, smiling, staring straight ahead. He started laughing. "We must be kind," she repeated, in an even tone, and to no one in particular, eventually nodding slowly. This moment was similar to exchanges I had with brown Muslims and other black Muslims who made fun of white Muslims. When I asked Nadeer at the end of his interview to suggest white Muslims I might interview, he asked, "What kind do you want?...I know black white people, *desi* (South Asian) white people, Arab white people." He said he wished a white Muslim friend of his was still in town to refer me to because his friend "converted to black" when he became Muslim. Nadeer suggests that white Muslims take on a different culture/race when they become Muslim. Similarly, in casual conversation, some brown Muslims would tell me that they think that a white person who wants to be Muslim is trying to appropriate a culture that they do not have a right to. Brown Muslims did not point out moments they saw as cultural appropriation because they expected me to just "get it," as a fellow brown Muslim, ending their claims with, "You know?" Not surprisingly, some white Muslims feared being called appropriators. Allison told me that she was once asked by a coworker if she feels that being Muslim as a white person constitutes cultural appropriation. She asked her husband, who is multiracial (Arab and white) and raised Muslim, and he dismissed the argument, much to Allison's relief.

These examples suggest that it is more normal or acceptable for nonwhite people to be Muslim than it is for white people. I never witnessed or heard of black Muslims being the butt of white Muslims' wordless jokes or laughter. Nor did I hear brown Muslims refer to black converts as culturally appropriating something by being Muslim. Being Muslim is easily made part of what it means to be black, even though blackness is not associated with Muslimness in the American imagination as much as brownness is. Similarly, blackness is easily made part of what it means to be Muslim because Islam has indigenized in black communities, as Sherman Jackson (2005) and others have argued. Muslim symbols appeared in many places in West City, to the point that Muslim symbols, practices, and beliefs exist without Muslim identity in black communities.

Islam in Black Communities

One afternoon, I stopped by one of the few black-owned cafes in a gentrifying area to write field notes between interview appointments. At the restaurant, while I rifled through my bag for my wallet to pay for coffee, the 20-something African American man behind the counter stretched, lifting his arms above his head. A tattoo under the inside of his gray t-shirt sleeve was now partially visible, revealing *Alhamdu lillah* (praise God) in Arabic. I gestured to his tattoo and asked if he is Muslim. In response, he made a sound that answered the question in the affirmative, but ambivalently. We laughed. He then said his tattoo is "super *haram*" (impermissible). He joked that "it's OK," he can "just cut [his] arm off and then die," so it's OK. I joked back by saying that that way he would at least be a good Muslim without tattoos. I was saying all of this while wearing a t-shirt myself, no hijab, my own haramness visible.

I began a conversation with the man and learned that he grew up attending the full time

school run by WDCM, an "all-black masjid," he said, even though his parents were not Muslim

and he did not grow up religious. Most of the students who attended WDCM were Muslim, but

there were other non-Muslims like himself. Although he converted, because he was "really

taken" by Islam, most non-Muslims at the school did not. The man added that he had heard of

black people who have gone to more mixed congregations around Arabs and who have been

discriminated against.[12] He really enjoyed his time at the WDCM school. He went to WDCM

through eighth grade and then to a Jesuit high school, because of the high-quality education at

both schools. As a testament to the quality of the school, he compared it to another school he

attended briefly where he found that he was more advanced than the other students. The teachers

at WDCM were all black except one Saudi teacher and she would "hit you with a ruler from

hella far away." The school was special and different because of the love, the quality education,

and fresh meals cooked for students every day. I mentioned that I had heard from someone else

that the students at the school were kind of sheltered, but he said they were not, that there was

once a drive-by shooting while they were playing on the playground outside. "It's in the middle

of the hood." The school closed years ago, due, he thought, to financial issues because of low

tuition.

I relay the man's story here because it illustrates that a Muslim institution had become part

of the wider black community in which it was located. Non-Muslim black families sent their

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[12] Interestingly, he only talked about racism from Arabs. He did not mention South Asians. This in part reflects geography and suggests that even if he were to go to a mixed congregation in Waterville, the one he could possibly go to would have Arabs or other groups but not South Asians, who are wealthier, suburban dwelling, and are the "immigrant" group that least frequently interacts with blacks in West City. His point may also indicate that Arabs are seen as having ownership of Islam.

children to the school because of its reputation as a good school, in much the same way that non-Catholic families send their children to local Catholic schools.

Islam is part of black culture for non-Muslim black people as well (Aidi 2005; Daulatzai 2012; Jackson 2005; Khabeer 2016). The WDCM school is one example of how Islam has indigenized in black communities. Hip-hop provides another example of this phenomenon. Symbols, numbers, and references in hip-hop are often connected to Islam. For example, Afrika Bambaataa's Universal Zulu Nation, a movement that began in 1973 and a foundation of hip hop culture, draws heavily on Islam. As Daulatzai (2012:113) explains, their early philosophical approach "Borrowed heavily, and in some cases word for word, from the Nation of Islam's own statement 'What the Muslims Believe,' including opening with the refrain, 'We believe,' in reference to the 'mental and physical resurrection of the dead,' calling for a reinterpretation of the Bible because it had been 'tampered' with, stating its belief in the Qur'an, and encouraging spiritual growth through 'knowledge of self' (which became an existential mantra within hip-hop.)" Similarly, as a black Muslim leader in West City put it, "Islam is part of black consciousness." The embeddedness of Islam in black culture frames and inspires black conversion to Islam. For example, another participant, a queer African American Muslim man who converted to Islam a few years ago, said that "some of the warriors against white supremacy with the biggest guns" – which he defined as having the most knowledge – "were Muslim," and that inspired him to convert.

Islamic references, practices, and symbols are in black culture which makes space for black people to be Muslim and gives their Muslimness a significance that is very different from what it means for white Muslims. The use of the term "indigenous Muslim" reflects this embeddedness. Muslims in West City and in the US as a whole often use the term "indigenous

Muslim" to describe black Muslims. "Immigrant Muslim" describes Arab and South Asian

Muslims. Initially used in the 1960s by African American Muslims (Nyang 1999), the term

"indigenous" Muslim was later developed further by Sherman Jackson (2005), along with the

notion of "immigrant Islam," to critique the social and religious authority that Arab and South

Asian Muslims had over being Muslim. I asked Nadeer what he means when he uses this phrase:

> Atiya: Indigenous Muslims?
> Nadeer: Well, American-born, meaning not from Islam from another country.
> We've been using that for a while, the indigenous, I think it has an anti-
> colonialism or anti-colonists, colonizers, there's a lot of ways to put that, meaning
> people who come here and wish to take leadership and wish to almost come to the
> country and stand at the front of the religion, [saying] "We have this." No. The
> indigenous Muslims got this, we did this, we good.
> Atiya: So who does that term include?
> Nadeer: It's primarily African American, but it really would be anybody that
> has…I don't hear a lot of Caucasians using it, but would if they are not of Iran or
> Arab background, and non-Caucasians…But yeah, we use that internally a lot.
> My parents are from America. They took shahadah on their own here, therefore
> they are indigenous Muslims, meaning they didn't come from elsewhere. The
> only white person I know who says it also went to the Nation of Islam, so that's a
> unique case.

The term indigenous Muslim, then, for Nadeer, means being American-born, but does not refer

to second generation Arab and South Asian Muslims who are American-born. Nor does it refer

to Native Americans, which is also notable because indigenous is typically used to refer to

Native Americans in most US contexts. The borders that make the difference between the

indigenous and the non-indigenous Muslim are national, American borders. Indigenous Muslim

status relies on what it means to be American. To be an indigenous Muslim is to be American,

and specifically African American.[13] For Nadeer and others, then, there is an effort to define

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[13] Indigeneity for Native Americans exists in part because of national borders – they would not need to assert
themselves as indigenous without settler colonialism that has made them into a group that is seen as either already
dead or as separate and different from Americanness. Being American requires the erasure of indigenous people.
But in a US Muslim context, being indigenous requires American borders – it is defined by American borders.

what being Muslim means vis-à-vis blackness, which is taken up in greater detail in Chapter 6. Being Muslim does not mean taking on the foreignness that is associated with being Muslim in the American imagination. For Nadeer and others, being an indigenous Muslim also means still being American, and frames both whites and immigrant Muslims as colonizers; it requires laying claim to being American in a way. Findings here resonate with literature that shows how there is a complex relationship to America in which blacks reject Americanness and engage it, too, in struggling against white supremacy (Jackson 2005; Jeffries 2010).

To be a Muslim on top of being African American, according to Nadeer, is "the farthest from white you can get and the *farthest*, *farthest* you can get would be African American Muslim, especially cause in this country, Islam started, and I'm not trying to have a debate on how Islam started, but as far as white folks' awareness of it, as far as Nation [of Islam] people's awareness of what a Muslim was, [it was] the most anti-white thing, response to racism, white supremacy, etc. The *farthest, farthest* you can get from the definition from whiteness would be African American Muslim in my opinion." For Nadeer and other black Muslims, being a black Muslim means rejecting whiteness. This is part of the context that whites experience when they convert to Islam. White converts are not only coming into a religion that is associated with foreignness, but also one that, according to Nadeer and others, is anti-white. In the next section, I discuss what this means for white Muslims.

To be White and Muslim

<u>Negotiating White Muslim Belonging</u>

White Muslims have a tenuous relationship with Muslimness because they are white, as this section will go on to show. Being white can mean not belonging as a Muslim, but it can also

mean being put on a pedestal in Muslim communities. At the same time, being white almost always means "convert," and convert means outsider in a way that has both seemingly negative and positive connotations. For example, "outsider" can mean having unique access to knowledge over and above "insiders," or it can mean not having any knowledge, all of which I discuss below. White Muslims, even those who are not converts, confront this dilemma.

One of my participants, a 33-year-old I call Adam, is not a convert, but his experiences highlight some aspects of how conversion works socially and along with whiteness. Adam was one of my key participants and he introduced me to many of the Arab and South Asian people that I interviewed. I was introduced to Adam by a South Asian contact. I told the contact that I was conducting a study in which I was interested in studying Muslims of different racial backgrounds, and particularly converts. She then recommended Adam. She said that he "knows everyone" so I must talk to him. Because his name is Adam Grant[14] and not something that sounded even vaguely Arab or South Asian to my otherwise well-trained ears (from having been raised Muslim among South Asians and Arabs), I guessed that he is a white convert to Islam. I initially made a note to myself that Adam could be helpful for introducing me to other white converts early in fieldwork before I learned that white converts are not typically close to each other, and also before I learned that Adam is multiracial and was raised Muslim.

When I met Adam for the first time, he told me that his mother is Arab and his father is white, which is why his name is Adam, where Adam is also an Arabic name. Adam can easily pass for white, and he typically does, he says. When I asked how he identifies racially/ethnically he said "white." "People think I'm a convert because I'm white." He said this in a rather flat tone, tilting his head and speaking quickly with his eyes mostly closed, the way that people relay

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[14] This is of course a pseudonym, and I chose one that could possibly send similar signals that this account discusses.

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an important piece of background information that is necessary for understanding a bigger story but is not the main story itself. He speaks frequently about the white privilege he has. On more than one occasion, I received a phone call from Adam reflecting on something related to white privilege that he was pondering.

Adam identifies as white, but I observed that he is often perceived as Arab in Muslim communities. He is fluent in Arabic, because it is his mother's first language and because he has made frequent trips "back home" to his mother's homeland. He also makes a strong effort to advance his Arabic and to throw Arabic words into everyday conversation. Knowledge, correct pronunciation, and the simple use of Arabic could be seen as a marker of Adam's Arab heritage. It is a visible (rather, audible) marker of his Arabness, whereas neither Adam's appearance nor his name suggest that he is Arab. His accent cannot be traced to any particular location within the US. It is the normative accent of the average US newscaster. Whatever might signal his nonwhite heritage – something that would speak to his status as a "born Muslim" – are *not* marked on his body. Therefore, Adam must make an effort to show that he is not white if his nonwhiteness is to be noticed.

Adam is social and chatty, a networker at heart who tries to connect with people using whatever he shares with them: a travel experience, an interest in a region, or knowledge of words in that person's heritage language. He trades in podcasts, giving and taking recommendations, though it is rare that a podcast is named that he is not already familiar with. In this connecting with people, I have seen Adam turn up his "Arabness," using a lot of Arabic words mixed in with his English – again, something that can be turned on and off. According to Adam, my assumptions that he was a white convert reflected the assumptions others make about him. These

assumptions reveal that whites are expected to be converts. Conversion is thus not only religious, but also racial in its association with certain racial groups.

The association between conversion and whiteness is an important point of context for understanding what it means to be a white Muslim. Another important point of context is how white conversion to Islam has proceeded in US history. A comparison to blacks is instructive here. For blacks, conversion occurred communally as part of a larger wave of movement building in the mid-twentieth century. Now, decades after this wave of black conversion to Islam in the mid-twentieth century, when individual black people convert to Islam, they convert in a context that is still associated with that communal conversion and its meanings. In contrast, for whites, there has never been a moment of communal conversion, so conversion as a white person is largely individual. This means that the spaces into which whites convert are not made for whites, which means that white Muslims may be pulled in a number of different directions, as Michael, a 33-year-old white Muslim man, would argue. He converted to Islam three years ago and says that his mentor, who is also a white Muslim, warned him about how other Muslims – specifically brown Muslims – may treat him upon converting. "He warned me people are going to try to pull you in a lot of different directions: 'They see a blank canvas and see an opportunity to justify their own ways, so just keep your distance, remember what Islam means to you, and why you embraced it. Hold onto that, don't let everyone drag you a million different directions.' And if you come into a community, people judge you right away. 'Is your shirt long enough, or your pants long enough, are you praying the right way, are you saying *ameen* (amen) after,'" and so on.

Mahdi Tourage (2012) writes on the performance of conversion connected to the pressure Michael mentioned, specifically white male conversion, at annual Muslim conventions in the US

and Canada. Tourage argues that white male converts' narratives are used to validate other Muslims' beliefs. The position of white (male) converts, he describes, is one of privilege. He describes two in particular, Hamza Yusuf and Suhaib Webb, both prominent white converts who are preachers and are followed by many, many Muslims across racial groups. They are deeply respected by most Muslims in my study. Tourage argues that their whiteness functions like a fetish:

> Like the sexual arousal of a fetishist, which takes place only in the presence of a psychosexual fetish, for (some) Muslims the deepest indications of faith is invoked by the converts' typical hyper-performativity of their faith. Conversely, when some converts refuse to or cannot fulfill this function properly they threaten the process of belief production, which explains why they receive a negative response from the mainstream Muslim community (2012:208–9).

White males can offer this function because whiteness is held in high esteem in the mostly brown Muslim communities that run the conventions Tourage describes. Brown Muslims have internalized racist ideas, such as the idea that white men represent objectivity and unbiased access to knowledge. This idea about white men means that white men's conversion can validate Muslimness in the eyes of brown Muslims.

This fetishizing exists because whiteness and Muslimness are separate. It can result in whites having a more positive experience in brown Muslim communities than black Muslims do, because they cannot serve this validating function. Whites' outsider status is thus a privileged one in some ways. Whites are often privileged even as they are outsiders. Maryam, for example, a Yemeni American woman, does not want to marry a fellow Yemeni. She told me in her interview that she is attracted to white men and wants to "marry somebody who's a convert because I want to know Islam and stuff like that and they can teach me and be nice. Not that Yemenis don't, you know, they're not like that. But I would think that [converts] would know

more, it's just like in my mind that they would know more." Allison (white) says that her husband, who is raised Muslim and is multiracial (Arab and white), also views converts as having "social cache." Looking through the lens of her own marriage and commenting on interracial marriages in West City, Allison views converts as able to be critical and analytical about aspects of Islam that "born Muslims" take for granted: "So, yeah, and yet one convert and one, you know, born Muslim, there's a legitimacy there, you have the best of both worlds, you have the person who knows what's happening from birth and the person who can be sort of critical and intellectual." To Allison, being a convert means having an ability to approach Islam more critically than born Muslims can. In these ways, white Muslims are privileged because they are seen as having special knowledge of Islam. When black Muslims are seen as having special knowledge, it is of suffering, not intellectual or religious knowledge; religious knowledge is ostensibly what is most valued in Muslim spaces. Whiteness is fetishized in Muslim communities, especially brown Muslim communities, and can be a source of privilege for a white Muslim. At the same time, whiteness clashes with Muslimness in sometimes uncomfortable ways for white Muslims, who try to negotiate that clash.

Not Quite White, Don't Want To Be White, Can't Be White

Fatima, a 65-year-old white Muslim, says that she is color-blind, that she does not see color. She seems to know the arguments against color-blindness as she cited and dismissed them in her interview. She expressed indignation when I got to the portion of the interview guide with questions on race. She became frustrated and exclaimed, "You keep talking about race, but it's about gender!" At the end of the interview, when I asked her to fill out a sheet with her demographic information, she said that she needed to call her mother to find out her race/ethnicity. We sat at her dinner table as she brought her phone and dialed her mother. She

had called herself white earlier in the interview but with all my questions about race, she seemed to feel differently. She dialed her mother and asked about her heritage, and as her mother spoke, she made a long list of European ethnicities along with the name of a Native American tribe. Her list took up the entire line of the question and the blank space in the margins of the page. Fatima did not want to be associated with whatever it would have meant to write "white" on the line. The white participants' I discuss in this section all experienced some sort of struggle with their whiteness.

Karen, a 32-year-old white woman, is in a South Asian community, and her story illustrates how whites often take on the cultural trappings of the communities they come through as a way to belong and no longer be fully white. Karen does not wear hijab, but was wearing a long loose shirt and loose jeans when I met with her the first time. She peppered her speech with advanced Urdu words in her interview. When I asked if she knew Urdu, she shook her head, "no." When asked how she identifies racially, she responded that she identifies as a *gori*, or "white female," in Urdu. Racially identifying using an Urdu word would likely not be understood in most contexts. Her word choice is indicative of her context (a South Asian Muslim community) and her ways of negotiating belonging within it. Self-identifying as a *gori* also may allow her to compartmentalize her white identity in a way that gives her a place in a Muslim community while also not needing to engage deeply with what it might mean to be white in a South Asian Muslim community. Some brown participants who do not know Karen but are familiar with white Muslims like her who negotiate belonging like she does call it cultural appropriation.

My interview with Karen stayed with me because I found myself unable to fully describe what I was seeing. Aside from her use of Urdu words, there was something about the way that

Karen carried herself and spoke that I could not describe. It was a femininity that felt familiar to me and reminded me of how some of the women in my extended family in Pakistan carry themselves. Taking on the cultural trappings of an established community of Muslims, whether South Asian, Arab, or African American, is therefore one strategy for negotiating belonging, or negotiating whiteness.

Unlike Karen, Andrew, a 25-year-old white Muslim, is very concerned about making sure he is not seen as appropriating a culture. He told me once in his interview that when he was young, he was very interested in "other cultures" and that it was him seeking out some form of identity, or being "envious" of people who are "really solid in their cultural identity." Like "many white people," he "struggled with [his] identity" and "felt disconnected." "I was really searching. This is why it took me so long to convert to Islam, because I wanted to make sure I wasn't going for the identity, like the beards, the hats, and these things – external identities…I didn't want to jump into something just to be part of something." Andrew felt the need to say that he was not converting to Islam for the externalities that, in his eyes, come with it. This is in contrast to the externalities that Karen seems to have taken on. Andrew is making a reference to converts like Karen and distancing himself from them. Karen may be described as making a racial conversion along with her religious one, and although Andrew is interested in "other identities" he emphasizes how he is not like others who just want to "be part of something." White Muslims always contend with the idea of racial conversion, whether their contending is how Karen does it in which she explicitly takes on the behaviors of a nonwhite Muslim group, or whether the contending is how Andrew does it, in which he tries to distance himself from the idea that his conversion may have racial meaning. Either way, this positions whiteness and Muslimness as dissonant.

I once heard Ayesha (African American) joke about how she speaks "Arabonics" – a combination of Arabic and Ebonics – when another African American Muslim corrected her pronunciation of an Arabic word. She playfully defended herself and said she is not trying to be Arab like some other black people she knows. Moments like this among participants suggest that African Americans can adopt Arabness to authenticate their Muslimness. It is notable that it is Arabness, specifically, and not brownness of any kind like the aspects of Pakistani culture that Karen took on. Islam has a special relationship with Arabic – the Qur'an is originally in Arabic, as are formal prayers. For a convert or community of converts to adopt Arabness has significance related specifically to religious practice. Taking on Pakistani cultural practices and words does not have the same significance. Whites taking on the cultural practices of a non-Arab group of Muslims thus has racial meaning that may be part of making a claim to cultural/racial authenticity as a Muslim as opposed to making a claim to belief/practice-based claims to religious authenticity as a Muslim that may require some degree of Arabic knowledge.

White belonging is not assumed in many Muslim religious spaces. Allison, the blue-eyed, hijab-wearing, white Muslim woman assumed to be foreign in a public bathroom, was assumed to be non-Muslim in a mosque. Allison typically wears variations of the same thing – a long shirt, skirt, and a hijab pinned under her chin. This is what she looked like when I was speaking with her at an event at the Islamic Center of Stone Heights. I witnessed a South Asian Muslim woman ask Allison how long ago she converted or if she was considering converting to Islam. With an edge in her voice, Allison responded that she *is* Muslim. Participants receive questions about their conversions in various ways, frequently negatively. Some hear it as suggesting that they do not belong, or that they are inauthentic or not fully Muslim.

I observed a similar interaction at a different mosque. The masjid is mostly Sufi (Islamic mysticism) oriented, and the people there have a reputation for being kind. They also have a reputation for being "weird," according to Allison. Like many others mosque based communities in the smaller cities within the West City metropolitan area, it is a multiracial congregation. The imam is Arab and is married to a white woman. Some of the congregants are white. The sermons focus on themes such as kindness, forgiveness, and developing a relationship with God. There is less about ritual and law, and when there is, the messages in sermons are softer than many other local mosques. One Friday, Salimah (African American) and I attended this mosque for prayer. After prayer, Salimah excitedly ran up to a white Muslim woman. Salimah sees this woman in many ways as her mentor. Salimah briefly introduced me and I waited as they continued their whispered conversation, catching up while others finished praying and moving out of the prayer hall. An older African American woman walked up to us, with a big smile and welcome. She asked Salimah and me about ourselves – where we are from – and told us to come next week for Friday prayer again. Still smiling and warm, she then asked the white woman why she was at the masjid. Salimah's expression shifted slightly, eyebrows slightly knit. The white woman said, "Because I'm Muslim?" Her voice rose at the end of the sentence as though it should have been obvious. The woman said "Oh," barely side tracked before she gracefully continued on to welcome the white woman as well. In this interaction, we see that even in the most friendly moments and places, there are ideas circulating that white people are out of place in a Muslim setting, or that new (white) faces may raise suspicion. Salimah and I were assumed to belong even if we were new to the community, while the white woman's newness signaled something that my and Salimah's did not – that she is *not* Muslim. I had not seen the older African American woman at the mosque before that week, though I had been attending it for four months

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at that point. Even if she positioned herself as a gatekeeper who was in the position of welcoming newcomers and thus constructing a boundary, it made sense to her for Salimah and I to be in that space. The idea that Muslim spaces are *not* spaces for white people appears in various ways and places.

White Muslims draw upon various nonwhite and/or Muslim things to negotiate belonging and normalize the fact that they are Muslim. I observed this one evening at an event honoring Malcolm X at a local Muslim organization that is multi-racial and run mostly by converts. With a slightly wavering voice, an African American Muslim professor spoke into the microphone on stage: "What is the role of white converts in fighting racism?" he asked. By chance, the professor read my question from one of the index cards on which the roughly 80 audience members had been asked to anonymously write their questions. The panel consisted mostly of African American men – two Muslims and a Christian pastor – as well as a white Muslim man, who is a well-respected local leader. My question was directed at the latter. There was a long pause after the question was read aloud. The professor rephrased the question, an attempt to fill the silence. The white Muslim leader responded, "Yeah, you know, I just feel like these adjectives don't define me personally. I've never felt white." A group of black women in the rows in front of me started whispering to one another. Moments later, they and others were booing as he continued: "I was raised with a consciousness about oppression…since I became Muslim, I was given my [Muslim] name and I thought OK, this is just what you have to do…since then, I haven't been white. I've been Muslim…so this idea of white privilege, if you're Muslim, there's no white privilege. You know, I've been pulled out of those lines at the airport many, many times." He also named the books written by black men and revolutionary figures he had learned about growing up, and mentioned that his wife and children are nonwhite to demonstrate that he

"[doesn't] think personally in those terms but [he's] very aware of that." The otherwise quiet, attentive audience was now buzzing. There was another long silence on stage after he finished responding. The African American Christian pastor placed a hand on the white Muslim man's shoulder and with a wry smile and a chuckle said, "Well, that sounds like a real white man's burden." The white Muslim leader sat silently.

Reflecting on this later, Inaya (African American), who otherwise tries hard to not speak about people behind their backs and tries to be especially respectful of her teachers and Islamic scholars, laughed about this moment. She laughed about the white Muslim leader not feeling authenticity as a Muslim and said that African Americans do not feel that "because indigenous Islam is black." She could not relate. White Muslims' reflection on the discrimination they experience as Muslims is a more comfortable topic of discussion for them in our interactions and in Muslim community spaces than conversation about white privilege, or perceived questions about white privilege. The Muslim leader redirected the question to talk about how he also experiences discrimination as a Muslim, which he also put forth as an effort to downplay his whiteness since he does not see himself "that way."

Kelly, a white Muslim, seems to feel similarly and jumps at the question about how people in public view her. She speaks excitably about being discriminated against at the airport when she wears a hijab. She has said, in so many words, that she doesn't like the fact that she's white. Her relationship to her own race varies. She sometimes identifies as a "white woman" and other times as "mixed, white and native." She said that people typically see her as white and she doesn't want to be seen that way. She expressed lots of nervousness at Muslims thinking, "What's this white lady doing being Muslim or wearing a scarf? She has no right." She speaks quietly and more dejectedly about this point, a point she made a number of times over the course

of several interviews, yet when I asked her to elaborate, she did not say much. This suggests an opposition between whiteness and being Muslim. Kelly is certainly feeling this opposition, as her nervousness indicates. She feels it is her whiteness that suggests that she does not belong.

One day, I was talking with three women outside of Mustafa Masjid after Friday prayer a month after Kelly converted there. Kelly walked by with her four-year-old son. It was my first month in West City, so we were equally new to Mustafa Masjid. Kelly looked frazzled and hurried. I asked if she needed to take her son home because he was tired. He fell asleep during the prayer and looked like he could again at any moment. She said yes without stopping and hurriedly walked away. Later, after I left the women, I received the following text from her: "I wanted to hang out some after prayer but I didn't know what everyone was doing. I didn't want to intrude. So I didn't leave because [my son] was sleepy…I just felt like I didn't know what I was doing…. : |" I responded, "I'm glad you told me, and if I had known then, I would've called you back to just hang out. That's all everyone was doing, was standing and talking. I had only met one of those people before but not the rest, so I was just standing around. How about next week we hang around there together?" She replied, "Sounds great! Thank you :)" and I responded, "Awesome! My pleasure :)"

I found it interesting that Kelly felt less comfortable than I did. What is the difference between me and her? Both of us were trying to gain entree into this community, but in some ways my success was greater than hers. Joining a religious community as an ethnographer is less spiritually or emotionally loaded than joining as a new member to convert to a new faith. Additionally, there were more white people at this mosque than South Asians. I was often the only South Asian present, so we might expect Kelly to fit in more easily than me. However, in Muslim spaces, Arabs and South Asians are perceived to belong. Kelly was aware of this

perception, as she frequently imagined others asking or wondering: "What's this white lady doing here in a scarf?" Both Kelly and the white Muslim leader are uncomfortable being white in Muslim spaces and negotiate it in different ways. He says he is no longer white and does not experience white privilege, and Kelly treads lightly because she feels that she will not be seen as legitimate due to her whiteness. Similar ideas appeared in other participants' experiences as well. Allison, for example, feels that her white privilege remains after becoming Muslim: "[My cousin is] really into this idea that I've voluntarily sacrificed my white privilege, you know? That I've like signed it off, given it away, which I don't feel is true at all. I don't know." Another participant, Sara, seems to miss some of what she has lost by being Muslim and wearing hijab. About wearing hijab, Sara says, "I have other white convert friends who sometimes just want to take it off, you know, just to *feel normal again* and stuff, because we used to feel normal before putting it on." Here, normal means being white American. At times, Sara misses aspects of being white that are lost when one is visibly Muslim. Although white Muslim participants negotiate their whiteness and Muslimness in different ways, the point remains that there is a negotiation that occurs, which suggests that whiteness and Muslimness are positioned as different if not incompatible.

Michael, a white middle class convert, negotiates his whiteness in ways that are similar to and also different from the white Muslim leader. Michael appears comfortable in Muslim community spaces. He is fascinated by nonwhiteness and things associated with it. For example, he is fascinated by gangs. I was struck by how he mentioned gangs a number of times across our meetings, though there seemed to be no reason for him to mention them. He is both fascinated and fearful. He talks about enjoying walking through poor, majority black areas of Waterville and North Hill "to see." He was living in Stone Heights, close to South Asian Muslim

communities. He once asked where I live and when I mentioned Waterville his eyes widened and he backed away a little bit in shock, jokingly and dramatically. He asked if I had been shot yet. He seems comfortable throwing stereotypes about nonwhites around as though it will be received by others like it is coming from a fellow nonwhite person.

At other points in our conversations, Michael talked multiple times about really liking spicy food, that he was trying to "up his chai game" (to make better milk-based South Asian tea), and that his "brown friends" say he is "basically brown" himself. I was unsure what to say. I said I am not a huge fan of spicy food and the chai I make is sometimes great and sometimes unfortunate. He responded with an attempt at encouragement, "If my white butt can make real chai" then you certainly can. Michael brings white American ideas about black and brown people with him as he converts to Islam. Michael refers to nonwhite friends who can vouch for him and claims insider cultural knowledge and expertise. Through these sorts of moves, Michael and other white Muslims can try to feel a sense of affinity with nonwhite Muslims and negotiate belonging in a way that erases their whiteness. While Michael does not appear overtly uncomfortable like the white Muslim leader did when he was answering questions about whiteness on a stage, the way Michael negotiates his whiteness is similar to the way that the white Muslim leader did. Both of them distanced themselves from their whiteness by claiming a connection to nonwhite groups based on some idea of authenticity (e.g. "real chai," "I've been pulled out of the lines at airports many, many times," etc.)

White Muslims are often viewed as outsiders in Muslim communities because of what it means to be white. Whiteness, which gives them privilege outside of the Muslim community, makes them outsiders in Muslim communities. Yet their status as white gives them privilege at times within Muslim communities, particularly above black Muslims. Indeed, there are material

benefits to whiteness within Muslim communities. For example, Michael volunteers with a

Muslim nonprofit and told me about how his supervisor there pushes him to the forefront of

things. His supervisor says that he is her bargaining chip and I asked how. "I'm white," he says,

as though it is obvious. Michael believes that he is pushed to the forefront because he is white.

Like Adam he seems to be conversant with these issues of privilege and talks about them freely.

He said that "as a male coming into the *Muslim* community, when I'm speaking, that's one thing,

and then being white you're already at the top." There is some veracity to Michael's statement,

because at least three of the mosques and Muslim organizations in the metropolitan area had a

white person at the head, whether as a founder, director, or imam, which makes whites

overrepresented in positions of power.

Michael referred to himself has having a "weird kind of Orientalism" one day while we

were walking around North Hill. In his interview, he said:

> I mean I'm white, on a skin level I guess, but I don't know. I always joke that I
> feel like I am a Muslim, brown, like I love, just - and I get into this kind
> generalizing and being judgmental, but… like you kinda tend to attach yourself to
> pop-culture trends…and I've always hated that, I've always like to attach myself
> to a feeling and like an ambience, like a cultural thing like being at coffee shops
> or being in like the inner-city, or having like a food or a family tradition so there's
> different little things and I've always loved for some reason South Asian culture, I
> think it's just, I love the food I love the eccentric, the colors, everything is just
> really vibrant. Western culture's not looked at that way, the sense you're always
> trying to push your wallet or your bank account and that's not something that I
> want in my life, to build my life around, so I don't know. I wander, I am a nomad,
> sometimes I feel like I want to live in the inner-city and go and like be part of hip-
> hop culture and sometimes I want to live in the country and be like the white
> country boy with horses and sometimes I want to go to India and eat…and be in
> the holy festivals and sometimes I want to move to like Turkey and Istanbul and
> eat kabob.

I was struck by Michael calling it a weird kind of Orientalism. My interpretation of what makes

his perspective Orientalist is that it is still those in the West constructing the East and defining

themselves in relation to it – classic Edward Said Orientalism. It is "weird" because instead of

using this process of Western self construction to *reject* all things (constructed as) Eastern, and

instead of constructing himself as its opposite, as in Said's Orientalism, Michael instead

valorizes the East and seeks to become part of it. Included also in here are experiences outside of

his white middle class one: the inner city and the country. Michael is one of several white men

who sees being Muslim as an alternative lifestyle. It is an alternative to "Western culture."

Michael says Western culture is about "trying to push your wallet or your bank account."

Similarly, Ben, a 35-year-old white man, talked a lot about money and white middle class values

when I asked him to tell me what being Muslim looks like for him now:

> Atiya: So what does being Muslim look like for you now? Has it changed over the
> years at all, would you say?
> Ben: Yeah, I think that's the main reason why, probably the main reason why I'm
> in school, why I came back to school. You know, making eighty thousand a year,
> quitting that, to come back to school so that I can get a degree and make fifty a
> year, maybe, you know it's like most people would be like "What?" But it's like,
> just questioning life a lot of, you know, you don't chase hedonia (sic), you don't
> chase money, cause you will be miserable, I'm a perfect example. You make all
> the money you want, it's like, miserable is miserable, nothing, nothing can change
> that except your way of life.
> Atiya: What things do you do as part of being Muslim and what things do you not
> do?
> Ben: One thing that Islam really did for me is I think most people, they go
> through their life trying to please other people. And it's like once all that is gone,
> you feel like a new person…you know, it's just the little things in like, you
> always try to do, eating out, clothes you buy, to you know, whatever.
> It's…everything is usually to please other people or to project an image of
> yourself for other people. I've always really, you know, I cared about social issues
> a lot, stuff like that, so it's like, always trying to cover that up, especially being
> from the hood, you know, it's like, it's almost socially constructed for you not to
> be who you are, it's socially constructed to put an image out there, to not learn, to
> not read, to go out on Friday nights so you can party, but Islam erases all that, you
> know, it made you feel like, feel like a new person. So I read a lot and I,
> especially history and stuff like that. I volunteer a lot. At the shelter, at a couple
> shelters here in Waterville and one in [a poor majority black area outside the city].
> There is an enemy out there that wants people dumb, they want people
> fornicating, they want people running the streets and partying, and it's the same

thing I did my whole life, you know. Thirty years old and not even worrying about marriage or a family. "Don't worry about it, just go have fun and party," you know. I think that, that's used to keep the public dumb, you know, they want, they want workers, they want, you know, the disparities continuing, you know they don't want a smart population, so if I ever get the urge to, to assimilate in, into this society, I always think about that, I always think, it makes it easier for me to learn more, you know, and to, to continue, you know.

Atiya: What does assimilating into the society, like what would that involve and what's not assimilating into it for you?

Ben: Assimilate, you know, for this society it would be, you know, spending money, as much money as you possibly can on things that support globalization, going to the mall every weekend, you know it's just, we don't really see that in Waterville, but of course like [bigger cities], you know, people are constantly trying to one-up each other. Yeah, it's all, it's all a false image, it's not, it's not real, you know, it's just an image that you try to cover yourself up with. "Look what I got," you know.

Ben's rejection of assimilation is an effort to distance himself culturally from something. He is running away from an American/white/Protestant ethic sort of mentality, and argues that money, materialism, partying, and so on cannot give him what he is looking for. As someone who grew up in a poor neighborhood, for whom making a lot of money seemed to be the answer for him for some time, he found that it did not give him what he had hoped and that being Muslim provided that. Although Michael was raised middle class and Ben was not, both seem to be responding to similar ideas about American culture and rejecting them. Both see being Muslim as an alternative. Being Muslim is something that both Ben and Michael see as different from who they are expected to be, which positions Muslimness as different in some way.

Michael and Ben want to distance themselves from traditional definitions of success for white men who are middle class or aspire to middle class status. Why do they want distance? Ben says it is because that status and its attendant aspirations are not "real" and are a "false image," and Michael seeks something that feels meaningful to him, and it is not found in these

expectations. Nadeer (African American) views the restrictions that Ben and Michael feel as a result of racism's impact on whites. He says:

> So it's also, I believe, a burden that even though it may be more visible and more kind of violent on people of color I think it affects the perpetuators worse, meaning like if…white folks have racism, white supremacy, that they benefitted from economically, that's cool, but you also gotta pay that back to God and that might become a way that you're restricted culturally, emotionally, intellectually, whatever.

For Nadeer, whiteness is spiritual deficiency and inhumanity. White Muslims, including Kevin, also view whiteness as a barrier to spiritual improvement. There is a lot of literature on how whiteness impacts white people, but that literature argues that the source of that impact is not their whiteness itself but something else combined with it: being a white woman, or being poor and white, for example (Frankenberg 1993; Wray 2006). However, my research shows that whiteness *itself* is seen as damaging for whites, along the lines of what writers like James Baldwin and Frantz Fanon. Baldwin said that whiteness makes whites moral monsters, and Fanon has argued that whites become more inhuman than the populations they constructed as non-human.

Whites are joining a religious group that is largely in the hands of nonwhites, and relative to whom whiteness itself was constructed. Their experiences show that whiteness and Muslimness clash. They also suggest that white people are dehumanized by white supremacy and are attracted to Islam as an alternative. White converts see Islam as promising them humanity, not only because of its religious injunctions and beliefs but in part because it is largely in the hands of nonwhites/Westerners, and many whites believe that they may be able to transcend their racial position or constraints through being Muslim. This is not to say that there are good and bad white people, and that these are the good ones who are able to transcend their whiteness and its

implications. Their racial attitudes and behaviors are complex. White men, for example, benefit from aspects of white privilege while also being able to claim distance from the less desirable aspects of their whiteness, like its association with oppressing nonwhites, since they are Muslim. These complex dynamics including white converts' racial distancing through Islam and a desire to transcend what it means to be white points to a broader relationship between whiteness and Muslimness: they are dissonant.

Asserting Belonging

In this section, I discuss ways that white Muslims have asserted their belonging relative to me. Although this became a problem of access, such as when white Muslims assumed gatekeeping roles as I sought to develop relationships with local Muslims, it also constitutes valuable data.

One such example of gatekeeping involved Allison. I was with Anisa, a 36-year-old African American woman who was raised Muslim, and was spending time with her while she ran errands. At the grocery store, while I helped Anisa load her second child into the car with her groceries, we ran into Allison. I had not yet interviewed Allison and did not know her very well at this point, but we had already exchanged information and she knew I was a researcher. Allison told me later that when she saw me with Anisa she immediately felt "protective" of Anisa. She told me that she wondered if Anisa knew that I am a researcher, if she knew what that means for our interactions given the extractive nature of research. My relationship with Allison was largely interview-only, and she did not know that Anisa and I had grown to be friends. I do not know why Allison felt she had to protect Anisa from me, but whatever the reason, her protectiveness of a fellow community member and Muslim positioned her as an insider and me as an outsider. One

can be less of an outsider by pointing out someone else who is more of an outsider than oneself. Therefore, Allison may have been positioning herself as an insider through the process of positioning me as an outsider. Gatekeeping, however well-intentioned, can function socially as a way of asserting belonging.

In my interview with Kevin, a 35-year-old white Muslim and community organizer, I find more evidence of gatekeeping, albeit of a different form. Kevin is married to a South Asian Muslim woman. He majored in ethnic studies and like many whites who become Muslim, he became interested in Islam through his interest in hip hop. He refers to himself as an anti-racist. I rarely heard Kevin speak without hearing him mention Malcolm X. At some point during our short interview, he dismissed sociology and social science in general as bogged down by a false belief in objectivity. He told me that he told his wife, who majored in political science, to switch to ethnic studies like him because in ethnic studies "we can tell our own stories." I wondered - who is we? Does his Muslimness put him within a "we" that fits somewhere into ethnic studies as a white man? Does he mean "we" as people who generally believe in the importance of ethnic studies? I did not ask at the time what he means by "we" because I did not want to possibly alienate him or come off as too aggressive too early in our interaction, and I already sensed his hesitation. He seemed distant and a bit cold and I found out one possible reason why.

Kevin said a lot of people study Muslims in the area. They study "us and then they leave." I responded with interest and openness in my voice to encourage him to say more. I said I did not realize there was so much research and my impression was that most research on Muslims focused on major cities on the east coast and midwest. He said that Muslim community members do interviews with researchers and then when he approaches Muslims for interviews for his media work in the community, they do not want to do it, because they say they have

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already told their stories. Here again, as in my interview with Allison, "us versus them" themes appear. Kevin may have been positioning himself as an insider relative to me. His contention that he is unable to interview Muslims because of people like me may be his way of asserting his position as an insider, which he believes should come with access to the community. Kevin can establish his insiderness in relation to me, because he has a claim to being part of the local Muslim community and an activist, which he leverages in our conversation.

The various issues white Muslims experience in terms of identity and belonging tell us something about the boundaries of whiteness. First, it does not include Muslimness, so things get confusing and sticky when white people are Muslim. Yet as Allison points out, "This is the only identity with an actual invitation to join." Being Muslim is an identity that has racial meaning, and race makes some people's Muslimness seem more authentic and legitimate. However, Islam is also a religion in which proselytizing is valued, as Allison points out. There is an invitation to join, but the reactions and reception to those who join vary by race.

Conclusion

This dissertation draws parallels between blackness and whiteness, unlike previous research that views these constructs as not only separate but also opposing. There is good reason to study blackness and whiteness as separate and opposing – they are constructed as such and their consequences are opposing in terms of wealth, poverty, education, housing and more (Fredrickson 1981; Lipsitz 2006; Massey and Denton 1994; Mills 1997; Oliver and Shapiro 2006; Tyson 2011). Relative to Muslimness, however, blackness and whiteness share some features as the findings in this chapter show. Specifically, moments when black and white Muslims are assumed to be non-Muslim suggest that they are assumed to be something else. What is that something else? A wealth of research on the role of Christianity in the development

of blackness and whiteness, as well as the fact that blacks are largely Christian and that blackness and whiteness are American (Carter 2008; Daulatzai 2012; Lincoln 1984; Young 2014), might suggest that Christianity or perhaps secularism is that "something else," because they are normative religious positions in the US. Christianity/secularism may be the implicit meanings in blackness and whiteness, but at the very least, the findings in this chapter suggest that the implicit religious meaning is at the very least *not* Muslimness. This chapter contributes a detailed look at how these broader meanings and associations play out in everyday life.

Revealing similarities in how black and white Muslims are perceived is not to equate blackness and whiteness, as I also revealed differences between these two positions. I discussed what it means to be black and Muslim and made two major points. First, being Muslim as a black person is linked to fighting white supremacy. Fighting white supremacy here is not only a political act but also a spiritual act as other scholars have argued (Chan-Malik 2011; Jackson 2005; Lincoln 1984; Wilmore 1998). Second, Islam has indigenized in black America to the point that Islamic symbols, beliefs, and practices can be found in black communities even when people do not identify as Muslim, which means that there are established spaces and meanings for people who are black and Muslim to inhabit and draw upon. Black Muslims experience racism inside and outside of the Muslim community, and have also created black Muslim spaces that serve an affirming and protecting function.

I also discussed what it means to be white and Muslim and found that whites are associated with conversion, whether they are converts or not. Most whites are indeed converts but the significance of their association with conversion is that it positions them as outsiders to Muslim communities in specific ways. White Muslims have a tenuous relationship with their whiteness. It takes work for them to assert their belonging as Muslims. White Muslims' tenuous

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relationship with Muslimness and black Muslims' stronger relationship with Muslimness is facilitated by the idea that being Muslim means rejecting whiteness. For black Muslims, this ethic manifests as a spiritual mandate to reject the internalized idea that whites are superior to them, while for white Muslims, this ethic manifests as anxieties about being white and having privilege and what some of them perceive as a lack of culture. Although there are major differences between blackness and whiteness, in Muslim contexts, there are also similarities.

The finding here that all African American and white participants do work to negotiate belonging further suggests a positioning of blackness and whiteness as separate from being Muslim. It could be that black and white Muslims must do this negotiating because they are a numerical minority. In other words, the limited number of black and white Muslims compared to brown or South Asian and Arab Muslims might mean that people simply are not familiar with black and white Muslims, because they are not the dominant image of a Muslim. However, this argument does not explain the data presented here. First, according to numerous estimates, black Muslims constitute about the same proportion of Muslims in the US as South Asians (Gallup 2009, Pew 2011; Muhammad 2016). In Waterville, black Muslims are the single largest Muslim racial group in the public areas where my observations occurred, with the exception of the area around the university (where the interaction between Salimah and the South Asian Muslim man occurred).

Muslims on the whole are not ignorant of the existence of black and white Muslims. Although brown Muslims sometimes question the legitimacy, sincerity, and religious knowledge of black and white Muslims, and sometimes behave as though they do not exist, they brown Muslims know that they exist and look up to some famous scholars like Hamza Yusuf and Suhaib Webb, who are white, and Zaid Shakir and Sherman Jackson, who are African American.

Therefore, the argument that the negotiation that black and white Muslims must engage in results from their invisibility, does not hold. Rather, I argue that the negotiation is a result of the specific implicit religious meanings in blackness and whiteness. Blackness and whiteness are positioned as separate from Muslimness. Although as a group South Asian Muslims are similar in population size to black Muslims, they do not have to negotiate their race and religion in the way that black Muslims do. No one is surprised to see someone who is brown or visibly "foreign" and visibly Muslim.

A growing body of work has found that to be visibly Muslim and visibly "brown" is practically synonymous (Brown et al. 2013; Rana 2011; Silva 2016; Volpp 2002). The findings in this chapter support the argument of research on Muslim racialization that Muslims are racialized as foreign and brown. My findings show that black and white Muslims are also racialized as foreign and brown in the moments when they are perceived as Muslim. In the moments that they are not perceived as Muslim, they are perceived as average white and black Americans. This suggests that blackness and whiteness are both religious and racial concepts, which has implications for the black-white binary. Scholars have treated blackness and whiteness today as categories defined by color, class, and other factors, but not religion (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Gilens 1999; Lipsitz 2006). This chapter illustrates that religion is a key part of how blackness and whiteness are defined in everyday interaction.

CHAPTER 4: THE SOMETIMES-WHITENESS OF BROWN MUSLIMS

Arab and South Asian Muslims have had a complicated relationship with being American, in part because Americanness is associated with whiteness (Devos and Banaji 2005; Fredrickson 1981; Gualtieri 2009; Haney-Lopez 2006; Tehranian 2008). From 1790-1952, immigrants petitioning for US citizenship had to prove that they were a "free white person" in order to be eligible for citizenship (Gualtieri 2009; Haney-Lopez 2006). "White" was determined based on ancestry, color, nation of origin, and also religion. In one case, a Muslim man from Yemen was denied citizenship partly on the basis of being Muslim. The judge ruled, "Apart from the dark skin of the Arabs, it is well known that they are a part of the Mohammedan world and that a wide gulf separates their culture from that of the predominately Christian peoples of Europe" (Beydoun 2015). Because of his skin color, religion, and "culture," he could not count as white in order to be an American. Being Muslim meant being part of an entirely different world – "the Mohammedan world." This idea that Muslims are part of a world that is different from Europeans, Christians, and therefore *whites*, resonates with the several hundred year history of Orientalism in which "the West" constructed and defined itself relative to its construction of "the East," which is "Mohammedan," among other things. Since the East or "Orient" is a swath of land including the present day Middle East and South Asia, this history frames my observations of Arab and South Asian Muslims in West City.

The Americanness of Arab and South Asian Muslims in the US has fascinated scholars for decades. It is rare to find research on Arab and South Asian Muslims in the US today that does

not on some level grapple with their identities as Muslim *and* American, which presumes these are distinct categories. A body of scholarly literature has tried to make sense of what being Muslim and being American means for Muslims in America by examining how Muslims in the US negotiate these identities in everyday life and experience immigration, assimilation and integration (Abdo 2006; Esposito, Nyang, and Bukhari 2004; Haddad 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2011; Haddad and Esposito 1998; Idliby 2014; Wang 2014). This literature demonstrates that Muslims' Americanness remains an open question. "Muslim" and "American" are framed in different ways, whether as inherently contradictory, a problem to be solved, or a false contradiction that can be reconciled; in all cases, Muslims' Americanness is not a given. For Arabs and South Asians Muslims, who are the focus of most studies in the literature on Muslims' Americanness, birthright citizenship and naturalized citizenship are not enough to bestow Americanness. Fast forwarding from this history of Orientalism and racial citizenship petitions to the contemporary period, it is also worth noting that 2017 has so far seen not just one but two policies dubbed "Muslim bans" that restrict immigration from several Muslim majority countries. Whether historically or contemporarily, this idea that Muslims are not American remains sturdy in the American imagination. Whiteness is additionally relevant to these questions of Muslims' Americanness because there is a related gap in the literature: recent research on "Muslim" and "American" does not examine whiteness, although whiteness and Americanness are linked and may be part of the way that Muslim and American remain a question or puzzle rather than a given.

This dissonance between "Muslim" and "American" has implications for black and white Muslims in this study, as the previous chapter shows: when black and white Muslims wear markers that indicate that they are Muslim, they are perceived as foreign (non-American). Being

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white and Muslim presents a dissonance of sorts. I have argued that whiteness has implicit religious meanings of non-Muslimness, which explains why white American Muslims feel inauthenticity as Muslims and/or experience a sort of outsider status as whites in Muslim communities. But there is a related puzzle that complicates my argument. Some participants commented to me that white Americans are not the only "white" people in this study, because Arabs and South Asians are also at times white. The sometimes-whiteness of Arab and South Asian Muslims led to other questions. If the meanings of whiteness lead to inauthenticity as Muslims for white American Muslims, or to whites being outsiders in Muslim communities, why is brown Muslims' authenticity or insider status as Muslims never questioned if they are also sometimes white? What does this pattern mean for the relationship between whiteness and Muslimness?

In this chapter, I focus on the experiences of Arab and South Asian Muslims. In the first section, I analyze moments in which they are positioned and/or identify as brown and show that there is a special connection between being brown, Muslim, and foreign (not American); these characteristics are nearly synonymous. In the second section, I examine the moments in which Arab and South Asian Muslims are positioned and/or identify as white. I differentiate between types of whiteness rather than viewing whiteness as a singular category. I conceptualize whiteness as multi-faceted and engage a range of definitions offered in scholarly literature: whiteness is marked by phenotype (lighter skin color), economics (owning property, wealth in general), space (white/black space, urban/suburban neighborhoods), affect ("acting white"), habitus, a political status, and, most importantly for this chapter, a sense of belonging or having a right to be in the US (Bonilla-Silva, Goar, and Embrick 2006; Fredrickson 1981; Gualtieri 2001;

Harris 1993; Lipsitz 2006, 2011; Martinot 2010; Saperstein and Penner 2012; Tyson, Darity, and Castellino 2004; Wray 2006).

When South Asians and Arabs are positioned as white, they are positioned as white economically, affectively, phenotypically, and/or through seeking it. None of these types of whiteness particularly conflict with their Muslimness. The whiteness that conflicts with Muslimness is about a sense of belonging based on a presumed right to be in what is now the US via the logic of settler colonialism, which is a fundamental part of what it means to be American. I show that Arab and South Asian Muslims experience some privileges and types of whiteness, but are still positioned as not American. All this emphasizes how Muslimness is foreign since nonblack Muslims can be white in various ways but not in one of the fundamental ways for which whiteness was created. In contrast, European descended white Americans' case for whiteness can be made even if they do not have affective, phenotypic, and economic whiteness. In short, I argue that Arab and South Asian Muslims are able to be white in all these ways except belonging. This preserves the whiteness aspect of what it means to be American while also allowing some to have a taste of the American dream, which leads to the sometimes-white working to attempt to build a stronger connection to whiteness since that is how an argument for being American is made. And the benefits can be nice.

Muslim = Brown

In the evening as people in North Hill were just getting out of work around five, I met Hasan at an upscale coffee shop he suggested. Hasan has the sort of rounded features and brown skin that to me give away that he is Egyptian. He wears his hair close cropped and has little facial hair, though I saw him with a beard once that was gone the next time I saw him. He went

to order something to drink, and came back laughing. He asked if the recorder was on. I said no but that I can turn it on. He said "OK, good," and proceeded to tell me the following story as I hit the record button. The man at the counter asked Hasan where he is from. Hasan said Texas. The man asked, "Where are you really from?" and Hasan said Egypt. The man offered in response that he is half Palestinian, half Syrian. Hasan started laughing and he said, "Palestinians and Syrians always get me. This is the second time that happened." What "happened?" Hasan assumed the man at the counter was white American. Many Palestinians and Syrians are lighter skinned and can physically pass for white, so he thought they were white American. He thought a white American was asking him where he is from, which has a different significance than if a fellow Arab (Muslim or not) asks him where he is from. Hasan's attitude about the interaction shifted. He went from feeling put off to a less negative feeling when he learned that the man was Palestinian and Syrian.

The first time "that happened," Hasan was at a picnic he organized in a park in North Hill to celebrate Eid (holiday at the end of Ramadan). Getting people together and arranging social gatherings is his thing. A few Muslims had gathered in the park, and more and more were coming. Their group expanded, taking up more space, and moving closer to a small group of lighter skinned people sitting and talking. Hasan went up to the smaller group and apologized for encroaching and asked if their group could move to make more room for the Muslim group. They said they were actually with his group. They were also Syrian and Palestinian. Hasan felt bad about not being able to tell that the group is Arab. To him, not recognizing that they were Arab meant assuming that they did not belong in a Muslim gathering. Hasan's stories show how being Muslim and/or Arab means being not white. But more importantly for this chapter, these two stories offer direct evidence that being Arab means being nonwhite.

Taha is one of Hasan's friends who also lives and works in North Hill. Taha is a 22-year-old South Asian Muslim whose demographic information fits most of the young South Asian Muslim crowd in West City: his parents immigrated to the US from Pakistan, he was born and raised Muslim in another part of the US, and he moved to the West coast to pursue a job in the technology industry. We had the following conversation when I asked him to refer me to other Muslims I could interview:

> Taha: You should meet my friend Lisa! She's white.
> Atiya: Is she Muslim?
> Taha: No, she's not.
> Atiya: Well, it would be cool to meet her anyway.
> Taha: You totally should. She's *way* more Muslim than me. She loves Bollywood and knows Hindi way better than me! (laughs)

Taha views knowledge and appreciation of South Asian culture and languages as qualities associated with Muslims. Of course, he knows that loving Bollywood and knowing Hindi are not part of being a religious Muslim, so what does it mean to say that a white non-Muslim is "more Muslim" than him based on these factors? Taha associates being Muslim with being South Asian. He also associates it with *not* being white American, which is why his joke works.

Taha's interview revealed that he does not have Muslims in his life who are not South Asian but I have seen him in spaces that have Muslims who are not South Asian. One could argue that the homogeneity of his Muslim social circle is what leads him to believe that Muslims as a whole are brown like the Muslims in his social circle and that the association is not because of larger racial/religious meanings. However, the fact that Taha's Muslim friends are largely South Asian does not explain why people associate brownness with Muslimness because Taha is not the only person to make this association. People who are neither brown nor have brown social circles also make this association. I observed black and white Muslims making this

association as well, as the following conversation with Malik, a 35-year-old African American Muslim, illustrates:

> Malik: Muslims don't understand black folks.
> Atiya: But doesn't "Muslims" include "black folks?"
> Malik: You know what I mean. It's the same for me.

Who are "Muslims" such that, to Malik, they do not already include "black folks"? Malik is an activist who participates in Twitter conversations like #BeingBlackandMuslim. Like many black Muslims, one of his political goals is to make space for black Muslims, and for their experiences and contributions to be recognized by non- and fellow Muslims. When black Muslims refer to "Muslim" in a way that limits it to South Asians and Arabs, it is to offer social commentary – a critique of how these groups have ownership over defining what it means to be a proper religious Muslim. In this conversation, Malik was not referring to black Muslims, but rather brown Muslims. He did not have to specify that he was talking about brown Muslims because when the word "Muslim" is said without a modifying adjective, such as black or white, people know who the phrase is referring to. That may explain why Malik was irritated at my follow up question that otherwise has an obvious answer.

Only one black Muslim participant out of 14, Ayesha, sometimes used "Muslims" to refer only to black Muslims in everyday conversations. She grew up attending a black Muslim school in a majority black part of Waterville. She did not meet nonblack Muslims until she was an adult. Aside from her, the remaining black (and also otherwise non-brown) Muslim participants use "Muslim" to refer to Muslims across ethnic/racial groups or as in Malik's example above, to refer to Arab and South Asian Muslims only. This shows that there is an association between being brown and Muslim that is bigger than the experiences and self-identity of brown Muslims as my conversation with Taha might suggest.

I also observed uses of the word "Muslim" to describe events and organizations that are mostly by and for brown Muslims. Taimour, a 26-year-old South Asian Muslim, and a few other young, mostly South Asian Muslims, coordinated a regular open mic event that had "Muslim" in the title. Nearly all coordinators were second generation Americans, largely children born to South Asian immigrants, and some born to African and Arab immigrants. At the event, people took turns reading their poems or short stories. The themes in the poems and stories at each individual open mic event were pretty stable. The events were similar in content, form, and presenters. The group of presenters was more diverse than the group of organizers, but not by much. On average, one white and one black person would present each time, and it was rare for the black person to be African American. At one of the open mic events, Malik texted me from where he was sitting on the other side of the room and said that there were too many "immigrant kid jokes," which suggests that some things that are for "Muslims" generally are still racially/ethnically specific.

Most poems, prose, or creative writing read aloud at the open mic event were about identity in some way. Many presenters offered identity-based social commentary. One South Asian woman who worked for a technology company delivered a piece about having trouble finding housing in the area. She received more positive feedback from the audience than many other performers did. Audience members were laughing, snapping, and clapping. In a conversation after the event concluded, a South Asian Muslim man said approvingly that the woman told a story that "had nothing to do with the fact that she's Muslim." Why is it good to have a poem that has nothing to do with the fact that she is Muslim? What makes it good?

Taimour addressed this question. He's an engineer at a major corporation in the area, like many of the young South Asian and Arab Muslims in this study:

Taimour: Muslims should be more regular, not for their Islamicness to be the biggest thing about them. Aziz Ansari – Islam is not there – he's like, "I don't know about that. I happen to have the skin color and I was born into this religion." Aziz Ansari is like that. Mindy Kaling is probably like that. There's a brownness.
Atiya: Are brownness and Muslimness related?
Taimour: They're interconnected deeply and I have a hard time disentangling that. I just realized that. They're hopelessly entangled for me.

Initially in this conversation, Taimour was trying to make the point that Aziz Ansari holds on to being brown without his "Islamicness." When I asked Taimour if being brown and Muslim are connected, he said that he realized that it is hard to disentangle them. Being Muslim is entangled with Taimour's identity as brown, even when he tries to separate them. While Taimour says in so many words why he cannot easily separate brown from Muslim through talking about Aziz Ansari saying "I happen to have the skin color and I was born into this religion," Taimour also makes reference to two South Asian American celebrities to make his point that these things should not dictate who Muslims are. Aziz Ansari is a comedian who is South Asian and born into a Muslim family in the US. Mindy Kaling is also a comedian and South Asian, but she was born into a Hindu family in the US. Kaling, a brown but non-Muslim woman, is used as evidence to demonstrate Taimour's ultimate point that Muslims should aspire to be "regular" or average people. This further suggests that brownness is so soaked in meanings of being Muslim that a *non-Muslim* person who is brown is also included in defining what it means to be Muslim. Also being an average person, or "regular," for Taimour means that being Muslim is not the most salient or visible identity. There is something constraining about the Muslimness that Taimour wants to distance himself from, but because he is also brown, he cannot quite accomplish that since they are entangled. But he wants to.

Allison (white) seems to pick up on this desire for keeping the brownness without the

Muslimness that Taimour and Taha express as she tried to describe Mustafa Masjid, a majority

African American mosque:

> People at Mustafa Masjid are – and you know it's so different than like South Asian Muslims, you know, who are often sort of more *cultural* in their orientation towards – I mean that's not true either, that's a stupid thing to say. I don't know what it is. But you know you meet, for example, young South Asian Muslims, but all sort of varying levels of religiosity or piety. For some people it's really important, some people not that important. But the people that go to Mustafa Masjid are overwhelmingly like a really zealous kind of bunch, you know?

Allison struggled to get her point across. She started to say that South Asian Muslims are "more

cultural" but then backtracked. Then she tried again to describe what she meant by offering an

example of young South Asian Muslims (who sound a lot like Taha and Taimour) who are not

particularly pious. Her point suggests that it is possible for South Asian Muslims to have an

orientation toward being Muslim that is not about religious practice because they can establish a

connection through a different route. Because being brown and Muslim are nearly synonymous,

it is possible to make a claim to being Muslim as a brown person while not being particularly

religious or pious. Rather than analyzing their connection to being Muslim as a claim, it may be

more accurate to say that a claim is made *for* people like Taha and Taimour; their brown bodies

make this claim for them whether they embrace it or struggle with it.

For Leena, a 28-year-old Arab Muslim woman, her connection to Islam is also not

through religiosity or piety. She is an activist whose primary community is fellow queer Arab

Muslims. She lives in Waterville. Leena has a connection to Islam that she describes as

"political." In an interview, I asked her, "What does being Muslim look like for you now?" She

responded, "Nothing. I just identify. I don't do anything particularly Muslim. I just care about

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Islam. No, I care about Islamophobia, because it hurts people." Following up, I asked, "Have you

always felt this way, or has it changed over time? The way you describe is caring about

Islamophobia but not having a core set of beliefs about practicing Islam." She confirmed and

explained:

> I wore hijab but I also did that for very politicized reasons as well. Most of my
> religious convictions are tied to political convictions. And so my strong belief in
> Islam stems from that as well. And that subsided when I realized that I can
> actually have these political views and not necessarily be committed to these
> religious beliefs. It was a maturing evolution I guess? I still respect all religion...I
> think I realized also that what I loved about the hijab [is] that it challenged the
> US. People don't want to see it and I love being in-your-face about it. It was very
> empowering in that sense.

Hijab is a signifier that carries meanings of foreignness to the US, which is part of the challenge

that it poses to the US that is important to Leena. So hijab can serve as a symbol that she finds

empowering in how it challenges the US. By rejecting the religious beliefs in Islam but retaining

a "political" connection to it, Leena's example demonstrates that being Muslim is connected to

brownness and not being American.

Nur is a 30-year-old Arab American and West African multiracial and transgender

Muslim who lives in Waterville. Like Leena, being an activist is important to them and their

primary community is queer Muslims or Arabs.[15] In their interview, Nur explains: "I identify as

a secular Muslim and it's a very strong part of my political identity. In the past five years,

Islam….or, being Muslim-identified, has been an explicit part of identities for me." Nur goes on

to describe the shift:

> [I was] so careful about…not compartmentalizing my gender and sexual identity
> and racial/ethnic identity. But there was always this piece about spirituality that
> wasn't addressed …I had to just make some judgments about what was not

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[15] Nur's preferred pronoun is "them."

enough or too much of something to *really* be Muslim…[until] a clarification that, fuck fragmentation, let's just live wholly and see how that goes.

Before their attempt to live wholly or live out their identities together without concern for what it means to be "*really* be Muslim," Nur still identified as Muslim. Nur's distinction between Islam and being Muslim-identified captures the pattern here that Muslimness functions at the level of racial/ethnic identity or heritage. For Nur and other brown Muslims, it may be that they must contend with their Muslimness because they cannot shake it of its racial meanings. In other words, it may not be a choice to maintain a racial connection so they find ways to navigate it.

While Nur's and Leena's stories can yield deeper analysis of how their sexuality plays a role in their relationship to their Muslimness, what is of most interest in this study is what their stories mean for how Arab and South Asian Muslims are typically positioned. They are positioned as brown, and to be brown and Muslim are largely synonymous. This is the case whether Arab and South Asian Muslims are straight or LGBT, and whether they live in Waterville like Nur and Leena or North Hill like Taha and Taimour. As this section has shown, the connection between brownness and being Muslim appears in different places. It appears in how participants, including black Muslims, use the word "Muslim" to refer to brown Muslims, but add qualifiers (e.g., black) when referring to non-brown Muslims. The connection also appears in the self-identity of participants like Taha and Taimour, who try but cannot separate their brownness from being Muslim. All of these data show that there is an entanglement between being brown and Muslim. Literature on the racialization of Muslims has shown that non-Muslims view Muslims as foreign and brown (Rana 2011; Selod 2014; Silva 2016). The data I have presented show that these ideas about Muslims as brown and not American are not only externally attributed to Muslims but also find resonance in Muslim communities: Muslims

use these ideas to identify and make sense of one another as well (e.g., Hasan did not expect white-passing individuals to be Muslim or Arab). With this entanglement made plain, I now turn to moments when Arab and South Asian Muslims are positioned as white.

South Asian and Arab Muslims as White

Taimour's desire for Muslims to just be "regular," described above, is connected to what it means to be American. The connection between regular and American was made clear to me at a party I attended one evening in North Hill hosted by Muslims. Tickets to the party, which had to be pre-purchased, cost upwards of $30, and they were sold out. The party was held in an art gallery – white walls, white floors, a small, largely colorless painting every few feet, and bright lights above on the high, white ceilings. In some corners of the long room were pop-up shops selling clothing, jewelry and other accessories for the most part. One necklace that was to be worn as a collar went for $95. Lauryn Hill, Bel Biv Devoe, and other 90s classics blared in the background. There was a DJ and no one was dancing. The room was not set up for dancing, but the music was at the volume that one might expect dancing; it was not background music. Most people stood around with a drink – a nonalcoholic "mocktail" – available for a couple dollars. Nearly everyone was in their twenties or thirties, and they had clearly dressed up for the event. At least half of the women had bright red lipstick, with the kind of uniform waves in their hair that take work, and heels that said they were taking an Uber to get home. Some had bleached blond hair. Some wore hijabs. As though it were a uniform, at least half of the men were in slim fitting suits with skinny ties, immaculately styled hair and beards. Out of the small handful of black people in the room, I knew two to be African American, and many of the remainder to be second generation Americans of African descent. People were here to see and be seen, and most of the happenings at this event were just that – seeing and being seen.

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This is what it looks like when "regular" reaches its logical conclusion among affluent Muslim youth. It looks like having expensive drinks that, on the one hand, do not have alcohol, but are meant to mimic drinking. It looks like loud music and high fashion, but no dancing and also not much skin showing. This party was for young Muslims in the area, and the vast majority of those who attended and organized it were South Asian and Arab. But all of this could easily describe a party for young white urban professionals looking to meet one another. Organizers discussed the event as creating culture, as a way to be cool. In a rapidly gentrifying city, for highly educated and well paid young brown Muslims in the US, what does cool mean? It might have something to do with South Asian Muslims participants' desire to be "regular" people and not for their "Islamicness to be the biggest thing about them," as Taimour said. That desire may be embodied in this event. Features of this event highlight the types of whiteness that Arab and South Asian Muslims experience. The types of whiteness embodied in this event are economic, phenotypic, affective, spatial, and cultural; specifically, expensive tickets in an expensive venue in an expensive part of North Hill, fashion most popular in white America, and white-friendly elements of black culture like hip hop tracks from the 90s that also made it to the top 40 list.

But what are the attendees of this party looking for? What do things like expensive tickets, drinks without alcohol, and loud music without dancing give them? These questions point to another type of whiteness – belonging as Americans – that evades Arab and South Asian Muslims. It is the linchpin of whiteness since settler colonial expansion is built into this type of whiteness, thus Arab and South Asian Muslims seeking whiteness must work hard to attempt to achieve this final, key form of whiteness. They are able to manage the foreignizing effect of their Muslimness, or the idea that they are not American, by emulating aspects of whiteness or playing up the whiteness that they do have access to.

Whiteness for Arab and South Asian Muslims in the suburbs is economic: wealthy and upwardly mobile. Salimah told me that she heard that a wealthy mosque in a suburban part of Stone Heights, a South Asian majority mosque, was raising $1 million to open a new wing. I thought I might fact check this and asked Michael, a white American convert to Islam, if he knew anything about it. He was not sure if this was true. I asked him if the mosque needs that new wing, and before I finished asking my question he scoffed and said, "No, absolutely not." Other times in this conversation he said that that community is "actually selfish" because "they want themselves and their friends to be comfortable but are not willing to put their money anywhere else." He said that there is an incredible amount of money in the suburbs and that there are "uncles" (what South Asians call older men out of respect) who have hundreds of millions of dollars. This number sounded absurd to me, and then he explained. He said that these are uncles in their 60s and 70s and they caught the "tech growth at the beginning" of the industry's explosive growth. They own technology companies that have taken off. They "fund Muslim life in the suburbs" and the story of their community is about "creating their own personal American dream." He said that they live in apartment buildings that they build that "other techies live in and that no one else can afford." These are "resort style apartments." He said that they build institutions that will benefit each other and "partake in this whiteness." I told him about how some say that South Asians in the suburbs there are essentially white. They are "totally white," he responded, with what seemed like some satisfaction that his is not the only kind of whiteness in the Muslim community.

This economic type of whiteness for South Asian and Arab Muslims can be seen in North Hill, too, where the "mocktails" party was. For example, when Taimour was filling out a demographic information sheet for me prior to our interview, he wrote "yuppie" as his class:

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Atiya: Tell me more about why you wrote "yuppie" for class.
Taimour: I think that, kinda like, I don't know. I don't know what class I'm supposed to be, but I'm just kinda single, professional, with money to burn that's got a privileged lifestyle, so yuppie.

Socio-economics are especially important as one of the ways Arabs and South Asians assume whiteness. It is also connected to white habitus. White racial self-segregation leads whites to develop positive ideas about themselves and negative ideas about others (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006), which promotes in-group solidarity. Arab and South Asian Muslims experiencing economic and spatial aspects of whiteness that come with living in wealthy neighborhoods and majority white areas can also experience the development of these positive ideas about themselves, which positions them as part of the white in-group relative to blacks. "Money whitens," as it is said in Brazil, and I argue that for Arabs and South Asian Muslims, wealth and suburbia can bestow whiteness in ways that it cannot for wealthy suburban black people.

The whiteness of Arabs and South Asians was confusing and incoherent at times. Leena (Arab) said in so many words that some Arabs and South Asians are white. She then warned me, "You will not get out of grad school if you are trying to understand it. It's too complex." She continued, "But there are also Afghans and Persians who really identify as white. I don't feel Arabs see themselves that way." "What are the differences?" I asked, "Why don't Arabs see themselves that way even when some of them can pass, physically?" She said, "I have no idea but it's very bizarre. Afghans, too, and whiteness...I don't know. Maybe because I work with a boss who is an Afghan woman who's really into white people and like really...She's just like very...whatever." Leena does not believe that Arabs see themselves as white, but believes Afghans and Persians see themselves as white. She could not offer reasons why she sees it this way, and could not quite describe it, but she feels it. These groups' whiteness operates on an affective level in Leena's eyes.

Sometimes, participants position Arab and South Asian Muslims as whiter than white people, as Sulaiman, a multiracial (black and white) Muslim man, once seemed to argue in comparisons he made between white converts and Arab and South Asian Muslims. Referring to two white converts, Sulaiman said, "They're not brothers (black men), but they're brothers. They're in the struggle." These are the same two white men who are conversant with aspects of their white privilege; the ones who joked about being able to get served food quickly at Muslim events because they are white. He further says that, "On the one hand, there's immigrants, by which I mean South Asians and Arabs, where it's a sickness, and I truly mean that, a sickness." The sickness is that they seek whiteness in contrast to the white men who are "in the struggle" more than South Asians and Arabs. To elaborate on his point about sickness, he told me a story about when he was in Saudi Arabia traveling. It was around the same time that the news broke that Rachel Dolezal, a leader in black community work who identified as black, was actually born and raised a white woman. This was also around when Dylan Roof killed nine black churchgoers in Charleston. While in Saudi Arabia and discussing these matters and Black Lives Matter, someone asked Sulaiman "in all sincerity if there was an increase in police killings and violence in the US." He said, "Even the question reeks of privilege!" His voice softened as he talked about their sincerity, as though he was trying to honor the sincerity of their ignorance while also not excusing it by calling it a matter of privilege. He posits the privilege of Arabs and South Asians as greater than that of white Muslims who he sees as having chosen a different relationship to their whiteness. Here, Sulaiman argues that the whiteness of Arabs and South Asians, and not being in the struggle, is in their seeking of whiteness and their distancing themselves from the struggles of black people to the point that they are not aware of basic realities for black people like police violence. Even their question troubles him. It is also notable

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that he is talking about Arabs in Saudi Arabia, not in the US, which suggests that, for participants like Sulaiman, the idea that Arabs are seeking whiteness carries across borders.

As the previous chapter shows, white American Muslims try to distance themselves from their whiteness, and being Muslim allows them to do so. In contrast, brown Muslims, according to Sulaiman, seek whiteness by distancing themselves from black people and their struggles. Brown Muslims can do so without losing the authenticity of their Muslimness or their insider status within Muslim communities. Arab and South Asian Muslims are able to frame their Muslim identity in different ways to accomplish whiteness despite their Muslimness by highlighting the other ways that they are white, like distancing themselves from blacks. In the story Sulaiman tells, Arab Muslims seem genuinely unaware of blacks' struggles and it may not be an intentional distancing. There are parallels to Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's (2006) concept of white habitus here. Bonilla-Silva argues that white habitus is a product of white self-segregation, which leads whites to not know black people. The lack of personal relationships with black people then leads them to believe positive things about themselves and negative things about blacks. Whites further are ignorant of some of the realities blacks face because whites have designed space so that they are not exposed to those realities. This concept of white habitus can be applied here to show how distancing from blacks does not have to be intentional on the part of individual nonblacks for it to have an impact. Similarly, those Sulaiman was in conversation with in Saudi Arabia were genuinely ignorant while also participating in white privilege, as Sulaiman sees it.

As a South Asian in the field – where at times to be South Asian was to be white and certainly to be in a position of privilege in Muslim communities – I was sometimes tested on where I stand. One such moment was after a gathering at a Somali woman's house in a smaller

city adjacent to Waterville. The guests were all Muslim women, including Salimah, who is African American, along with her other friends who are African American, Somali and Ethiopian American and Latina. There was also one white American woman and an Arab woman and her cousin. At one point during the party, the Arab woman's t-shirt became the subject of conversation. It was a t-shirt with an image of Tupac on it and someone complimented it and asked a question about being a fan of Tupac. The Arab woman then said that she did not listen to Tupac ("I just liked the shirt"). In another conversation that evening, the Arab woman's cousin made a comment that Waterville is "unsafe," and said that she was told to "not look people in the face" or "smile at them in the street." I saw Salimah's expression change. Even as black people are being pushed out of Waterville due to gentrification, it still has a relatively large black population and a reputation for being "unsafe."

Wanting to debrief on the party, Salimah called me the next day. She asked what I thought about the Arab woman's cousin who tagged along with her. When Salimah asked me "what I think" about the cousin, she was really asking about these two things that happened at the party: the t-shirt and the cousin's comment about safety. Based on Salimah's hesitant tone, I felt like I was being tested on whether or not I caught the covert racism in the cousin's comments. I was briefly hesitant, but then realized that Salimah already knows what I think from us having spent so much time together. In response to Salimah's question about what I thought, I said that the woman is repeating what I have heard from many immigrants who are fed many ideas about safety, America, and black people. I also noted that I am not surprised that she was told to not "look people in the face" or "smile at them in the street" but that I was surprised she said it directly to two of the African American women who were there, Salimah included. "That's the white privilege part of it," Salimah jumped in, that they feel they can say such things

to people's faces. She then asked if I thought Arab people were white. Usually Salimah was uninterested in questions about racial boundaries, so I was pleasantly surprised that she asked this question. I said that sometimes they can count as white in terms of skin color, like when people look at them, but maybe not once some of them open their mouths and people see them as foreign; perhaps they are somewhere between white and nonwhite. Salimah then said that her read is that the Arab woman is "drawn to the cool." That the woman thinks black culture is cool and wants to be part of it for that reason. Salimah then named people at the party who felt "real" to her, and said that the Arab woman does not feel real to her. In this moment, Salimah is characterizing the woman as white because of the woman's relationship to blackness: the woman was "drawn to the cool" of black cultural production while also participating in anti-black racism. This type of whiteness is cultural. It draws the "cool" from blackness, which I observed in the party with the "mocktails" and 90s hip hop, too. Salimah's contribution to the conversation on whether the Arab woman is white is to say that the woman objectifies blackness, which might be the most "white" thing to do if we recall the historical construction of whiteness on the backs of those it constructed as black through objectifying.

The women at the party all knew that the Arab woman's cousin was talking about black people; but what was unclear was whether she saw the African American women at the party as black. This experience at the gathering may also be interpreted as showing a separation between blackness and Muslimness since this was a Muslim space, which may have led the woman to assume that making veiled references to *black* people may not mean anything to the *Muslim* women in the room. In her ideas about blackness and racialized space like Waterville, we see another type of whiteness that applies to Arabs. It is a form of whiteness that comes from distancing oneself from black people or taking "everything but the burden" from blacks, as Greg

Tate (2003) puts it. The Arab woman's cousin's comment suggests that she is distancing herself from black people and spaces, which has often times served as an important box to check in order to experience whiteness.

Whether or not Arab and South Asian Muslims are people of color is also an unsettled question with a range of perspectives. Speaking about a suburban area of Stone Heights, Jehan (Arab) says that it "does not have many people of color other than Arab, South Asian," she paused, not finishing her sentence before she then wondered aloud, "I don't even know if they self-identify as people of color, actually." Omar, a Latino participant, became so frustrated with anti-black and anti-Latino racism within Muslim communities at the hands of "immigrant Muslims" during our interview that at one point he threw his hands up and raised his voice, half yelling, "They don't understand people of color!" Another participant, Amina, who is East African, said, "Desis (South Asians) are the white people of the Muslim community." She was speaking specifically on the internal Muslim community racial hierarchy. For her, "white" refers to a position of power. Jehan, Omar, and Amina's perspectives lead to the question: if Arab and South Asian Muslims are not people of color, what are they? Jehan's and Omar's sense that Arab and South Asian Muslims are not necessarily people of color suggests that these groups are white. But at the same time, Muslims as a whole are sometimes positioned as people of color. For example, at a march to observe Martin Luther King Day led by various groups in West City connected to the Black Lives Matter movement and local racial justice groups, organizers intentionally arranged the march in the following order: black people march in the front, followed by nonblack people of color, and white people at the end of the march. Within the nonblack people of color was a "third world" contingent. Muslims were to stand in that contingent. The group I attended the march with was made up of many black Muslims,

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especially members of Mustafa Masjid and WDCM, both majority black mosques. In the arrangement of the march, Muslims are explicitly positioned as nonblack people of color, even though most of the Muslims there were black (African and African American), multiracial, and white.

In this section, I have presented data on moments when South Asian and Arab Muslims are positioned as white. I show how factors like class and racial attitudes, which scholars of the bi- or tri-racial structure in the US have argued help position people in their respective racial groups (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Kim 1999b; Tuan 1998), also help position Arab and South Asian Muslims as white. But these factors do not appear in literature on Muslims' racial positioning. In my findings, we see how people who are "racialized as Muslim" also position themselves as white or are seen as white, which suggests that we must put literatures and insights on Muslim racialization and the black-white binary in conversation. Literature on Muslim racialization emphasizes national security, war, and policies as what racializes Muslims, and research on black and white racialization emphasizes class, color, and culture. Bringing these literatures together helps us understand how all of these factors influence the racial positioning of multiple groups. In the next section, I more directly address a final type of whiteness – belonging as Americans – and argue that Arabs and South Asians do not have access to this type of whiteness.

American Belonging as Whiteness

Maira is a 33-year-old South Asian Muslim woman who lives in the suburbs of Stone Heights and identifies as a person of color. She feels, however, that it's "odd" to identify that way:

> Atiya: How do you identify, racially or ethnically?

Maira: I guess I identify as South Asian…in the oddest of ways I identify as a person of color without really any specificity. I think that's odd.
Atiya: What do you mean that it's odd?
Maira: Well, we (siblings) didn't grow up very Pakistani. We figured out at a very early age that my parents spoke really fluent English and had no convincing accents so they couldn't convince us to speak Urdu to them. We didn't go back. I've only been to Pakistan twice, because they prioritized going to Saudi Arabia [for religious pilgrimages]…There was as much a connection to the motherland as maybe just - we wear the clothes. We didn't grow up watching Bollywood or anything of that sort, and so for me I was born and raised in Arizona, United States. I don't identify as white (laughs) and also not as - I mean I identify as an American, but have trouble with nation-state based identities. We don't choose anything about it and that's true for race and ethnicity as well. I have so many objections to the way the United States was created and our policies today that it's hard to feel comfortable just saying I'm an American.

Maira thinks it is odd to identify as a person of color because she thinks "people of color" is supposed to be an umbrella identity with specific racial and ethnic identities under it, but she feels strongly about people of color as her identity and ambivalent about what is under it (South Asian). She does not identify as white, and seems to begin to say that she does not identify as American before saying that she does indeed identify as American. She talks about "white" and "American" in the same breath as she explains her identity. South Asian and Arab participants talked about being or not being American frequently. Maira is uncomfortable identifying as an American because of her political views on the US's settler colonialism and foreign policy, which she mentions elsewhere in her interview.

Omar is a 41-year old South Asian Muslim with a thick beard, and he typically wears a long robe and a kufi. In his interview, he talked about being American frequently. He brought most questions I asked around to Americanness:

Atiya: So what did being Muslim look like at home, growing up? What did it involve and not involve?
Omar: You know, my parents were very conservative Muslims, so Islam was just a core part of our lives, you know? Praying the prayers every day was just something that happened – I mean, there's no force ever – everyone just prayed,

that was just how we were raised. Reciting the Qur'an, having your daily Qur'an lesson at home, having your daily Islamic studies lesson – and it wasn't like hours and hours long of some instruction, it was just, like, maybe 15, 20 minutes every single day, though. And so you covered more in 5 days than people would generally cover in a Sunday school class, which is why I never went to Sunday school, actually. Because my parents just taught us at home and (pause) but that was just it, yeah. I mean, my parents were just, you know, really simple, humble people and being Muslim just meant being good character of people. We used to mow our neighbors' lawns, we used to put their garbage cans away, you know. Just – we were just your average American neighbor.

Omar spends most of his time answering my question about what being Muslim looked like at home describing religious practices. At the end he paused and spoke on general values of simplicity and humility. He tied these values to being Muslim *and* to being "your average American neighbor." The average American neighbor he describes is a suburban one who helps their neighbor – one who lives in a house, has a lawn, and has garbage cans that sit at the end of the driveway once every week or two for a garbage truck to come by and retrieve them. This image of averageness is suburban, which is a white racialized space (Massey and Denton 1994; Oliver and Shapiro 2006).

The next question in my interview with Omar asked, "What things [do] you do now as part of being Muslim? Is it kind of similar to how you grew up or is it different in some ways?" He began by saying, "Very much so. Just your average citizen – I mean, being Muslim – what does being Muslim mean to me? I think being Muslim to me means being conscious to God, and that's my personal relationship with God, right?" He went on to repeat his point about being an "average citizen." He then said more about religious practice: prayers, fasting, going to the mosque when possible, dressing modestly, and being a "good, concerned neighbor." He then told me a story about a car accident that he and his wife were in. The man who hit them tried to drive away, and Omar stopped him, saying, "Dude, just hold on, man, don't run away. You're going to

get into a lot of trouble." The driver responded, "Man, leave me alone." This conversation is happening while Omar, his wife (who wears hijab), and the man who hit them were standing outside of their cars in a residential area of Stone Heights:

> Next thing you know, you got people coming out of their homes, and they see this bearded person, you know, and I'm like, "They're probably thinking *I'm* running away from –" I don't know, because at some point my wife's like, "Everyone's looking at us," and I'm like, "Oh yeah, huh – we don't - " *I* think I'm very American. I am American. But I look different, so (pause) and then there was helicopters, but, you know, that's - that's what - I mean, I never thought twice, it wasn't- you know, I never thought twice, it was just…it's a busy day at home, just ordering a pizza, just going online, on my phone, on an app, ordering a pizza at the local Pizza Hut and just going to pick it up, being just an average normal human being. But then I realize, "Oh my God, people are looking at me because of my beard or the way that I'm dressed." (Pause) So, yeah, I mean, if – what does Muslim being – what does being Muslim mean today? It's just trying to be a good person, if that makes sense.

In this story, the other man is in the wrong for attempting to leave the scene of an accident he caused but Omar and his wife come under suspicion because they "look Muslim." This suspicion leads to Omar defending himself against this suspicion to me as he reflects on this experience. His defense is that he is American, and then he lists all the "average," "normal" things that he does. He did not expect to be viewed the way that he feels he was viewed as not American. His Americanness is not a given, and he is suspicious in part because of it.

Omar consistently emphasized the importance of being American, even in Muslim spaces:

> I do believe that the spokesperson for the mosque should be an individual who speaks English without an accent. I don't want the masjid to be a place where children feel like they've come into some foreign land. I greatly admire and acknowledge the efforts of our immigrant parents, and, you know, immigrant friends, but, like, the spokes – do you – I mean, these are – I – I really want these institutions to be (pause) American institutions.

Speaking English "without an accent" means to talk like a white American, and at the very least not in the accents that people who immigrated from "some foreign land" might have. Omar stumbles over his words a bit, perhaps not actually comfortable with his feeling about immigrants, even as he feels this strongly, and he pauses before he says "American institutions." For Omar, being an American institution means being led by someone who speaks like a white American, and perhaps even a black American, but either way – not someone from a "foreign land." This emphasizes that brown Muslims are not American and if they emulate white practices including speaking a certain way, they can reduce the foreignness and possibly access some Americanness. Making a connection to being American for a brown Muslim like Omar is done through imagery of white suburban life, suggesting a link between Americanness and whiteness. But why does he say this point about being an average American when he is otherwise talking about religious practice? I argue that it is because there is a historical and contemporary discourse that posits Muslim and American as separate, and Omar feels the need, whether consciously or not, to repeatedly counter that by calling upon images of American whiteness. The fact that he feels the need to do this suggests that he and other Arab and South Asian Muslims may not feel that they are actually American, or white. Because he is Muslim, brown, and looks it, his Americanness doesn't speak for itself – it has to be named. White Americans do not need to prove that they are American. Omar's statement also illustrates a slightly different but important point: for some South Asian and Arab Muslims who seek whiteness, it can mean reframing their religious practices as normal and American, or as something that does not compromise their Americanness. Again, for white Christians, their religiosity does not need to be reframed to show that it is legitimately American. For Omar, being American does not involve letting go of his Islamic religious practice. Rather, Omar

reframes his religious practice as part of being American which recalls this historical positioning of Muslim and American as separate.

Maira, like Omar, is also concerned with personal piety. However, she feels very differently from him in terms of being American:

> I have a problem with staying quiet about wars and drones and bombings…It was fascinating for me to see that *outside* of the Muslim community that there's an expectation that Muslims shut up to keep up and just do the American thing and salute the flag and our troops. That we don't have the first amendment rights that Glenn Greenwald has, or the ACLU has. And that hypocrisy is problematic. Also inside the Muslim community for Muslims who [say], "How dare you? You're being unpatriotic. This is so bad for the image of Muslims." It's like, "Wait, so we're going to compromise our values so that you can feel like a flag-waving American?"

Maira feels ambivalent about identifying as an American because of American violence abroad, and feels that she is not given space to not "stay quiet" because Muslims are perceived differently than whites when they critique US violence abroad. She refers to the ACLU and Glenn Greenwald, a white American journalist who is outspoken about war and foreign policy to make her point that whites can get away with things that she cannot. What is significant about her statement is that she contrasts whiteness and being Muslim, such that being white means being able to be American and have first amendment rights. She also refers to how Muslims feel pressure from outside their community to be patriotic, since it is important for their image and for them to feel like "flag-waving Americans." This suggests that the Muslims she is referring to in her community in Stone Heights have to make an effort to be Americans, and one way they do it is by being patriotic. If they are not patriotic, they believe it makes them look bad *as Muslims*. Non-Muslim white Americans, in contrast, can be unpatriotic without their identity as Americans being questioned – they may be seen as bad Americans or as un-American, but they are not

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typically cast as non-American. The missing piece for Arab and South Asian Muslims'

Americanness is whiteness, the type that comes through belonging as an American.

There is a strong association between whiteness and Americanness in my data and the

literature (Devos and Banaji 2005; Fredrickson 1981; Gualtieri 2009; Haney-Lopez 2006;

Tehranian 2008). Literature also shows, however, that there is also an association between

blackness and Americanness (Daulatzai 2012; Jackson 2005; Young 2014). This latter point is

important to engage here as well. I have argued that Arab and South Asian Muslims make great

effort to be seen as American, and it occurs through seeking whiteness. Thus far, I have focused

on whiteness, but because there is an association between blackness and Americanness as well,

one might wonder how blackness enters this argument: is it possible that South Asians and Arabs

are simply trying to be American in whatever way, whether white, black, or something else? One

way to address this question is to see if blackness is a way that Arab and South Asian Muslims

attempt to belong as Americans. Jehan, an Arab Muslim woman, speaks to this in her interview

when she told me about how she is trying to figure out where she fits:

> Jehan: It's interesting because I almost felt that as I was in college and in my early
> twenties, there was this narrative around "American Islam" that was so heavily
> pushed that I almost subconsciously tried to dissociate myself from my culture.
> And from my roots in that sense and I didn't physically visit Egypt till I was 24,
> so later in life. And I was like "OK, I'm just an American Muslim, that's what I
> am, that's who I am." And when I went to Egypt and I met people in my extended
> family for the first time and I saw how Islam was lived there and frankly just how
> much healthier they are there in their expressions of religion and how that
> integrates into their personalities and lives, I started to just gravitate more…I
> stopped pushing this whole narrative of "American Muslim American Muslim
> American Muslim." And then I think as I journeyed further into life like starting
> to work at [a black Muslim organization] and understanding the African
> American religious experience and learning more about the lives of Elijah
> Muhammad, Warith Deen Muhammad, and their community, it's almost like
> they're…they have a different experience altogether than all of us, [than] mine,
> and it's interestingly the main narrative for how Islam has flourished in this

country so I almost felt like a fake saying I was an American Muslim, like what does that mean exactly?

Atiya: That was my next question.

Jehan: Yeah so I don't know I think how race and religion come together – for me it is – I feel now more than ever much more deeply connected to Africa as my home continent. I don't know what it means yet to be an American Muslim, I am trying to focus more on developing my version of myself and to see how that fits in to a broader picture as yet to be determined. I will say that I gravitate more towards the African American Muslim community and a lot of that I think is a result of having been in circles like [the black Muslim organization] or the experience of African American communities and my own lack of…I don't relate to white people, I don't relate to even Arabs a lot, I don't relate to people of South Asian cultures who may be interpreting Islam through their lens. So that kind of left me with a big question mark. So who do I relate to? And a lot of like my closest, closest friends I met through [the black Muslim organization] and all of us kind of came to an appreciation and understanding of the plight of other…and especially the minority experience, and the destitute and oppressed and the repressed and unfortunately in this country a lot of those people tend to be from the black community.

For Jehan, moving away from being an "American Muslim" came out of experiencing Muslim life in Egypt and also "gravitating towards the African American Muslim community." She says she does not relate to white people, nor does she relate to Arab and South Asians. Black Muslims have filled a void for her where her identity of being an "American Muslim" once was. This suggests that she is looking for a racial/religious home, a way to belong, and that black Muslim communities have given her that. It is a belonging that does not engage the idea of "America" while also happening through a group that is on some level American. Jehan is Egyptian, from the continent of Africa, and makes a claim to Africa as her home continent in this way. This may facilitate her sense of belonging and connection to black Muslim communities. It may not be the same for South Asian Muslims, but they are also connected to blackness by virtue of being nonwhite, as Taimour (South Asian) said. He said that he is "happy" that he has "minority

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experiences and perspectives" because he can see himself in contrast to those who are not minorities:

> Just being brown there's a certain level of urban credibility instantly. I can't explain. I was thinking about it in terms of, if I'm telling stories about the hood or something more seedy, white people will believe that I've had that experience much more easily than if I was white. It's not as if I was black, but there's a credibility. Talking about travel and stuff, it's believable that I could have had certain, I think it's a mix of people can - it's two things, people can be surprised that I can break a stereotype, and I think I have a lot of contradictions in how I navigate between drinking and not, being around Muslims and not, I just want to engage with everything I like to engage with and see how it goes. And not feel weird going to an Islamic event and going to a drinking event. This is just who I am right now, at some point it'll shake out and I'll veer toward one or the other.

Taimour has the sense that there is something about being nonwhite that puts all nonwhite people together in the eyes of whites. He feels this even if his identity and choices reflect moving more toward whiteness as I have argued earlier in this chapter.

There is ambiguity in the position of brown Muslims. This ambiguity can be a source of freedom to move around and make choices about who and what they will identify with. It is also a source of feeling placeless and unsure where they fit as Taimour and Jehan have expressed. It is also a place to experiment. Nur has expressed that they decided at some point to just try to "live wholly and see how that goes," implying experimentation. Taimour says that he likes to experiment with how people see him as well. While Americanness is elusive for Arab and South Asian Muslims, some continuously try to prove they are American through proving that they are white. Others try and then abandon the effort, and some reject these possible claims to Americanness and whiteness. Some like Leena, Nur, and Maira do not seek whiteness, while some like Taimour and Taha do. Jehan tried and failed, and now does not seek whiteness. Part of the difference between them here is in their politics and their relationship to being American –

their desire for being included, and what they might be included into. Part of the difference also is in their relationship to blackness and black people, which is analyzed in depth in Chapter 6.

Conclusion

There are some stable themes in the findings in this chapter even as there is no definitive answer on whether Arab and South Asian Muslims are white, brown, or nonwhite as a whole. The factors that allow Arab and South Asian Muslims to experience whiteness include their own desires to be white and the attendant racial attitudes; seeking the American Dream; money ("money whitens," as they say in Brazil); the ability to pass physically via phenotype, features, and fashion in some cases; suburban and urban housing in white racialized space; and adopting and enjoying aspects of black culture while seeking distance from black people. In short, their whiteness can be economic, phenotypic, spatial, affective, and attitudinal. None of these types of whiteness explicitly conflict with the social meanings and religious practices of Muslimness. Absent in this list of things that make Arabs and Muslims white is one of the key things that makes unquestionably white people white: belonging. Belonging is also one of the key things that conflicts with Muslimness, as literature on Orientalism and the historical connection between race and religion show; Muslimness is positioned as fundamentally different from the West (Kazi 2009; Massad 2015; E. W. Said 1979; Selod 2014). Experiencing and projecting whiteness in these other ways I have listed does not change the idea that Muslims are, by definition, according to Orientalist discourse, almost innately not American. Their non-Americanness is the place where their whiteness hits a glass ceiling; past that ceiling is whiteness based on belonging as full Americans. Arab and South Asian Muslims try hard to emulate what is needed in order to belong, but Americanness is something that cannot fully be taken on like other forms of whiteness can. This is because of the roots of US whiteness in settler colonialism.

My research contributes to the literature on whiteness and racial citizenship by highlighting this definition of whiteness in the lives of the not quite white. "Free white persons" is no longer a *de jure* factor in US citizenship, but data here suggests it may be *de facto* for being considered fully American.

The type of whiteness that evades brown Muslims is structured by a logic of settler colonialism and having a racial right to this land as whites. This is a kind of whiteness that Arabs and South Asians can benefit from when they are positioned as white through other means, but the point remains that national belonging as an American is never itself the means. I connect this claim to a different body of literature in which being Muslim is often posited as something that needs to be made American, as something that is compatible with being American (Abdo 2006; Esposito et al. 2004; Haddad 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2011; Haddad and Esposito 1998; Idliby 2014; Wang 2014), and again, I show here that it is an argument that must be made and is not a given, even for American-born Arab and South Asian Muslims, because it would require whiteness and they can only experience whiteness to a certain extent. I also show that some Arab and South Asian Muslims can forge a connection to blackness to experience belonging and that when they do, it engages the meanings of "American" differently than when the same group seeks whiteness.

This chapter showed that the black-white binary shapes nonwhite/nonblack existence. Ann Morning (2001), Stanley Thangaraj (2015), and Claire Kim (1999) all argue that the black-white binary shapes nonblack/nonwhite racial experiences. Ann Morning's work on South Asian racial categorization analyzes South Asians' individual-level adoption and resistance to racial labels; black and white were categories that South Asians chose between (Morning 2001), and various measures of class influenced whether they chose white or black. Stanley Thangaraj's

work on how South Asian men position themselves through blackness and whiteness in the world of pickup basketball also points out how the binary helps position them but does not engage religion deeply, and the same goes for Claire Kim's work. These studies demonstrate how critical parts of nonblack/nonwhite groups' racial lives are shaped by black-white binary logic, and I argue that religion is important in that shaping. Religion influences the racial positioning of "intermediate" groups like Arab and South Asian Muslims; their religion makes some designations automatic (i.e., brown), some conditional or not fully possible (i.e., whiteness), and some only dabbled in (i.e. blackness).

CHAPTER 5: MARRIAGE, GENDER ROLES, AND THE ORIENT FOR BLACK AND WHITE MUSLIM WOMEN

Gender and sexuality have been at the center of Orientalism since its inception. Orientalism is a process by which the Occident (West) positioned itself as different from and superior to its construction of the Orient (El-Rouayheb 2005; Massad 2015; E. Said 1979). Scholarship shows that binaries like East/West or Orient/Occident are important to the formation of the black-white racial binary; this formation occurred through notions of superiority and inferiority in terms of religion, civilization, and culture in the premodern era that calcified into the concept of race (Fredrickson 1981; Mills 1997). Empirical research shows that racism rooted in the black-white binary factors into how gender shapes the lives of black and white women (Davis 1997; Harnois and Ifatunji 2011; Smith 2008) and that Orientalism factors into how gender shapes the lives of Muslim women (and men) (Hammer 2013; Karim 2008; Maira 2008; Rana 2011; Smith 2016), and. Orientalist images of Muslim women paint them as oppressed, meek, demure, and subject to a religion that is uniquely patriarchal and oppressive. This is in comparison to Western women who are painted as uniquely liberated. Images of black women created under the logic of the black-white binary paint them as a range of stereotypes as well, all in comparison to white women (Collins 2002). Meanwhile, for white women, to paraphrase Ntozake Shange, all of Western civilization depends on her. Studies in scholarly literature on Muslim women are largely on women from the Middle East, South Asia, and their diasporas, while the studies on black and white women are US focused. However, we do not know how these areas of work come together

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in the lives of people at the crossroads of Orientalism (or an East-West binary) and the black-white binary. To fill these gaps, in this chapter, I analyze how gender and marriage appear in the lives of black and white Muslim women in the US to understand the gendered interaction of Orientalism and the black-white binary. I examine what black and white Muslim women's ideas and behaviors related to women's gender roles, interracial marriage, and marriage more generally mean for how Orientalism and the black-white binary meet. This analysis allows us to understand where and how racial and religious lines are drawn.

Research on the intersection of Orientalism and blackness (Carter 2008; Jackson 2005; Jun 2011) spans different fields and topics, but all studies attest to how Orientalism and blackness are creations of the West and whiteness, so they share an origin. Therefore, we can surmise that one way that Orientalism and the black-white binary come together is by having a common creator and thus perhaps common practices. Having a common origin may appear to explain how the black-white binary and Orientalism come together, but that cannot tell us how these constructions work together in the lives of the groups they have created ("Orientals" and blacks).

Blacks and "the Orient" may interact in complex ways that position them against each other rather than as people with a shared experience. They may come together in ways that may be best described by Helen Heran Jun's argument about Asian American and African American citizenship. In these groups' "respective struggles for inclusion, they both have had to negotiate the terms by which the other has been racially excluded" (Jun (2011:4). Because of the logic of citizenship, which African Americans and Asian Americans have been locked out of in different ways in the US, these groups essentially have to step on one another if they seek inclusion. Jun provides the example of how this worked in the case of Korean immigrant merchants during the

rioting in Los Angeles in 1992 in response to the acquittal of the police officers who beat

Rodney King:

> The critiques that emerged from Asian American studies and African American studies acknowledged ethnic specificity yet were largely unable to connect the strategic situations of power with the more general states of domination. For instance, many Asian Americanist scholars, myself included, eventually focused on the state's abandonment of Korean immigrant merchants during the rioting as concrete evidence of the enduring disenfranchisement of Asian Americans: proof of second-class citizenship. This politically sound maneuver to critique the state, however, was structured by a logic that essentially demanded that U.S. Asians had as much right as anyone else (i.e., whites) to be protected from "lawless" blacks and Latinos…[this critique's] terms nonetheless capitulated to discourses of black criminality and to the legitimacy of state violence. (2011:2)

The terms of Koreans' inclusion depended on the logic of anti-black racism in this case. As for

African Americans, Jun provides an example from the nineteenth century of representations in

black publications of Chinese immigrants as backward and foreign. She argues that this offered

the black community a "discursive means of negotiating the violence of black

disenfranchisement," by framing themselves as rightfully American and not foreign, which is a

process she terms "black Orientalism" (2011:6).

Sherman Jackson (2005) also uses the phrase "black Orientalism" but for a different

context. Jackson uses it to describe ways that black Americans have conceptualized the

Arab/Muslim world based on impressions developed through interaction with "immigrant

Muslims" in the US. Though analyzing different contexts, Jun's and Jackson's versions of black

Orientalism share the idea that Orientalism and blackness come together in various ways for

various purposes and are a fruitful site for understanding racial dynamics in the US. I extend

Jun's and Jackson's work to understand how Orientalism and anti-black racism interact with one

another in everyday life, and the role of marriage and gender in this interaction.

In the sections below, I begin by examining patterns of interracial marriage impacting black and white Muslim women, which is one major site where Orientalism and the black-white binary meet. Next, I present data on how black and white Muslim women deal with the Orientalist stereotype of the meek Muslim woman. The stereotype is not only religious, but also racial, since the image of the meek Muslim woman is an image of a brown woman. Because they are Muslim women, blacks and whites are forced to contend with this pervasive stereotype of Muslim women in some way. I show that they distance themselves from this stereotype. Lastly, I present data on how these women both challenge and embrace gender roles that they view as Islamic. I show that the way they do all of these things – reject stereotypes, challenge and embrace gender roles – is influenced by Orientalism. Like classic Orientalism, black and white Muslim women often conceive of Islam as a religion of rigid gender roles that is patriarchal. But instead of rejecting Islam for these reasons like most Orientalists, these factors are part of the attraction. The women's attraction to this particular version of Islam is related to a desire to not be subject to the gender roles and meanings placed upon them as black and white (non-Muslim) women. Ultimately, this is another way in which being Muslim is positioned as separate from being black and white.

Interracial Marriage

There are three interrelated themes that are woven through the data on interracial marriages: brown Muslims exhibit anti-black racism in their unwillingness to marry blacks, white Muslims seek authenticity as Muslims through marrying nonwhite Muslims, and white and black Muslims find affinity based on a shared non-brownness or Americanness which leads to interracial marriages. These themes shed light on where Orientalism and the black-white binary meet.

Sulaiman is a multiracial (black and white) Muslim man. I arranged a time to meet with him during an *iftar* (fast breaking meal). The tables were packed at the mosque, and two white men got up from the table to make room for me and Sulaiman to sit. Sulaiman later said in passing that I should be talking to those two white men and another one who is friends with them. He asked if I noticed how quickly they got their food such that they were done eating by the time we had gotten food and sat down. He told me he asked them how they got their food so fast and they said, "Oh, you don't know about that white privilege?" Sulaiman then told me that they became Muslim and married black women immediately to prove, "'Look, we're not white anymore.'" Sulaiman said this approvingly. On another occasion, Jehan (Arab American) expressed a similar perception of a famous white Muslim leader who converted decades ago. She told me that he "wanted to marry a black woman," that his spiritual teacher is black, and that he knows Arabic perfectly. She then asked, "Is he still white after all that?" These examples suggest that white Muslims gain distance from their whiteness in part through interracial marriage. This distancing is valuable because the further one is from whiteness, the more authentic their Muslimness may be, which is desirable within Muslim communities. Allison, a white Muslim, explains why:

> And it's interesting cause it's (interracial marriage is) so much more common [among Muslims]. There's also, yeah I think white people are borrowing legitimacy from their brown spouses, you know? In the sense that if you imagine a couple that has two converts, you know, there's a little bit of a, "They can't be doing it right, they're two people who are clueless, somebody should know what's going on there." (Laughs) you know?

Allison highlights that whites gain legitimacy as Muslims from their brown spouses. I then asked Allison about trends in interracial marriage, because I had heard of only two white-white couples in the Muslim communities there, and I wanted to see if this observation could be substantiated

by those more familiar with the area since I was new and there are no statistical data on these

trends in this community:

> Atiya: Have you seen many convert and convert couples?
> Allison: Honestly like one.
> Atiya: Yeah?
> Allison: Yeah…I don't, they're not, I like saw them at an event one time, and it was remarkable enough that I remembered it, that these two sort of very white-like they looked like they could have been going to the Renaissance Fair, you know? Like, they were both wearing Arab costumes but they were like white as white, you know? Which I'm not sure is how I look, but- (laughs)

Allison is using "convert" to mean white Muslims, perhaps based on the context of the

conversation in which we were talking about white Muslims borrowing legitimacy from

nonwhites. She notes that she knows of only one white-white Muslim couple. Her reference to

the Renaissance Fair, which is a cultural event attended and organized largely by whites, and

calling the couple's clothing Arab "costumes" also highlights the relationship between whiteness

and being Muslim: as whites, they do not look like an average Muslim couple, thus the more

likely image they evoke is of play acting in costumes at a Renaissance Fair.

As some participants and I observed, white Muslims do not typically marry one another.

This makes sense in a context in which whites gain racial/religious legitimacy as Muslims

through having a brown spouse. In Waterville, it is common for black and white Muslims to

marry one another, and for other nonwhite converts to marry one another. For example, Valerie

is a multiracial (white and Mexican) convert who is married to an Asian convert. She thinks

interracial marriage is more common among converts:

> But in terms of interracial marriages in general, I've seen that more in convert communities and I think (pause) I don't know. I think it could be a lot of reasons, I think it could be because just from being and having family in America several generations. This is a very diverse country. People of different ethnicities and races interact with each other all the time and it's part of the history of this country. It's part of the culture, so it's not—and I know there are exceptions in

different families and stuff, but it's not so strange or taboo, whereas maybe in different cultures, you know, that have come to America like more recently, and where they're coming from maybe there's not as much- not that there's not diversity cause there's definitely diversity, people speaking different dialects from different regions, but it's definitely a bit more homogenous depending on what part of the world people are coming from. Whereas here people come from everywhere, and being that it's more of a different phenomenon of coming here and also just the fact of being an immigrant, and trying to hold on to your roots, and where you came from, and your culture. Just the phenomenon of immigration and having to leave behind so much, there's probably so much that maybe has something to do with why in certain communities there's not so much of that interracial interaction and marriage and stuff. That's one reason that I can think of.

Valerie's points here include veiled references to a number of groups. Her point about "different" dialects, regions, and so on is a reference to Muslims who are not converts; converts are largely US born, so she is speaking on a difference between how converts (Americans, people whose families have been here for generations) do interracial marriage more than "immigrant Muslims." She describes the US as "diverse" and immigrants as "different" before complicating that initial statement. So in her statement, converts are people whose families have possibly been in the US for generations, which suggests whites and blacks. Converts will interracially marry each other because within Muslim communities, they are their own group. As another white convert said: "Reverts (another word for convert) are our own kind of background." These data suggest that the affinity between blacks, whites, and (other) converts is based on being non-brown or as American (evidenced in how she talks about being in the US for generations).

While white converts tend to marry blacks or fellow converts who are nonwhite, I observed that brown Muslims, particularly South Asians, infrequently marry blacks. Of the possible combinations of marriages between three of the major ethnic/racial groups among Muslims (Arabs, South Asians, and African Americans), the least common interracial

relationship I observed was between South Asians and African Americans. Participants, particularly white and black Muslims, also were aware of this pattern. Nadeer told me about a South Asian Muslim family he knows that would "rather [their] daughter marry a non-practicing [non-Muslim] person of our similar background than this [an African American Muslim]." He uses this to make the point that the family was so racist against black people that they are more willing to possibly break religious injunctions against marrying non-Muslims than they are willing to marry black people who are Muslim. Ironically, many Muslims argue that "racism does not exist in Islam" and should not be a factor in who one marries – that as long as they are marrying a fellow Muslim, race does not matter. Karen (white) notes the hypocrisy of this statement. This was the one moment in her interview in which her otherwise calm demeanor shifted and she became heated. She talked about some of the problems converts have, such as no one to help you meet someone to marry, like South Asians who already have these networks and people helping them. She offered an example of a South Asian "auntie" at an organization dedicated to convert support. Karen explains that the auntie claims to be "Muslim first and *desi* (South Asian) second," and that the auntie is very religious but makes excuses for those who will only marry fellow South Asians. South Asians most often marry one another, which I also observed in West City.

West City's South Asians' anti-black racism in the marriage market also came up at a party I attended with Salimah (African American) and her African American, African, and Latina friends. An Eritrean Muslim woman was the first to leave. On her way out, she lightly mentioned that there is a "nice Muslim brother" she knows who is "looking to get married." About seven other women and I were sitting around the sofa while she was putting her shoes on and yelling from the hallway. The party grew quiet as some other conversations stopped and the

remaining six women began listening. The Somali woman hosting the party took charge and asked where he is from. The Eritrean woman said he's Indian and "he's really sweet, he's a good guy [she wants] to help out." The hostess dismissed the suggestion. "Girl, who's he trying to marry? You know he's not trying to marry a black girl." The other women at the party joined in, agreeing with the hostess. The woman who was leaving cajoled, "Come on, you guys."

Interracial marriage patterns and ideas about what they mean reveal a few themes. First, because of anti-black racism, brown Muslims do not want to marry black Muslims. Brown Muslims have internalized the logic of the black-white binary that positions blackness as undesirable, even as brown Muslims are positioned as differently undesirable by a similar logic. Second, white Muslims seek authenticity through marrying nonwhite Muslims, whether brown or black. Third, there is an affinity between black and white Muslims that is based on their shared Americanness. Even as brown Muslims' anti-blackness is part of the reason that black Muslims' marriage pool is smaller within Muslim communities, the affinity between black and white Muslims based on their shared Americanness also the line between East and West, Orient and Occident. And here blacks and whites both are American. One might expect that there might be some affinity between nonwhites like black and brown Muslims as people of color, but instead, data here show that this is the least frequent interracial marriage. This section ultimately shows that the black-white binary and Orientalism meet in complex ways that interracial marriage dynamics illuminate. The next section addresses the complex ways in which black and white Muslim women deal with the Orientalist stereotype of the meek Muslim woman.

Dealing with the Meek Muslim Woman Stereotype

Hafsa is multiracial (Asian and black) and raised Muslim. She spends her time at Mustafa Masjid, WDCM, and local Muslim organizations, convert support groups, and other generally non-brown spaces, except for a Muslim nonprofit she used to volunteer with. The nonprofit is run by a multiracial group and attracts a wide range of Muslims, mostly nonblack, seeking traditional Islamic knowledge. Its donor base is largely suburban South Asian Muslims. Hafsa said that one of the white Muslim men who cofounded the non-profit "sets the culture there" and that the people at this organization are "all the same kind of person." She says that they "say [the] same things, react [the] same way." She imitated the women saying things like, "The rain is such a blessing, *alhamdulillah* (praise God)," as she looked down, pulled her shoulders inward, and spoke with a soft voice full of wonder. "Some call it God consciousness, but it's passivity, especially women," she continues. Hafsa's observation resonates with Saba Mahmood's (2004) work on piety and shyness. Mahmood's ethnography of the women in Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood offers the concept of "cultivating shyness" where women are to behave as though they are shy and meek, and this constitutes piety.

Salimah, an African American woman who has no trouble asserting herself, also rejects this image of an idealized Muslim woman. She became Muslim six years ago and she views many "born Muslim" women as passive. She told me of her early days at a convert support group in the area, which she no longer attends. Men and women sat on different sides of the same room. She told me she used to raise her hand and ask questions of the teacher, and afterward, women would thank her for asking questions since they did not want to be the ones asking questions: "They were uncomfortable or wanted to put forward a certain image, or they were meek," Salimah said. This was a group of mostly converts, but still they were acting out a

particular type of femininity. Some Muslim women, like Salimah and Hafsa, reject this image, although they know it is sometimes rewarded.

Salimah finds home in a group of women that is largely black – both "born Muslim" and convert, African and African American – with one Arab woman as well. The women got together for iftar (fast breaking meal) in Ramadan and had a great time talking about being Muslim, work, marriage, sex, conversion, and their lives before conversion. They were all converts except the Arab woman. Salimah went on and on about the great time she had with the group of mostly black women because they were all able to relate to one another. She expressed a desire to be close to people who are "born Muslim" but added that they "just can't relate" to her experiences. Salimah gave an example of being at gathering with her friends where the one brown woman was in charge of the music and put on Ying Yang Twins and Michael Jackson. Salimah rolled her eyes when retelling the story; she often felt that the Arab woman was heavy handed in her display of appreciation for all things black American, and that she is "drawn to the cool" of black culture in a way that Salimah does not like. Salimah sometimes expresses her appreciation of the Arab woman as well because in this group, "they all have a personality" and "other Muslim girls don't." She sees this particular born Muslim woman and the African born Muslim women in this group as exceptional for having "a personality."

Who are the "other Muslim girls" to whom Salimah is referring? I found out when she and I attended an open mic night sponsored by Muslim organization run by mostly South Asians and Arabs. A few white and black people also participate and read their poems and prose at events. Salimah and I attended several of these open mics together. Once, she looked around and asked me, "What's with all the sad *desi* (South Asian) girls?" We had just spoken with a South Asian Muslim woman who was always rather quiet and smiled a lot every time I saw her at these

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open mics and other gatherings full of young Arab and South Asian Muslims. For Salimah, Muslim women like that are the ones who lack personality. She says born Muslim women are "demure" and that she "can't relate to them."

The figure of the Muslim woman that women like Salimah and Hafsa compare themselves and others to embodies femininity in a particular way. It is a racialized femininity. However, not all black Muslim women reject this image. Some, like Inaya, aspire to similar forms of femininity in some ways but because it is racial, they cannot and do not get whatever benefits, including male attention, there are to being perceived this way. Inaya is a member of the racially diverse non-profit that Hafsa frequented. Inaya is an African American woman who converted to Islam years ago. She always wears dresses, and in fact, she sews them herself. On any given day, her hijab matches her dress in print, color, or both, and she is wearing jewelry. By some measures of femininity, she might be considered quite feminine. However, she says that nonblack men do not think she is very feminine. She told me that when she asks black men if they think she is feminine they say yes, and when she asks nonblack men they say no. When I asked for an example, she was unable to think of something that would clearly illustrate this, but she said she can feel it. In observing Muslim spaces and hearing nonblack Muslim men talk about black Muslim women, however, I found evidence to support Inaya's gut sense. For example, Omar, a South Asian Muslim member of the same non-profit, told me in an interview that he is "just not attracted to black women." This is another example of subtle anti-blackness among brown Muslims, where racism is disguised as mere preferences.

Comportment is another important feature of the racialized stereotype of the Muslim woman figure, as Hafsa and Salimah suggest. Allison (white) describes that comportment as different from her own:

So sometimes to this day I still feel like a sort of caricature when I, I'm being a normal person, but also wearing hijab. I think about it every time I get on my bicycle, like I look so weird, right? I just look the most weird ever (laughs). You know, Americans, like white Americans, and Americans in general, but in their particular way white Americans are like these sort of loud, big people that move in big ways. You could be anywhere in the world and see an American from like way over there and know without a doubt, you know? They can be speaking any language, they can be walking anywhere, and you know. For all of those reasons when you pair them with like an outward symbol of Muslimness, I feel like it's just this thing that doesn't make any sense. And I'm sure that it is far more subtle than I experience firsthand, but you know I feel like I am not particularly graceful, I'm not the least bit demure in like the way that I move my body, and those of the sort of petite and demure, and like all these things are the sort of stereotype of a Muslim woman, you know? And even Muslim women who break outside of the stereotype are also, by and large, still much more petite, you know (laughs)? It's just like literally this bigness thing. And, and in all of these ways like I just feel like there's this funny disconnect that happens where I, I feel like, I feel a little bit like a kid, like I haven't like grown into my clothes or something you know (laughs) or like a puppy that hasn't grown into its paws. There's like a sort of (pause) there's a way in which I feel like my self-presentation as Muslim is like slapped on, like pasted with a little loose stick, like just like slapped on top of this entirely other thing (laughs). It's like a, you know, I don't know, a kid wearing dress up clothes (laughs). Because I just feel like I'm just too loud, and like when I talk about getting on my bicycle, not only are not that many Muslim women riding bicycles, but I have like a men's steel-frame road bike you know with the bar that's horizontal across the top and the way you get onto that bike it's like you swing your back leg over, you know? And it's this sort of big movement, and this, it's just not the least bit feminine, really (laughs), you know?"

Allison describes the "stereotype of a Muslim woman" as demure, and points out the racial meaning applied to this woman by contrasting "white Americans" with "Muslim women." She describes white Americans and Americans in general as making big movements, and Muslim women as not only not making big movements, but also as "more petite." Through this contrast and her references to being big versus petite, we see racial meanings come through comparatively and relationally. By comparing themselves to the demure Muslim woman, women like Allison and Salimah are able to define themselves as *not* that person. It is also noteworthy that the stereotype is racial – it is a brown woman – and it is largely non-brown women who

negotiate their position as Muslim women by claiming Muslimness but rejecting this type of femininity. As Sylvia Chan-Malik argues:

> [D]ifferences between Black and immigrant Muslims have affected how gender dynamics are being negotiated and constructed in Muslim American communities…While contemporary American orientalist discourse has produced a racialized trope of the Poor Muslim Woman that Muslim American women must continually contend with in relationships external to their communities, culturally-influenced conceptions of proper" (sic) gender roles and the roles women should play within political and religious institutions are issues that constitute internal tensions that many confront on a daily basis within their familial and religious communities. (2011:14)

Chan-Malik highlights how Muslim women contend with the stereotype of the "Poor Muslim Woman" and how it is a racialized trope. She argues that this contention is affected by differences between black and immigrant Muslims. I add white Muslim women to this argument.

While the stereotype of the Poor Muslim Woman or the Meek Muslim Woman is a racial and gendered symbol, and meanings are constructed through it and relative to it, in "real life," Muslims in this study think about their gender roles and positions in a wide range of ways that do not typically fit fully within or outside of the bounds of this figure. This section has shown where Orientalism meets the black-white binary through an examination of black and white Muslim women's interaction with Orientalist stereotypes. The next section addresses how black and white Muslim women live out and think about gender roles and gender dynamics in Muslim communities.

Challenging and Appreciating Gender Roles

Fatima, a 65-year-old white woman, appreciates what some refer to as "traditional" gender structures in religious Muslim spaces in contrast to what she grew up with. She describes her parents as "bohemians" who created an "abusive household without structure" because "the bomb of sex, drugs, and rock and roll fell on America." She says, "There's got to be rules to

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protect the freedom. So I never was a big fan of the 60s. People talk about the 60s and I'm like, really?" In her late teens, she was introduced to Islam by an African American man at her workplace who she eventually married:

> So he started telling me *and* the girl that worked with me at the counter about Islam. And within two weeks, I *knew* I was gonna be Muslim…everything he said was speaking what my soul was. And it was *so* interesting, the other girl had the opposite reaction. She was a feminist, and just everything, she didn't like. And it was so fascinating to me to see the contrast.

At other times in her interview, Fatima posits feminism as contrasting with what it means to be a Muslim. She holds to a model of complementary gender roles: if men behave like "real men" then women are free to be "women." She positions these values as Islamic and in contrast to feminism, which she also associates with the West. Notably, none of the brown Muslim women participants in my study found as much value in patriarchal interpretations of Islam. None of them spent as much time talking about the importance of these patriarchal interpretations of Islam. Far more white and black Muslim women viewed patriarchal interpretations as positive, which suggests a racial pattern.

Kelly, a white woman twenty years younger than Fatima and also married to a black man, has similar experiences and interpretations of whiteness and being Muslim. Over the course of our time together, she talked a lot about parenting and struggling to provide for her five children. She had been a single mother off and on for two decades, and had Section 8 housing. She grew up "free-spirited" as a child raised by her mother and various other adults on a "hippie commune," as she describes it. She feels that it did not serve her well in life.

Kelly wants something else for herself and her children. On one of our car rides, she reflected with a sense of awe on how her current relationship – her first ever relationship with a

Muslim and since becoming Muslim herself – is the first in which she has not wanted to be "in charge." In her previous long term relationships, which were also with black men, there have been "power struggles," but now, she no longer wants to be the "head of the household." She described her natural inclination as being toward an idyllic image of a family with a heterosexual, married, two parent household with many children, and that she "even pictured a big burly man as the husband." Her desire for structure in life is a desire for a gendered structure that she finds as part of being Muslim.

In the interpretation of Islam that Kelly favors, she finds gender roles that resonate with the goals she has for her family. One day when I went to meet her to go for a walk, she was wearing makeup, which I had never known her to do. Sitting on the steps in front her apartment, she told me about a moment of frustration with her husbnad's refusal to stop talking to an old friend of his who is a woman. She questioned why she should do things for him if he does not do what she asks him to do, like not talking to the woman. I asked for an example of what she does for him. She responded that she does not tweeze her eyebrows, dye her hair, or wear makeup because he does not like that, and that in her frustration with him, she was about to go do those things. Interestingly, in earlier conversations with her weeks before she told me that she does not do those things because they're impermissible for women in Islam *and* because he does not like it. That her emphasis on gendered Islamic prescriptions is so close to what her husband wants for her, along with her desire for a lifestyle that is different from her childhood, all speak to her gendered, racial experiences as a white woman who is Muslim.

Kelly's experience is similar to many other white women today who reject the practices for which historical, mainstream, first-wave white feminists fought (i.e., working outside the home, equal decision making power as the male head of the household) and instead choose to be

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stay at home mothers, although they accept the spirit of these practices. Kelly also emphasizes a patriarchal understanding of gender roles in Islam and sometimes feels it serves her interests. Her feeling that her upbringing as a "free spirit" left her "ignorant of how the world works," in terms of gender roles, is woven into the positive feelings she has toward having a man as the head of the household.

Whereas Fatima and Kelly came to Islam through black Muslim communities, Karen, a 32-year-old white woman, came through a South Asian Muslim community. She works in an administrative position at a state agency. Karen and I never talked about me being South Asian, or an Urdu speaker, but she used a lot of Urdu words during her interview. Perhaps she assumed I was South Asian and may thus know Urdu, and she would not have used Urdu words if I were white or black. Even if this is why she used Urdu words, the following story is suggestive of how white women create a position for themselves as Muslim, and how that involves dealing with Orientalist meanings regarding gender roles. For example, when I asked how else she identifies aside from being Muslim, she said she is a *gori*, which means "white female" in Urdu/Hindi. She used the word *desi* frequently also, which is an Urdu/Hindi word meaning South Asian. However, I was most surprised when she used the Urdu term *nibhaana* three times. It is not a common word you might learn in Urdu 101. The term refers to compromise in marriage, and specifically what women have to do and give to make a marriage work, and it is a compromise that is suggestive of patriarchy and gender roles rather than an even compromise. I asked if she knew Urdu. She said she did not, that she just knew a few words here and there. If non-South Asians know any Urdu words, *gori* and *desi* are likely to be among them. But why *nibhaana*? Maybe it speaks to the importance of marriage, courtship, and family in her life and in the lives of the people she spends time with. All her social circles, aside from her workplace, are entirely

or mostly South Asian. She was once engaged to a Pakistani and she lived in Karachi for a few months. She is now seeing another Pakistani Muslim man.

I asked Karen how/why she has so many South Asians in her life. She responds that she's similar to them – she never dated growing up, she does not like the concept of cohabitation, virginity is important to her, and she views dancing in gatherings with men and women as inappropriate. Not dancing in mixed gender gatherings is a gender issue that is especially important to some South Asian Muslims. In contrast, Nadeer told me about New Year's Eve parties at the majority black Warith Deen Community Masjid that involve mixed gender dancing. Karen creates a connection to authentic Muslimness by assuming the culture, norms, and values of the particular racial group of Muslims with whom she socializes. In doing so, she helps to fashion an Islam that is heavily defined by gender roles and resonates with Orientalist meanings of how Muslim women are supposed to behave.

Not all white Muslim women respond to or embody gender roles in the way that Fatima, Kelly, and Karen do. Sara, a 40-year-old white woman, converted while studying abroad in the Middle East and meeting her now husband, who is Moroccan. When she returned to college, Sara joined the campus Muslim Students Association. She told me how her behavior in such spaces included going to the men's food line at gender segregated dinners. She is acutely aware of her position relative to brown Muslims as well as some of the norms in Muslim spaces, which she attempts to evade:

> It didn't matter 'cause I was some white convert girl. You can get away with a lot of things…people just are like 'Okay whatever, she's a convert, she can do whatever' (laughs). It's not the same as if I was like *desi* or Arab or something that would have all kinds of cultural…But I don't think people talked a lot about me even though I was doing crazy things…I could do whatever I wanted and still be friendly with everyone you know?

Sara's marriage and relationship to gender norms – given her race, gender, and status as a convert – mediate her experience in Muslim spaces. Her ideas underscore the enmeshing of brownness and being Muslim, since she refers to how Arab and South Asian people have a cultural connection to Islam. Arab and South Asian Muslim femininity and roles are different from what is expected of her. Sara assumes that, because she does not have a racial/cultural connection to being Muslim, her actions are interpreted differently. Unlike Fatima who appreciates living within the confines of gender structures in Muslim communities, Sara does not mind them and also does not fight them because they provide a structure that her race allows her to transcend, and transcendence can feel good.

Allison is less appreciative of patriarchy and gender roles than all of the white women discussed so far. She says that she became a feminist because she was attracted to its counter-culture feel, and that the same feel drew her to Islam later. She reflects on religion and gender:

> I feel strongly that gender equality is the route to gender justice…[but] how do you deal with the aspects of the [religious texts] that seem to challenge the feminist view of the world? My answer would depend on the day…Mostly at this point I'm trying to say I just don't know and I'm just not worried about it...I value very much in my own marriage an egalitarian relationship…As far as making prescriptions for the rest of the world, I feel (laughs) I'm very uncomfortable about that.

It is notable that Allison says that engagement in these debates is largely a thing of the past for her. To illustrate some of the moments that turned her off from engaging in these debates, she sent me an email exchange between her and a local African American Muslim leader, discussing gender equality in Islam. Carefully omitting his name from the email thread, she highlights parts that illustrate the exchange: she asks questions about his engagement with Islamic feminist scholarship, and eventually he argues that Muslim women are content with patriarchy in Islam,

and that Allison's rejection of patriarchy is stemming from her whiteness. He does not view gender justice as necessary, viewing gender inequality as a result of imperfect application of a perfect religious tradition. Through the use of gender and race, the man positions himself as authentic and Allison as not only inauthentic, but as promoting imperialism and a narrow first wave feminism. She found this insulting. This moment illuminates how whiteness is positioned via gender as less Muslim than blackness. Ultimately, certain gendered ways of behaving and thinking are coded racially and religiously, and they are part of how people are defined as Muslim.

The white woman is a figure that carries the West's vision of itself, even as white women's realities do not often reflect this vision (Mackinnon 2013). The vision of a civilization that is feminist, pro-LGBT rights, and sexually liberated also includes a vision of a civilization that is Christian, which is created to stand in contrast to the civilizations of "the East" and Islam (Massad 2015). It is interesting to think of the white woman, then, as a Muslim, where there is another set of meanings that come together to define the Muslim woman. For a white woman to become Muslim, which is seen as a different civilization, requires or is motivated by the desire to make a big shift since white womanhood is so tied to the construction of the West and the black-white binary.

Kelly, Fatima, and Salimah (black) all separately told me that they get along better with converts, whether black or white, because they have all experienced trauma. All three have referred to "born Muslims" as coming from families in which they are protected and sheltered, or who have not experienced struggle financially, which are experiences that they cannot relate to. All have the desire to be close with people who are born Muslim and say that there are a few that they are close to because they talk about their problems. On two separate occasions, Fatima has

used the example of Egyptians, saying that she likes Egyptians because "they'll talk about the problems they're having with their husbands, but Syrians, no way." These women have a certain image of "born Muslims" in which the women "don't have personalities" as Salimah said; that you can't "really connect with them" as Salimah and Fatima said; and that they are "sheltered" as Kelly said. Interestingly, at the same time, in other points in our conversations, they have expressed a desire for the protection, stability, and sheltered lives that they believe born Muslim women experience.

Gender roles in the lives of black Muslim women also reveal racial/religious lines and can involve big shifts. Karimah is a 30-year-old African American woman who was raised Muslim but who talks about herself as coming back to Islam as an adult after living a life she did not want. "This type of life was not working for me," she said, after describing her life in college: she did not wear hijab and drank with her friends (though looking back she laughs and says "I didn't even like wine!"). She dated and eventually had her heart broken. She feels she is "psychologically kind of messed up because of [romantic] relationships, not feeling that love or peace [she] ultimately was longing for." Most notably she says, "That's when I made a serious jump, and I went all the way on the other side. I was like, 'Ok I need to be Muslim. I need to be married. I need to this and that. I can't have these people.'" Wanting to be Muslim was directly connected to her experiences in romantic relationships. Being Muslim and being married go together for her and the vast majority of participants.

Now married to an African American Muslim man, Karimah's experience of being Muslim continues to be shaped by gender: "My husband and I, we have an amazing relationship. [My husband] has a life and I have my life. But I'm not worshipping him like I've worshipped men before. I've given so much of myself and lost myself in other people." Karimah's change in

lifestyle from the experiences of experimentation that are common among US college students to another required a "jump to the other side," in her words, where the "other side" is life as a Muslim. Some black Muslims like Karimah create their connection to Islam through the channels of gender/sexuality.

At the same time, holding onto or fighting gender roles, like many of the white women do, is not important to Karimah. She bends these roles sometimes but she does not emphasize this or express pride in it. She told me once about how she thinks that she has some masculine aspects to her while her husband has some feminine aspects. She said the way that he stands, his posture, is kind of feminine; he has long eyelashes and feminine mannerisms. She told me how she asked her dad once about what she should look for in a person that she would marry and he said to find someone that complemented her. Karimah does not view her husband's feminine features negatively; in fact, she said she believes that if the Prophet Muhammad was walking down the street today people would think that he was gay.

Across women interviewees, race matters in how their experiences are gendered. An elderly black woman participant who was once part of the Black Panther Party, then the Nation of Islam, and now a Sunni Muslim, shook her head and pursed her lips as she said in her interview with me, "I feel bad for my daughters' [future] husbands." I asked why. She laughed and continued, "Because they're strong, and Muslim men don't like strong women." She told me a lot about a women's study circle that she had been leading for years and was proud of. The women read Qur'an together, shared stories, watched videos, and socialized. "Islam tells us to 'read,'" she said a number of times, "it is the first verse [of the Qur'an] revealed to the Prophet." Her emphasis on learning the religion for oneself as a woman was a consistent theme in her interview. Based on her past experiences in black radical politics, I expected her to speak a lot

more explicitly about race but she did not. Instead, she spoke more explicitly about being a woman; the way that race shaped her experiences came out in how she talked about being a woman. She told a number of stories about women in her study circle who would complain about their husbands. Her diagnosis of their problem is that they do not study the religion for themselves and instead "take [their husbands'] word for it." I asked her more about what the women were like, and she said that they were white Muslim women married to "foreign Muslim men," and that this is a problem that black women do not have because they study Islam independently and challenge their husbands on Islamic issues. Her emphasis on strength and independence, qualities that she says separate her as an African American Muslim woman from white Muslim women, is what she emphasizes in Islam.

Conclusion

Those in this study who are the primary targets of Orientalism (brown Muslims) and those who are the primary targets of racism in relation to the black-white binary (black Muslims) live in somewhat separate worlds, in part due to how black and brown people are positioned relative to one another in the US, which this chapter illustrates through an analysis of black and white Muslim women's ideas and behaviors around gender roles and marriage. In this chapter, I set out to see where and how the black-white binary and Orientalism meet. The data here suggest that Orientalism and the black-white binary meet in several places with respect to interracial marriage. There are three interrelated areas in which this occurs. First, brown Muslims have internalized the anti-blackness of the black-white binary and rarely marry blacks. Second, white Muslims in the West City metropolitan area are more likely to marry nonwhites than whites. White Muslims seek authenticity as Muslims, which can be "borrowed" from their nonwhite, mostly brown, Muslim partners. White Muslims can also draw legitimacy as Muslims from black

partners. Thus a third area is the common pairing of black-white interracial Muslim marriages, which can be based on affinity between non-brown Muslims. However, this affinity complicates the color line. As some participants point out, this affinity might suggest an emergent racial/religious group in which US converts across racial groups constitute their own "background" or racial/religious position within Muslim communities positioned against brown and/or "born" Muslims. A shared "background" puts blacks and whites together on one side of the racial/religious line, and brown people on the other side of it. This finding illustrates how Orientalism and the black-white binary help shape the essentialized meanings of the categories at play (i.e. "Muslim," "white," etc.).

I also showed how black and white Muslim women manage the largely undesirable stereotype of the meek Muslim woman, who is a racial figure that is brown, by distancing themselves from her. At the same time, they find ways to hold on to (or to try to ignore) notions of patriarchy. The women at times challenge and at times embrace gender roles. I also find that black and white women are contending with Orientalist stereotypes and doing the work of shaping what Islam means to them in terms of gender and sexuality by engaging these stereotypes at times. In this meeting of Orientalism and the black-white binary, I have argued that the ways gender and sexuality appear here reveal where the racial/religious lines are: that those racial/religious lines show that American blackness and whiteness are positioned as non-Muslim.

The data here support literature on how the racial/religious meanings around being Muslim are posited as the opposite of the meanings around Europe, whiteness, "the West," and what it means to be American (Grosfoguel and Mielants 2006; Massad 2015; E. W. Said 1979). However, my work reveals black and white Muslims' gendered relationships to Orientalism.

Notably, converts do not necessarily have understandings of Islam and "the East" that differ

from Orientalist views. In the tradition of classic Orientalism, converts often conceive of Islam

as a religion of rigid gender roles that is patriarchal. But whereas most Orientalists reject Islam

for these reasons, these factors are part of the attraction for many black and white participants in

this study. Race, religion, and gender figure into the creation of contrasting, competing

civilizations that we can see play out in the lives of black and white Muslim women.

CHAPTER 6: THE BLACK RADICAL TRADITION AND ISLAMOPHOBIA IN POLITICAL ACTIVISM

"Nothing more emphatically testifies to the reality of power relations than opposition and resistance to their effects" (2010:99).

-Steve Martinot

Racial categories and their meanings are contested; they are not stable (Omi and Winant 2014). There have been shifts in what racial categories signify. Scholarship has documented how blackness was created by whiteness, and how black people have also shaped and defined blackness (Carter 2008; Martinot 2010; Shelby 2007). Islam has played a key role in how black Americans have created and shaped blackness (Jackson 2005). Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and Muhammad Ali are just some of the major black Muslim figures who have shaped what it means to be black in the U.S. These figures helped shape black radical movements of the 1960s and 70s. Members of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, a cornerstone of black power movement work, were Muslim. There is thus a history of blackness and Muslimness coming together in the US as a way to challenge inequality. Whereas previous chapters in this dissertation have argued that blackness and Muslimness are separate, this chapter takes a closer look at when and how they are brought together. Political activism and organizing is a major arena in which the separation between blackness and Muslimness is challenged. In this chapter, I analyze two major frames that Muslim activists and organizers draw upon in their political work. One major frame of political activism and organizing among Muslims is inspired by the black radical tradition. Another major framework focuses on Islamophobia.

Specifically, I examine how these activists engage, shape, and challenge the meanings of

blackness and Muslimness. I focus on several substantive issues: #BlackLivesMatter,

#MuslimLivesMatter, and the murder of three young Muslims in Chapel Hill, North Carolina in

2015 (the "Chapel Hill shootings"). I analyze how activists and organizers approach blackness

and Muslimness in these areas, and argue that the approaches are different and toward different

ends.[16] I further argue that gender appears in different ways to achieve these ends, given that race

and religion are already gendered (Collins 2000; Hammer 2013; Penner and Saperstein 2013;

Puar 2007).

This chapter examines how Muslim activists contest racial/religious categories and how

they interpret and fight their marginalization within and through these categories. As Steve

Martinot has argued, the ways that people oppose and resist their oppression can tell us

something about power relations, in this case relations that construct blackness and Muslimness.

In this way, this chapter contributes a perspective on these constructs from those who are

engaging them to fight oppression. Scholarly literature argues that racial categories and

meanings are contested (Almaguer 1994b; Hall 2002; Molina 2014; Omi and Winant 2014;

Rodriguez 2000), and I show the role of religious positioning in that contestation. There is

research on how race is contested through religion, however this body of work conceptualizes

religion as a matter of beliefs and practices that shape individuals and congregations (Bailey and

Snedker 2011; Braunstein et al. 2014; Chong 1998; Edgell and Tranby 2007; Emerson and Smith

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[16] It is necessary at this point to say that this chapter is about fulfilling the primary goal of this dissertation, which is to understand how blackness, whiteness, and Muslimness are positioned relative to one another, rather than an attempt to do justice to the creative, multifaceted, and complex political work that people in West City are doing. There are many important stories and efforts that do not appear in these pages. This chapter is best read as a representation of a portion of political work in West City that directly addresses blackness and Muslimness, because political resistance was such a big part of community life in Waterville where I spent most of my time.

2000; Marti 2005; Perry 2014; Rao 2015). In this study, I conceptualize religion as a way of organizing and categorizing bodies along with beliefs and practices. My approach thus contributes a different angle from which to approach racial contestation.

This chapter proceeds in three sections. The first section covers political activism and organizing rooted in the black radical tradition. I show how black Muslims inspired by black radical thought push the racial/religious boundaries of Muslimness as brown, and blackness as Christian. They challenge these boundaries by repositioning blackness and Muslimness as inseparable in their political work. The voices of black men are prominent here, while black women challenge the masculinist inflection in black radical thought – a challenge that black nationalism has long faced (Collins 2000; Wyche 2004). These activists and organizers redefine blackness and Muslimness, bringing them together seamlessly.

The second section focuses on another major frame of thinking about blackness and Muslimness that is rooted in anti-Islamophobia based activism. I show how "Islamophobia" is framed as oppression targeting brown people since Islamophobia is seen as being aimed at Muslims, and the implicit meaning of Muslim is brown. This frame envisions blackness and Muslimness or the struggles of blacks and Muslims as separate but intersecting. It argues that blacks and Muslims constitute two communities but attempts to bring blackness and Muslimness together by acknowledging that there are people who are both black and Muslim. Activists who engage this frame also struggle with Orientalist ideas that Islam is uniquely patriarchal, and relatedly, with the real everyday patriarchy in Muslim communities. In the process of challenging patriarchy, they sometimes fix Muslimness as brown since Orientalism and the particular types of patriarchy they challenge are focused on brown Muslims. In sum, gender appears differently in these two frames of activism and political organizing due to these groups'

racial/religious positions. In the third and final section of this chapter, I show how these frames

of thinking about blackness and Muslimness interact in how participants approached the Black

Lives Matter movement and the Chapel Hill shootings.

The Black Radical Tradition and Challenging the Boundaries of Blackness and Muslimness

"Anyone trying to separate Islam from black culture will have a very hard time. It's a real

mistake," Shaykh Hakim said to the mostly brown audience of the Muslim Students Association

(MSA) at a local predominately white university. Shaykh Hakim is African American and in his

fifties, and has served as a leader in local black Muslim Sunni communities for years. He is

known for his radical politics against white supremacy. His talk that evening was about black

history and Islam in the US. The audience of about twenty people was mostly brown with three

other black people aside from Shaykh Hakim, which is typical for the racial composition of

MSAs at predominately white institutions like this one. He continued, "In the hood they

understand that better than the campuses. Islam is seen as part of black consciousness in the

hood." This is the main message in nearly all of Shaykh Hakim talks: blackness and Muslimness

are naturally connected.

Shaykh Hakim challenges those who might disagree, including black nationalists and

"immigrant" Muslims. "Black nationalists going hard that 'Islam is Arab, but I'm black." This

suggests that Islam is not for them as black people. But their names are Muslim names, he says.

Malik (African American) was in the room and lightly challenged the shaykh on this by saying,

"They're also Swahili names." Shaykh Hakim moved on, addressing the brown students in the

room, "My immigrant brothers and sisters: in the hood, that's a refuge. Watch out for the

suburbs. You're protected by the people you're afraid of." He said, "When we interact with the West, we get some of it," meaning that immigrants' anti-black racism is because they are influenced by the West's anti-blackness. "When people come, they know who to hate to fit in." He then tied anti-black racism in Muslim communities to anti-Muslimness, speaking on the Chapel Hill shootings a few months earlier: "The West is in denial," he said. "It was about parking spaces? Yeah right!" he said, referring to how some said the murders were a matter of a "parking dispute" that took a turn, and not an act of anti-Muslim violence. "White folks call Muslims, especially Arabs, 'sand niggers'…We all in this together. *La ilaaha illa Allah* (there is no god but God). That's it, we all together. You could be from Pakistan and your homie Somali, and we cool." His approach to racism among Muslims is to see Muslims as all in this together. He challenges "immigrant" Muslims' anti-black racism with the idea that they are simply unable to see that they are connected to black people, around whom they are safer than in the mostly white suburbs. Part of the shaykh's goal is to highlight connections between various groups.

It is notable, then, how Shaykh Hakim names the various groups: "The Latin world is coming up. The Muslims, we already been here. The black folks are coming. That's the coalition. Then there's some progressive white folks, Occupy [Wall Street] and so forth." He speaks of these groups separately then focuses in on blackness and Muslimness: "The racial niggers are black people, the spiritual niggers are Muslims. The West has always seen it this way. The West, the white man, has always seen it this way. There is a natural connection between Muslims and black folks." To his largely brown audience he says, "The African American Muslim tradition is yours, too. Wherever you're from, there's an Islamic tradition. Embrace it, understand it, share it." As we see later in this chapter, in Muslim spaces that are black and brown or majority brown, it is less frequently said that "the African American tradition" belongs to brown Muslims as well.

Ownership over Muslimness and redefining it is contested. Here, Shaykh Hakim focuses his attention on how the West has seen and treated black and brown Muslims similarly. I argue that this frame for thinking about blackness and Muslimness challenges racial/religious categories in which Muslimness is brown, and blackness is non-Muslim.

Shaykh Hakim is part of a larger cluster of mostly African American Muslims who are also connected to the Warith Deen Community Mosque (WDCM), Mustafa Masjid, and other major hubs in the broader African American Muslim community in Waterville. A few months before his speech to mostly brown Muslim students at the university, the shaykh hosted an event at a majority African American mosque in Waterville about Islamophobia and the black community. The speakers at the event were all Muslim and included a few former members of the Black Panther Party (BPP). A former Panther spoke most of the time and had a similar perspective as Shaykh Hakim: both were making a connection between blackness and Muslimness, arguing that to be Muslim is to be a non-Western person, and that therefore "we all in this together."

"How do we survive in America, the center of an empire hell bent on destroying us and those who stand for justice?" the former Panther began. "Anytime we do anything, they say we're terrorists." In the 1960s, terrorism was used to describe what the BPP was doing as well, and he uses this to make connections between then and the way terrorism is used now to talk about Muslims. In this framework, America is not a friend, safe haven, or a place with laws that protect. He continues, "Brothers and sisters aiding the oppressor by selling alcohol and pork." This is a common critique of brown Muslims in black Muslim communities: that brown Muslims own the ubiquitous corner stores and liquor stores that sell alcohol in black neighborhoods. "Many of you here have come from different places, India, Pakistan, Arab states constructed by

European powers. We are looking for the collapse of the Arab comprador class. That's what the

Arab Spring was about." Notably, I was the only person in the room who could be said to be

"from different places" like South Asia and the Middle East. Everyone else was black,

multiracial, or Latino, except for Fatima and two other white women.

"I am not talking about being violent," the Panther continues, referring to the murder of

Eric Garner, "The police are the children of those who lynched black people…We need first

responders and our own gun clubs." He goes on to critique the language of "immigrant" and

"indigenous" Muslims, saying it is "what the FBI [and] CIA call us. 'Indigenous' is African

American Muslims and 'immigrant' is everyone else. Think about that. If we're indigenous

Muslims, the struggle started with white supremacy, their fight against Islam." He is rejecting the

use of the language of immigrant and indigenous while highlighting what he sees as a reality that

the language suggests: that African American Muslims' struggle is against white supremacy and

that white supremacy targets Islam. His argument seamlessly links blackness and being Muslim

in the way that he thinks about resistance to state violence. He continued:

> Thousands turn en masse to Islam after the collapse of the Civil Rights
> Movement…our kids need to understand the role of white supremacy in that
> history. That's coalition politics. We have to reeducate ourselves and assert
> ourselves. We are going to be labeled enemies of the state. How do we fight this?
> Hiding in plain sight. Leading in hijab. Don't think images they make about black
> women and women of color are harmless aspects of freedom of speech. We
> cannot counter this with money because we poor. The ones with the money are on
> the other side of the barricade. We have two Muslims in Congress. One's a cop,
> one's a snitch. Can't win for losing. It's your taxpayers' dollars flying over
> Pakistan with drones. How do you think we did the breakfast program and
> doctors? We need programs at masjids that reinforce knowledge and spirit.
> Ahmed is [an] FBI informant, reporting on Saeed who works for police – they're
> snitching on each other! It happened in the 60s, too. They call it self-
> radicalization of indigenous Muslims [but] upstanding people in prisons are
> Muslims. Staunchest Muslims are prison Muslims but when they come out,
> they're lost to the community.

The Panther uses two Muslim names, Ahmed and Saeed, as examples to talk about how Muslims today are used to spy on one another and how that was also done to divide black organizations in the 1960s. He makes comparisons between what mosques should be doing and what the Black Panthers did in the 1960s when he refers to their free breakfast program for children. Here he conceives of mosques as a politicized space in which race, specifically racial meaning related to being black (i.e., Black Panther programs), is a key part of how Muslim space should be politicized. In making these comparisons, he is challenging the racial/religious meanings that conceives of Muslimness as brown and blackness as non-Muslim (specifically Christian in most conversations in Waterville). His argument is similar to Shaykh Hakim's argument that there is a natural connection between blacks and Muslims. Similarly, the former Panther sees the terms of immigrant and indigenous Muslims as a way to divide a group that is otherwise one people. Both Shaykh Hakim and the former Panther challenge the implicit meanings of Muslimness and blackness.

In the question and answer period following the panel at the mosque, the women in the room, most of whom were black, asked most of the questions. Three of the six questions or comments were directly about gender. A black woman's comment addressed black Muslim men, and said that they should not take an attack on "sisters in the street by police" as "an attack on your ego." She said, "You have been oppressed in ways other men haven't" and "we want to move forward together." A black man on the panel said in response, "We are matriarchal. Sisters do the work." Referring to those who do not see it this way, he says, "We are still looking at things from a white supremacist mindset…especially white *male* supremacy." The former Panther added, "Eighty-five percent of the time I get busted, my significant other [said] don't go

out. Wifey says, 'I got a feeling.' Girlfriend says, 'I got a feeling.'" A multiracial woman made the next gender-related comment. She suggested that one of the ways that communities break apart is through dissension and criticism between men and women. The former Panther responded to say that whatever survival necessitates, we must use each other's assets; "men and women think certain ways but he didn't create us so we'd be separate." "If Allah doesn't burden someone more than they can bear, why should you?" He continues: in struggle, some people are reluctant to fight. "I hate to give the example," he says, of "a macho brother posturing" like he is tough, "but sisters manufacture the bullets." He said that some of the women with the BPP were some of the best shooters, and "Men start to respect that." On the one hand, there is verbal recognition of patriarchy in the political analysis here, evidenced in one of the speakers' comments on "white *male* supremacy." On the other hand, there is the suggestion that men's gender roles (shooting) are valued more than women's, such that when women do what men do, women are valued or respected more.

Radical analysis of anti-blackness and anti-Muslimness in this frame is not accompanied by radical analysis and practices related to patriarchy. As a result, many of the questions, all posed by women, focused on masculinity, gender roles, or gender relations. The development of Islam in black communities has a strong relationship with black nationalism, which some argue has had a "seemingly incompatible" relationship with "feminist" approaches (Collins 1996). While black women challenge this dynamic, that they even have to attests to its existence. It is worth noting that the speakers on the panel were all men. The space in which blackness and Muslimness is brought together is gendered, and it brings together the particular patriarchal aspects of the black radical tradition and Islam.

So far in this dissertation, I have argued that the racial/religious meaning of blackness includes Christianity in large part, whereas Muslimness is associated with brownness. But here, the former Panther, Shaykh Hakim, and others challenge the boundaries of these categories. In their eyes, Muslimness is a general nonwhiteness rather than specifically brownness and blackness is not defined by being Christian, but rather by being Muslim. They thus try to bring blackness and Muslimness closer together based on their shared relationship to white supremacy. Shaykh Hakim and the former Panther do not focus on the differences between black and brown Muslims, or the complicity of brown people in black people's oppression. They mention these topics, but they are not the main points of their talks. Rather, they focus on the strained relationship between black and brown Muslims, which is about what they argue brown complicity in black oppression *does*: it serves as a barrier to a united front against white supremacy and the West.

Part of how Shaykh Hakim, the Panther, and others in these spaces redefine these racial/religious meanings is by thinking about race not as a matter of identity, but as a position relative to white supremacy. The Nation of Islam (NOI) often has a similar perspective. The NOI is another major site where the racial/religious boundaries of blackness and Muslimness are pushed to expand and meld with one another. My very presence at the Nation mosque is significant for this point. After Faheem, one of my contacts at the Nation, gave one of the sermons I attended at the mosque, we spoke for a bit outside. I asked him who can be part of the Nation, racially speaking. He said, "White people are not allowed in the building." I remained silent and nodded, indicating that it was still his turn to talk. I wanted him to continue and elaborate on what that means. He continued, "It used to be no African immigrants, Caribbean either, only black American." I then wondered whether brown people count as white, so I asked,

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"Who is white?" Faheem said, "Anyone who is not black." I was silent again suggesting he should say more, because I then wondered who is black, but he left it at that and seemed to be done with that line of questioning. I pointed at myself and said "white?" as though to ask "am I white?" and he laughed and shook his head. I later learned that their community had an Asian American member, and that a Latino served as a minister in another one of the Nation communities on the West coast decades ago. Nadeer once told me about a white person he knew who was in the Nation, and he called this person an exception. Based on what I observed, it was indeed exceptional. Every time I was at the NOI mosque, I was the only nonblack person there. I was formally treated the same as other newcomers, which I learned when I went one Sunday with Eman, a a Sunni Muslim woman with African American and Somali parents. It was my third time there and her first, and we were treated the same: she and I went through the same check procedure upon entering in which a woman gave us a pat down and looked through our purses[17], and the woman then walked us to the rows of chairs in the main hall and told us where to sit.

My first time at the NOI mosque was on a Sunday. The first speaker introducing Faheem, who was the main speaker of the day, made introductory remarks. His words also circled around blackness and being Muslim, bringing them together like Shaykh Hakim and the Panther did, sometimes to the point that it was unclear which of his points had to do with race and which had to do with religion. It is both at the same time. On the "history of black people" he said, "Why would you start with slavery? We are not American, we are far more than American. That's why coming into the mosque is like going to another country. Not the state flag, not the US flag, but the free flying flag of Islam." He referred to the NOI flag propped up on the stage. "We've been

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[17] This check procedure is standard at NOI mosques, and I did not observe it at any non-NOI mosques.

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raised in America to be like our enemy…Muslim children are special, because [they] fear nothing but Allah." By rejecting Americanness as what defines black Americans but keeping blackness, the speaker redefines blackness through its relationship to Islam. His account is another example of how the racial/religious meanings of blackness and Muslimness are challenged in spaces that are part of or inspired by black radical politics.

Faheem spoke next. Every time I heard him speak, he would cite a major development in black America and say that it would not exist without the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and Louis Farrakhan. This time, he said:

> We can confidently and comfortably say that without Honorable Elijah Muhammad: no Islam in America, no women wearing hijab, not calling ourselves "black" but "negro." We'd still be eating pork. Where would black America be without Louis Farrakhan? You wouldn't have Obama. He made Afrocentricity possible. Elijah Muhammad is the father of black consciousness. We would be niggers. You don't gotta like him but you gotta respect the record.

Faheem argues that the genealogy of the Nation makes contemporary blackness and Islam inseparable, as he talks about hijabs and "black" versus "negro" in the same breath.

The ties to Christianity that are challenged on the one hand in black Muslim spaces also remain in the style of speech and in some of its content. For example, Faheem says, "Jesus says the kingdom of God is inside you, [but] 'Where in you?'" Louis Farrakhan asks. Farrakhan answers, it is "deep down in most of us under false reality, sin, [and] transgression, buried under pain of racism and sexism, trifleness, disobedience." Here Faheem cites Louis Farrakhan's reference to the Bible for support of Farrakhan's point. Faheem continues, "So when the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, came, the Jews and Christians said, 'We already have a book.' He said, 'How is that working for you?' When Jesus came, they said 'We already have a book.' He said, 'How is that working for you?' When Elijah Muhammad came, they said, 'We already

have a book. He said, 'How is that working for you?'" Christian references and meanings about the "kingdom of God" are used as part of the rhetoric and performance of the sermon. Another such reference is in this example: Faheem cites Louis Farrakhan saying that the NOI has "always been present when our leadership is crucified by the enemy: Paul Robeson, WEB DuBois, Elijah Muhammad." Faheem makes the reference explicit by explaining that it is "based on 'were you there when they crucified our Lord,'" as heads in the room nodded. Another time, Faheem used the Bible as further support for his points, citing it along with the Qur'an. Rejecting "slave religion" that says "when you die you go to a better place," he raised his voice to emphasize, "no one came back to tell you how good it was! Did you know neither the Bible nor Qur'an says that?" He continued, "People look at us and say we are not real Muslims...They all received Abraham…so who is the nation that has not received a messenger? How could God punish black people? How could God be just if he doesn't send black people anything and says 'To hell with the negro!' I don't believe God is a white racist."

The full name of the Nation of Islam is the Lost-Found Nation of Islam – that black people are a nation that was lost then found, and that God sent them a messenger, too, as messengers have been sent to all nations. Here again blackness and being Muslim are woven together through a narrative that resists the separation of blackness and Muslimness. Further still, Muslimness is situated firmly in black American experiences of slavery and oppression at the hands of white racists such that rejecting the idea that God could be a white racist makes sense. This is not how God is thought about in South Asian and Arab mosques in which the center of Islam is brown people's experiences, even when non-brown people are present and active. Faheem's reference to Abraham suggests he is responding to Abrahamic faiths, specifically other Muslims perhaps, that do not see the NOI as "real Muslims." His response is not to try to

convince them that NOI members are real Muslims, even rhetorically by addressing them in absentia. Rather, his response is to convince or remind those in the room – NOI members – of why and who they are: a lost-found nation. They are not seeking inclusion or recognition from any outside body.

At the NOI mosque that day, the theme of Faheem's lecture was food and eating healthily according to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad:

> Our women have forgotten how to live. The enemy taught you cooking was demeaning and then he fed your kids. They come out fat and ugly. It's gonna be a tough lecture today. The fattest men in our community are preachers. And the Muslim world laughed at us because we ate one meal a day. We fast all year long based on that definition.

In this point, Faheem makes a critique that brings in gender, race, and religion. He critiques some feminist ideas about gender roles, Christian preachers, and non-NOI Muslims. He continues drawing support from both the Bible and the Qur'an: "If you go to the Bible and the Holy Qur'an, the pig is categorically forbidden. Black folks not eating pig in Africa, in Kemet, in ancient Egypt. There is no mystery god! The devil is a liar. Why do we trust the devil to run our kitchen?" When women specifically enter the narrative in these spaces, it is typically to uphold gendered roles as good for them and everyone else as part of an anti-white supremacist Muslim ethic.

Another day, another sermon from Faheem at the NOI mosque started similarly – honoring Elijah Muhammad for what he has given and how he has been undervalued for his contributions: that there would be no Black Lives Matter without him, and that Faheem has not "been to a single college class that gives [Elijah Muhammad] his due." The "FBI thought they got rid of" the NOI like they did SNCC, SCLC, Eldridge Cleaver, and Kwame Toure, but the NOI "did not die," he said. "After 9/11, especially black Muslims began suffering under the

persecution the Nation has been suffering under." He sees the persecution following 9/11 as targeting black Muslims who are not in the Nation. It is not clear if he meant African Americans or a broader group of nonwhite people, similar to how he defined blackness to me in our conversation outside the mosque. In either case, here he makes a link made between black radical and civil rights movement repression and post-9/11 impacts on Muslims.

A major theme in these spaces is Malcolm X's concept of separation as opposed to integration. One of Faheem's statements reflects the separation that Malcolm X advocated: "I don't want a couple laws passed, I want the land." The political position of the NOI is less intent on convincing non-NOI Muslims and non-Muslim whites that the NOI is legitimate or that they are human and deserve rights, which is important and necessary to some degree in an inclusion or integration-focused approach.

In West City, the NOI is in some ways a rather distinct community. There is a lot of movement between Mustafa Masjid, WDCM, and other Sunni groups and mosques in the area even as they disagree on some matters. But Ayesha, Eman, and Malik are the only people I talked to or observed in both black Sunni and NOI spaces. It is possible that these communities are distinct for theological differences or because many of the people at Mustafa Masjid and WDCM were once part of the NOI (or their parents were). Also, there are some key political differences that may be related to theological differences: WDCM and Mustafa Masjid attendees are Sunni Muslims and thus have some relationship to other Sunni Muslims who are Arab, South Asian, and more. Black Sunnis' politics may thus involve more of a racial struggle *within* their Muslim communities since they are more multi-racial than NOI spaces. The NOI traces their religious sources back to black Americans and so the views of nonblack Americans do not have

the power to delegitimize them. Black Sunni Muslims, however, share sources with brown Muslims, who can wield religious/racial authority over black Sunni Muslims.

Like Shaykh Hakim, the former Black Panther, and others discussed here, Faheem and his NOI community think about fighting back against oppression in ways that meld blackness and Muslimness, challenging the boundaries of their racial/religious meaning. Slavery is a major theme used across all of the black Muslim spaces to forge a connection between blackness and Muslimness. Faheem argues, "The enemy robbed twelve million of us and robbed us of our name, language, culture, religion, minds. [The] only three things the Qur'an prescribes" are "fasting, prayer, [and] retaliation…the Holy Qur'an says fighting is prescribed for you. Prescription is a medicine." Faheem ties the recent vigils following the murders of nine black people at a church in Charleston to this concept of retaliation. "These deaths will stop when we're tired enough to retaliate. Freedom not attained by easy words. Must be willing to sacrifice. Negroes here offering forgiveness." Here, a verse that is summarily downplayed and interpreted differently in brown Muslim communities is highlighted. Faheem frames retaliation as a response to hundreds of years of oppression in the form of slavery. This explicitly racial exegesis of the Qur'an may put the discomfort many feel about any talk of violence in the Qur'an into a more familiar context.

The former Panther also links and rejects slavery and Christianity: "Genocide, stealing land, slavery have been [done by] Christians." The experience of slavery is connected to being Muslim, and that is important here for how it suggests that these groups are challenging the dominant racial/religious meanings of Muslimness and blackness. Faheem and others at the NOI mosque make a point that slavery is not the start of the history of black people. Malik has also challenged this idea. Similarly, the activist introducing the former Black Panther speaking at

Shaykh Hakim's mosque said, "Muslims been under attack since day one, like Africans here in America. 2015 same as 1915. Our greatest strength is our history, and the history in the US is the history of white supremacy, from the genocide of Native Americans and enslavement of Africans." Shaykh Hakim makes a similar point in how he positions slavery and white supremacy. In his talk at the local university MSA, he said, "the slave had to be broken." That "when we see African Americans, we see Muslim names" now. And that black people "are sensitive about that. They beat our names out of us. The first thing we wanna do when we become Muslim is change our name, get rid of slave name. Immigrant brothers and sisters, make them say your name." He continued, "Islam came up on the revolutionary side of the struggle." "If I can use the word militancy," he continued, "using Islam as a weapon of our liberation – now it's about Qur'an and Sunnah (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad), it's what will give us our freedom. The government is afraid of that. Black people are still in the struggle."

Slavery is woven through the narratives of black radicals and those inspired by black radicals in a way that makes blackness and being Muslim naturally connected. Shaykh Hakim and Faheem talk about how Africans' history, religion, and cultures, were erased when they were stolen and made into slaves. When the men refer to the religion that was erased, it is a reference to Islam (and at times other African traditions but never a reference to Christianity), evidenced in how they highlight how many slaves were Muslim. They see being Muslim as reclaiming who they were before slavery, and thus to be Muslim is seamlessly part of fighting white supremacy. Malik, for example, often argues that Muslim slaves resisted white supremacy more than other slaves. In tracing their roots to the resistance of Muslim slaves, Malik and the other men bring blackness and Muslimness together. In their work, that bringing together is itself an act of resistance.

Resistance by definition testifies to the existence of domination. And here, the racial/religious meaning of blackness as non-Muslim is a source of domination. Blackness is associated with non-Muslimness unless it is challenged to be otherwise, and here it is challenged. In the next section, we see people engage the dominant racial/religious meanings of blackness, whiteness, and Muslimness in their fight against injustice, as the next section shows. Engaging the dominant meanings can come with a politics that is integration focused and requires convincing dominant groups of one's humanity; meanwhile black Muslims like Faheem, Shaykh Hakim, and the former Panther do not focus on convincing Arab and South Asian Muslims of their humanity or legitimacy. In the next section, I discuss spaces that are majority Arab and South Asian Muslims, or that are mixed but dominated by these groups. I show how Islamophobia is one of the main frames they work with to think about their racial/religious experiences.

Islamophobia is for Brown People: Maintaining the Boundaries of Blackness and Muslimness

It was Martin Luther King Day and several thousand people gathered in Waterville for a march. It was also a few months after Mike Brown's murder and the Black Lives Matter movement was taking off. The march was organized in a particular order: black people were to stand in the very front, nonblack people of color next, and white people at the end of the march. The Muslim group I accompanied to the march consisted of members of Mustafa Masjid and WDCM – Hafsa, Nadeer, Anisa, and others. They carried a range of signs about being Muslim and black, including signs that simply said black lives matter. Hafsa told us that Muslims are supposed to go to the section of the march with the "third world contingent," which was in the section for nonblack people of color. In this way, Muslims as a whole were explicitly positioned as nonblack people of color even though many African Americans, some multiracial people, and

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some whites were part of this group of Muslims. The march organizers were trying to highlight the struggles of black people and forefront them in the way the march was organized. Their resistance to racism was symbolized in how they flipped the US racial hierarchy, putting whites at the end. The middle group – nonblack people of color – remained in the middle and it is notable that even in this flip, Muslims are seen as nonblack people of color. Muslims' position does not change. Unlike the sort of seamless melding of blackness and Muslimness I discuss in the previous section, this frame for thinking about blackness and Muslimness positions them as separate. Political activism against Islamophobia often reflected this type of approach in which Muslims are positioned as nonblack people of color. The accounts below show that political organizing that is anti-Islamophobia (also called "anti-Muslim hate" or "bigotry") tends to view the main victims of Islamophobia as nonblack people of color, specifically brown.

I attended two fundraising dinners for two Muslim organizations doing legal advocacy and political organizing work in the area: Civil Liberties for Muslim Americans (CLMA) and Muslim Voices for Change (MVC). At CLMA, the fundraiser was invite-only, and a South Asian participant offered me an extra ticket she had. Both fundraisers were in Stone Heights. The CLMA fundraiser had about thirty tables of six or seven people. One of the tables was entirely African American, and Hafsa later told me that that was Nadeer's family since he was doing some short term paid work for CLMA. The rest of the tables were mostly Arab and South Asian, with a few whites and multiracial people. It was a formal, sober affair, and suits and heels clicked around. Guests stood and socialized, eating appetizers before it was time to enter the banquet hall.

The speeches at the fundraiser were about "anti-Muslim bigotry." The first speaker, a South Asian Muslim woman on the board of CLMA, began by greeting everyone with *asalaam*

alaikum. Only a few others along with the table with African American Muslims responded aloud with *walaikum salaam*. She said that the organization's goal is to "defend the founding values of the country and the rights of the American Muslim community." This is the "deadliest period to be a Muslim in America." She added that it was not even as bad immediately after 9/11. She also referred to Dr. Martin Luther King several times, positioning CLMA's work in his dream; "we can make those dreams come true. [You] probably have the same dreams for your kids." A later speaker, an African American non-Muslim lawyer, said that, "Despite Dr. King, we have problems in the African American community. And the Muslim American community is faced with similar discrimination, often state sponsored." The lawyer was the first speaker to refer to Black Lives Matter; she referred to Freddie Gray and the recent uprising in Baltimore. She offered more analogies between the struggles of "the African American community" and the "Muslim American community" discussing them as separate, distinct communities: "The only image of Arab Americans, of Muslim Americans, is [the TV show] 'Homeland.' Like how people think African Americans are criminals." The next speaker was another board member, a South Asian Muslim man. "In the US we have Eric Garner, Ferguson, Chapel Hill," he began, referring to places that had seen high profile violence against black and/or Muslim people in the past few months. He continued, "but [the US] is unique because it is peaceful. We protect everyone's rights and due process." After talking about racism he experienced where he was told to go back to his country, he says, "Since 9/11, we have seen an erosion of our rights. CLMA is protecting our freedom in a country that's not so much for us." He then made an analogy between anti-Muslim bigotry and Japanese internment. He referred to the Korematsu Supreme Court case, and how Supreme Court Justice Scalia said that if you think the same thing (internment) will not happen again "you're kidding yourself."

The first board member returned, since she was MCing the event. She said that the police officers in Baltimore and other places killing "unarmed black men and boys" should be charged so that we can see more accountability in law enforcement. The MC then introduced and sat with an African American Muslim politician, and they had a conversation on stage as part of the fundraiser program. She said that an "internal issue in the Muslim community" is the "fault lines between the African American community and immigrant community." The politician said that "People in the Muslim community should practice Islam," and recognize that the companions of the Prophet Muhammed were "multicultural." He continued, African American communities faced slavery and Jim Crow, and that it is "difficult to understand that if you didn't go through it." Speaking on brown Muslims, he said:

> I'm not gonna hold friends to unrealistic standards but they have had similar experiences. Egyptians have had Mubarak, Syria has Assad. My friends in here because government elsewhere is bad. We come together as one *ummah* (Muslim community across borders). The best way to get a friend is to be a friend.

He told a story of how he marched with CLMA at one point and says that "the Muslim community today is a respectable community" because of CLMA. He recalled the pre-9/11 days when Muslims would say, "Don't vote, it's haram (impermissible)." Those days included racism that has carried on: "And immigrant Muslims not returning greetings of African American Muslims. And today I see their muted response to Tamir Rice and Brother Garner." The MC then redirected the conversation, "Changing the topic to anti-Muslim bigotry," she began, and they talked about notorious, prominent Islamophobes like Pam Geller. The official then said, with "eight million Muslims" in the US, we must take advantage of the fact that "we're highly educated and wealthy, so three million can contribute to campaigns. Our Jewish and Irish friends have mastered this, and we must do the same." He adds: Muslims have been in this country since

its inception, and we must take control of the narrative. In this conversation, blackness briefly

intersects with Muslimness. Intersection implies separate things that then meet at particular

junctures. Blackness and Muslimness are separate and intersection at points in this frame. We see

this in the comparison the politician and others make: Muslims are a minority, comparable to the

Jews, Irish, and also African Americans. The politician's parallels to the Jewish and Irish

communities may suggest that Muslims are nonblack people of color, or otherwise somewhere

between blackness and whiteness, because Muslims' *struggles* are paralleled to blacks, and their

goals are compared to Jewish and Irish people, who became white. The politician's ideas for

what Muslims should be doing politically suggest a politics with the goal of inclusion or

integration. Sylvia Chan-Malik (2011) argues that this sort of politics with the goal of inclusion

is common for brown Muslim immigrants and their children, as compared to black Muslims,

because of what Islam means to each group:

> Islam is certainly part and parcel of a Black American spiritual and cultural consciousness. Indeed, until the 1970s, while Muslims from the Middle East, South Asia, and other parts of the world were certainly present in the US, the vast majority of Muslims in the US were Black, and "Islam" connoted a politicized stance of antiracist resistance and struggle. However, in the post-1965 era, following the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act and unstable political circumstances in South Asia and the Arab world, the numbers of South Asians and Arabs living and working in the U.S. rose exponentially, a demographic shift that irrevocably changed the composition of the Muslim American community. As a result, the Muslim American community came to embody two distinct, and in many cases, mutually opposed visions of Islam and the nation, one which viewed the faith as a means to counter the dehumanizing effects of white supremacy and national disenfranchisement, as was the case for Black American Muslims; and the other which saw Islam as a religious and cultural inheritance, while viewing America as a land of opportunity and prosperity, as could be said of the immigrant Muslim population. In the interaction between these two worldviews, questions of legitimacy and authenticity in regards to practices of Islam and the nature of citizenship have come to represent the central sources of tension between these groups. (2011:12–13)

CLMA and often the Islamophobia-based politics in brown Muslim communities (which Chan-Malik calls immigrant Muslims) are driven by an understanding of America as a "land of opportunity and prosperity." For brown Muslims, Islam is a "religious and cultural inheritance" – part of brown Muslims' heritage - rather than part of a broader consciousness linked to a fighting systemic white supremacy. These two approaches to Islam, the nation, and politics appear in the example of bullying. The MC said that one of the most common things she hears from Muslim parents is that their child is growing up ashamed to be Muslim. I did not hear this complaint in black Muslim communities. In West City, Muslimness is seen as a point of pride and it also sometimes elevates black people's social status. Bullying is a common theme at MVC too, as it also is located in Stone Heights and focuses on issues that are of greater interest to brown Muslims.

The MVC fundraiser was also a highly curated and formal event. There were at least twice as many tables as the CLMA fundraiser. It was a production, and I was a volunteer. Volunteers were told to position themselves in the banquet hall to do a quick run through of the fund-raising portion of the event. We were told to smile as we held baskets for donors to put their donation envelopes in. We were told to turn on our heels so that we could see people at the tables behind us, next to us, and in front of us, depending where we were standing. We were also lectured about posture and how to stand. While listening, I stood with my arms folded. A volunteer pointed to my arms and told me to unfold them because it looks hostile, and we want people to donate.

Halfway through the event, speeches began. Like in the CLMA fundraiser, at least half of the speakers were women. One of the leaders in MVC began her speech by relaying a story about a time when she was told to go back to her country. Then she said, "But I am an American. *This*

is my country." The audience erupted in applause. Muslims being positioned as not American is an issue that hits at Arab and South Asian Muslims especially hard, and they were the majority of the audience. Her speech touched on a lot of issues that are more important to immigrants and their children than anyone else in Muslim communities. Islamophobia, the main focus of MVC, is thus framed as an issue that impacts people who are seen as foreign, brown, or immigrant.

It is possible that these two organizations framed their organizations' work to appeal to the concerns of those in the community who had extra money to donate – that is, brown suburban Muslims. Many of this group's concerns include the bullying of their Muslim children in schools, discrimination at the airport, anti-immigrant sentiment, and the idea that Muslims are not American, which are not the biggest issues that black Muslims, for example, face. There is support for this possible interpretation that these organizations focus on brown Muslims' issues because they are the ones with money: indeed, both of these organizations are suburban based, which is where brown Muslims live for the most part.

While appealing to the donor base may explain why these organizations focus on issues impacting brown suburban Muslims, it cannot explain a similar type of frame for thinking about Islamophobia among brown urban Muslims in North Hill (where they exist in smaller numbers). It also cannot explain a similar type of frame coming out of black Muslim communities in Waterville, where some also see Islamophobia as a brown-specific issue, though in Waterville there are not a lot of brown Muslims.

One of the groups I observed in Waterville is a gathering of South Asian Muslim women. The group was started by a woman whose spiritual teacher is a Sufi queer black *imam* who she describes as a "social justice oriented, soulful, heartful, awesome person." Another member of the group says, "He's the warmest presence I've ever been in. He's one of the people who's

made me feel really excited about being Muslim. He brings together my faith, and my Muslim identity, in this really beautiful way." Again here we see a distinction between faith as a Muslim and identity as a Muslim for brown Muslims. Several of the women were queer, and all were between the ages of 20 and 40. The group of about nine women would meet every few weeks to do art together, discuss various political issues, spend time together and eat, meditate, and other such activities. Each meeting, the group would "do something difficult" and meditate briefly right after. All of the women in this group are activists who work on a range of issues: anti-Islamophobia, racial justice specifically Black Lives Matter, LGBT rights, immigrant rights, reproductive justice, educational equality, and more. They are all politically far left of center, feminist, and most would describe their politics as radical. When the group first started to meet, there was a conversation about whether to open this group up to non-brown Muslim women or others, but the group agreed to keep it to brown Muslim women. While everyone in the group is Muslim, their "political identities," as some call it, unite them more strongly than their religious practices. An ongoing conversation in this space is: how willing are people in the group to talk about their religious practice in Islam and not only their political identities?

One of the meetings was in Ramadan, and the "something difficult" was reading a short chapter of the Qur'an, just a few lines long. We took turns reading out loud. People were silent afterward. It felt like they did not have much to say. The organizer of the group later talked about how she enjoyed this activity since she had been feeling lonely and isolated. Other women talked about how they felt disconnected from mainstream brown Muslim communities. The ambivalence around bringing religious practice in to the group was resolved briefly one day in Ramadan when the group prayed *maghrib* (sunset time prayer) in congregation at the home of one of the women in the group. Others brought their significant others and invited friends. The

mixed gender prayer was led by a woman. In the vast majority of Muslim spaces, mixed gender prayer is led by men, and women only lead fellow women in prayer.

The goal of this group is not to fight Islamophobia directly, but to serve as a space for healing and recovering from various challenges the women face in their activist work and lives as brown women who are activists against Islamophobia and who identify as Muslim. Having a mixed gender prayer illustrates how challenging patriarchy is important to this group even as they intentionally keep this group for brown Muslim women only – which suggests that they may be subtly engaging the implicit meaning of Muslimness as brown. But this does not mean that these women are ignorant of the existence of black Muslims and black struggle such that they ignore black Muslims. In fact, these women are active in political organizing against anti-black racism, and they frame their politics as "intersectional." They hold on to being Muslim as a political identity. Whereas brown Muslims can be Muslim through a political identity, black and white Muslims cannot. The fusion of brown and Muslim makes this possible. The brown Muslim women's group does not seek inclusion for Muslims like CLMA and MVC do, but the group's approach to politics and everyday experience of their racial/religious position does not challenge the synonymity of brownness and Muslimness. Instead, the group uses it as a point of departure to make critiques and spaces that challenge patriarchal practices in Muslim communities and Orientalist interpretations of Islam that position it as uniquely patriarchal.

It is important to note here that the goal in this dissertation is not to determine which groups are good, bad, or most effective in how they deal with their racial/religious position. Rather, the goal is to show how the work of the different groups reveals a complex matrix of racial/religious positions that are contested and engaged to challenge various forms of inequality. The South Asian Muslim women's group, for example, resists patriarchal interpretations of Islam

and other forms of patriarchy while also reproducing dominant meanings of Muslimness in

which is associated with brownness. In contrast, the black Muslim men inspired by the black

radical tradition seamlessly bring blackness and Muslimness together as part of resistance to

white supremacy while building it on a patriarchal foundation.

Islamophobia helps form the identity-based politics of Muslimness, leading to the theme

that Islamophobia is for brown people. Nadeer (African American) had strong opinions about

these meanings of Islamophobia. Here, in response to me asking him if he thinks people think he

is Muslim when they look at him, he critiques it as though addressing brown Muslims:

> I also think that's also part of the problem when you start talking about
> Islamophobia and why I think that's a complete scam…Islamophobia is just the
> code word for racism. It's a code word for racism that applies to your people in a
> certain way that you're trying to exotify in order to benefit and to change the
> narrative in your way and that's cool in a certain way, but you're also excluding
> people who don't experience it as a Muslim experience, which isn't real. They
> don't hate you because you're Muslim. They don't care if you pray or not. They
> hate you cause you come from one of the countries that are the target. Your food
> is different, your language is different, your culture is different, you dress
> differently. Whether or not you pray one time or five times or zero times [has]
> nothing to do with your religion whatsoever. They don't care how much alcohol
> you eat, pork you eat, they don't care, it's nothing to do with Islam, it has
> everything to do with being of these countries of this region. What you mean is
> racism, but you don't want to call it racism cause you want to call it your own
> brand of racism, it's racism that doesn't apply to all Muslims. Does it apply to
> people from Singapore or Thailand or Indonesia? No. Muslims from China? No.
> Just Muslims from Iraq, Iran, Saudi. We're droning Somalia, but they don't care
> about Somalia. It's just a way to kind of snatch the identity of what the Muslim
> and the American Muslim is, so I reject it. There's a lot of really respected people
> that [use "Islamophobia"] that I respect the heck out of, but I'm just like, that
> brand has got to be smashed and I'll do my part to completely undermine people
> that I love in that way cause it's a scam. I don't experience any of that unless my
> ID's getting checked and if I willfully identity myself with a shirt or something
> like that at the airport, but no, I don't believe I get treated as a Muslim, I get
> treated like a scary black man.

Nadeer views the separation of Islamophobia from other types of racism as something that

supports brown domination in Muslim communities by giving them their "own brand of racism,"

which allows them to continue to separate themselves from "American Muslims" (meaning African American Muslims).

Salimah (African American), expressed a similar perspective though she and Nadeer are not in the same circles. When she saw Facebook posts by Muslim organizations like CLMA and MVC about anti-bullying, she would get irritated and ask me every now and again: "what the fuck is Islamophobia?" She would explain that she thinks it is not a "real" problem, that it is essentially people whining. Nadeer and Salimah's perspectives touch on the politics of inclusion or integration in some of the Islamophobia based approaches. Having your "own brand of racism" allows for a path to inclusion as a citizen, as an American, by separating your struggles from others, namely black people. The brand of racism is based on being Muslim, and Nadeer's problem with this is that it's not talking about *all* Muslims, but only brown ones. This argument is similar to Helen Heran Jun's (2011) argument comparing African American and Asian American efforts to gain social/legal citizenship. The logic of citizenship is inclusion: being added to a structure that already exists in which systematic exclusion (of others) is part of the structure. She argues that Asian and African Americans are excluded from citizenship in different ways, and that their paths to inclusion involve reinforcing the ways that the other group has been excluded. Applying Jun's argument to this chapter, then, some brown Muslims' inclusion is predicated on distancing themselves from blacks, as a portion of Nadeer's quote suggests: "you're trying to exotify in order to benefit and to change the narrative in your way." Exotify is the key word here that suggests that brown Muslims shifting the narrative about them relies on them making the form of racism they experience seem different or "exotic" compared to anti-black racism.

To black Muslims, Islamophobia is framed as a different sort of racism from what African Americans face, whether Muslim or not, as the following story by Aleem about fears of FBI surveillance shows. My first interview with Aleem was outside the mosque after Friday prayer. During this interview, in which I sat with my papers and a recorder visible, a middle aged black man in a *shalwar kameez* (long tunic and loose pants) that Aleem was talking with earlier stopped for a moment to say bye to Aleem. The man and I exchanged greetings – *asalaam alaikum*. After that, he didn't say anything to me, but he was openly staring at me, looking me right in the eye, although his speech was directed at Aleem. I later learned from Aleem that the man was suspicious of me. He asked Aleem if I was from the FBI and warned Aleem that he could "get into trouble." Aleem told his friend that black people do not get targeted by the FBI like that, but rather South Asians and Arabs do. Aleem added:

> Like I said man, we're (blacks) not on that level, and some people who were
> innocent got caught up, but if you really look at it, more of the target people were
> people who were Middle Eastern, or people from the region of India Pakistan.
> These were the individuals who were being targeted. You know, some people
> who were of the Sikh religion got caught up and killed and stuff like that. It has
> nothing to do with the religion of Islam.

Aleem argues that surveillance and hate crimes are directed at brown people, whether Muslim or not. Aleem, Nadeer, and Salimah similarly see Islamophobia as racial and associated with brown and not black people, and not about religious beliefs, whether they view Islamophobia as a legitimate problem or not.

Inaya (African American) once said to a friend of hers in front of me that black people are not as affected by Islamophobia. She explained why with the following statement about how whites feel about black Muslims: "We know you part of them but I hate you for something else." Whites know that black Muslims are Muslim but they hate them because they are black – not

because they are Muslim. Black people are protected from Islamophobia, Inaya says, arguing that they face a different sort of struggle. Just as Nadeer argues that Islamophobia is a way to "snatch the identity" of "the American Muslim," meaning African American Muslim, Inaya argues that the concept of Islamophobia shapes who Muslims are believed to be, racially speaking. She critiques how the "face of Islam" is not black: "And white people," she begins, "it doesn't help them to put a black face on Islam because they're already killing black people" regardless of whether or not they are Muslim. Inaya continues that white people are "killing the immigrant to perpetuate wars. They need a villain."

On another occasion, Ayesha, a middle aged African American woman, made a similar argument about what Islamophobia means to African American Muslims: "We don't have anything they want, it's all overseas" so as an African American Muslim, "you're somebody, but nobody, too." For Ayesha and Inaya, Islamophobia is nonblack, with purpose, and nonblack. Inaya's friend, however, also an African American Muslim woman, jumped into the conversation and disagreed: "They wanna make it like black and Muslim is separate, but no. Yeah black people are affected by Islamophobia at college. We also have been called terrorists." She added that some consider Louis Farrakhan a "sellout for not addressing Islamophobia." For Inaya's friend, bringing blackness and Muslimness together under the inclusion-based logic of Islamophobia means that black Muslims must be framed as also being victims of Islamophobia because they are Muslim and Islamophobia is, ostensibly, about all Muslims. Even as Inaya's friend considers Islamophobia to impact black people, her point about the criticism of Farrakhan for not addressing Islamophobia suggests that he too sees Islamophobia as a brown issue. This section has shown that an Islamophobia-based framework for activism and organizing largely frames brown people as the targets of Islamophobia. In this framework, blackness and

Muslimness retain their dominant racial/religious meanings but come together through the concept of intersection, in which blackness and Muslimness meet in the lives of black Muslims. In contrast to the black radical inspired way of melding blackness and Muslimness that redefines the boundaries of blackness and Muslimness, the Islamophobia-based way maintains the boundaries.

The next section examines how the black radical-inspired ways of melding blackness and Muslimness and the Islamophobia-focused way of connecting blackness and Muslimness are used to different ends. These are two of the main frames participants in West City use to connect blackness and Muslimness but not the only frames. Other frames draw upon these frames, as the section below shows through a closer look at Islamophobia and anti-black racism, revealing the complex ways that racial/religious meanings are contested in these Muslim communities.

#BlackLivesMatter vs. #MuslimLivesMatter: Racial/Religious Custody Battles

One evening at Mustafa Masjid, two months before the Chapel Hill shootings, the topic of an event was to make connections between the budding uprising in Ferguson to the struggles of Muslims abroad. The phrase "Muslim Lives Matter" would become more common and almost branded after the Chapel Hill shootings, the way that Black Lives Matter has, but this conversation at Mustafa Masjid focused on how black and Muslim lives connect and preceded the Chapel Hill shootings.

Kevin, a white Muslim who helped organize the event, spoke first, which did not sit well with a few of my participants. Standing at the podium at Mustafa Masjid, Kevin started with, "White supremacy is…" and he went on to describe it. Frequently referring to Malcolm X, he said that he is a first-generation college graduate and that he was drawn to Islam because he was

raised with the teaching that racism is sinful, and he was into hip hop, and he read the Qur'an. Halfway through Kevin's time speaking, Salimah (African American) leaned over in her seat and whispered loudly to me, "It's interesting that a white guy's speaking first." She knew him, as did I, but objected to him speaking first. I silently mouthed "we'll talk later." Aside from his roughly five-minute introduction to the event, Kevin introduced the speakers, asked a question of one of them, and said nothing more about himself. In our conversation after the event, Hafsa (multiracial), who is also a community organizer, shook her head and rolled her eyes at how Kevin spoke first. She said he was "making this all about himself." "It's called *Black* Lives Matter," she said, arguing that he was "centering himself" which is a phrase Salimah also used to describe him.

Salimah's and Hafsa's reactions to Kevin, and them confiding in me, is notable. They viewed him talking about his whiteness, even as he spoke strongly against white supremacy, as a distraction from the event at hand. Was this also their way of questioning his right to speak as a white person, even though he is Muslim? Did they feel the same way about Nadia, the other nonblack person speaking at the event, a light skinned Arab American Muslim woman who is also a community organizer? To find out, I asked what they thought about Nadia's speech. Nadia began, "First of all, if you haven't already noticed, I'm not black." She said this as though it was obvious, in a tone that was partly a joke. Few laughed. "But our faith says that black lives matter." "Arab and South Asian immigrants" have benefited from "artificial white privilege" and they have "benefited for decades." But "9/11 woke us up." She started to introduce the next point she was going to make, giving disclaimers. "And now I'm going to say a word that I don't have the authority to say, quoting Imam Talib (African American)." She said a bit more to preface it, and then put the microphone in front of Malik who was sitting next to her on the panel, who said

for her, "Y'all niggas, too." The audience cheered, Salimah among them. Nadia continued, "We are the ones who must confront our own people…Arab and South Asian Muslims, that is, like the white allies who are doing the same work."

Nadia spoke about her personal experiences and connection to black oppression far more than Kevin did. She spoke about her connection as an Arab American to black struggles in the US, which, arguably, Kevin may also have been trying to do. Why did Salimah and Hafsa react one way to an Arab Muslim organizer and another way to a white Muslim organizer? These two organizers expressed nearly identical political views. Nadia even compared her role as an Arab to that of whites by saying that Arabs and South Asians must behave as allies to black people like white allies are to black people. Why do Salimah and Hafsa see her talking about herself as *not* distracting from a conversation about how black lives and Muslim lives matter, while they see Kevin (and his references to Malcolm X) as a distraction? I argue that this is because Kevin and Nadia represent different things – whiteness and brownness. Hafsa's and Salimah's reactions show that, in activist spaces that are about challenging or resisting oppression, Muslim means brown, so even though Kevin is Muslim, he is not fully or socially Muslim since his whiteness serves as a barrier. Both Kevin and Nadia are clear about not being black while they also draw upon blackness (e.g., hip hop, "niggas") to make connections between black and Muslim lives.

I expected the "Y'all niggas, too" comment to be a controversial moment in Salimah and Hafsa's eyes. But when I asked them later what they thought of that moment, or Nadia's speech in general, they expressed appreciation. Salimah said she agreed that "Y'all niggas, too." My main question to her was this: how it was possible for people like me and Nadia to be "niggas, too" when it is inappropriate at best and racist at worst for us to say that word? How is it possible for us to be something that is not ours to call ourselves? Salimah paused and said, "That's a good

question, A. Let me think on it." When I asked her again a few days later, she did not have an answer and was less interested.

The literature reflects this debate and confusion on the racial location of Muslims in general or brown Muslims in particular: Moustafa Bayoumi (2009:133-4) asks whether Muslims are "white, brown, or black (all of these, actually) or if they are their own novel category?" There is some evidence pointing in all directions. Nadia says she is not black, and then says that her fellow Arab and South Asian Muslims should follow the example of "white allies." It sounds as though she is neither black nor white, but she also has a closer relationship to blackness because "Y'all niggas, too." And the strong association between Muslimness and brownness remains. The ambiguity of Nadia's position may allow her to speak to and through all of these categories in a way that, however contradictory, can speak to everyone in the room, such as Salimah and Hafsa.

Nadia's speech also addressed slavery and Islam in the US, and black-brown relations in the Muslim community. She continued her speech to say that "Islamophobes are a distraction" from what is really happening in our community, by which she means intra-Muslim racism. She said her hometown is very segregated. The mosque she goes to is all Arab. Another one up the street is all South Asian. "We look at African American like it's separate but they are one-third of Muslims. Our kids don't know their Muslim American history. If our kids did know, they'd feel more confident [about being Muslim] when people challenge them." Then, with slight amusement and bewilderment in her voice, she said, "People think we showed up on 9/11." People laughed. Nadia continued to make connections between black and brown Muslims by addressing the latter nearly in absentia, because there were only five South Asians or Arabs, including me, in the majority black audience of about forty people. "We benefitted from the

African American community. We *can* be Muslim here because of them…because of African slaves since they were the first Muslims here." Thinking through the relationship between slavery and Islam in the US is a major theme among Muslims trying to connect the importance of black and Muslim lives, or black and brown Muslims. Nadia's read of the significance of slavery is different from those of Muslims connected to black radical thought discussed earlier in this chapter. She refers to slavery to connect blackness and Muslimness and to create connections between communities that she views as discrete. For her, blackness is not interwoven with what it means to be Muslim, but rather has shaped this separate category of what it means to be Muslim.

When it was Malik's turn to speak, he said that there is an "academicizing of Islamophobia" and that we must "rewind" to "African people dealing with Islamophobia since they were brought to these shores." Along the same lines as Shaykh Hakim, Malik argued that "Muslim slaves were the most likely to resist" and that "Immigrants need to learn from our experience." The idea that immigrants must learn from black Muslims is pervasive in black Muslim communities, particularly after the shootings in Chapel Hill – which were among the worst of the violence called Islamophobia. Many black Muslims said that immigrant Muslims must learn this ethic of self-defense from black Muslims, and not leave themselves vulnerable to attack by being passive. Ayesha (African American) shared a similar sentiment with me. I was sitting in the passenger seat of her car, accompanying her on her errands so we could talk. It was the day after the news broke about the three young Muslims murdered in Chapel Hill. She said that immigrant Muslims need to learn from black Muslims. She says that the power of the Nation of Islam and other black Muslim communities keeps black Muslim women safe, that "no one messes with us" because they do not know whether it will be "turbans" – referring to Sunni

Muslim men – or "bowties" – referring to NOI men – who will show up. Faheem told me a story

about the Nation of Islam that resonated with Ayesha's point. Once, someone "messed with" a

Muslim sister and there was a sea of Nation men in the street, marching. He shook his head and

laughed, saying that people did not want that to happen again, so it never happened again.

Malik continued in his speech, "Confronting anti-blackness among Muslims is my point."

"It is deeply ingrained. Mustafa Masjid is an integrated community, but there are others that are

not." He then named other major mosque-based communities in Waterville. "There's the 'liquor

store masjid,' which I've said to their face, so I can say it here" he said, with his hands up in the

air as though to remove blame from himself, "and then there's [another mosque] with various

groups, and WDCM in Waterville is all black, and the Nation of Islam is not even

acknowledged." The pitch of his voice got higher toward the end when he talked about the NOI.

The NOI has helped people clean up their lives including not drinking while others (referring to

liquor stores) "sell poison." "Christianity has been manipulated to control black people…black

people won't leave [Christianity] for another slave master." The synthesis of blackness and

Muslimness in fighting white supremacy is a consistent theme in black Muslims' political work.

For Malik, using the term Islamophobia to describe part of what slaves experienced helps to get

nonblack Muslims to recognize that black people are legitimately Muslim, too, and have been in

the US for a long time, too. He says all this to highlight anti-blackness among Muslims. Aside

from the black radical tradition frame, conversations on racism and brown people highlights

intra-Muslim race relations and racism. Intra-Muslim anti-blackness is *the* anti-blackness

discussed in non-NOI majority black and multiracial Sunni Muslim spaces; framing black

struggles as Islamophobia, which is owned by brown people, is a way to make an argument for

black Muslim inclusion into (brown) Muslimness. The relationship between brown and black

Muslims is of greater concern in some segments of the black Muslim community (Mustafa Masjid) than in others (WDCM). The relationship is even less of a concern in the NOI, who interact with brown Muslims the least of black Muslim groups.

Several months after Malik's speech at the event at Mustafa Masjid, the Chapel Hill shootings happened. I received a text from Hafsa (multiracial) soon after word spread about the murders:

> wow. we have a lot to discuss in the aftermath of the unc shootings. i have seen narrative after narrative from Muslims on fb [Facebook] celebrating the 'beautiful souls' that were lost because they were dental students, and college educated, and YOUNG and married?! obviously, there [sic] lives are worthy of commemoration and I don't want to take away from that. but the way in which we choose to celebrate them says so much about deeply embedded classism, ageism and model minority myth in the community! anyways I figured I would say these things to you – wasn't sure who else would get it. sigh. So much work to do to advance our communities. Talk soon. Love

Later, Hafsa expressed that she didn't feel comfortable sharing her perspective with many others because it could be read in a way that she did not intend. She, too, was upset at the loss of life, and also sees this as a moment that reveals Muslims' priorities. One of the reasons the victims were celebrated, according to Hafsa was because two of the victims were married and they were "young." Their murders highlighted other divisions and arrangements of Muslim communities, including along racial lines as her reference to the model minority myth suggests. Hafsa's point is that other Muslims face violence as well and are not mourned as deeply following the shootings. Mustafa Masjid also attempted to highlight how other Muslims facing violence are not mourned as deeply, without disrespecting or downplaying the violence in Chapel Hill, which was a perception that Hafsa feared.

There were several prayer vigils over the course of two days following the Chapel Hill

shootings at major local universities and in majority brown Muslim areas. Five out of the six

events were outside of Waterville, where majority black Muslim communities are. Though there

were no vigils in Waterville, Friday prayer at Mustafa Masjid the week of the shooting included

a prayer service and an "in-absentia funeral prayer" or *janaza* for five different people – the three

of the Chapel Hill shootings, an African American Muslim rapper who was killed under

unknown circumstances in Waterville, and Abdi-Samad Sheikh Hussein. Three months earlier,

Abdi-Samad Sheikh Hussein, a Somali Muslim teenager, had succumbed to his injuries in

Kansas City after being hit by a car in a mosque parking lot. The police had declared the hit and

run intentional, possibly a hate crime. The imam giving the sermon at Mustafa Masjid that day

spent an equal amount of time talking about these three different incidents, speaking highly of all

five victims, not privileging the Chapel Hill shooting victims, who were Syrian American, over

black Muslims who were also killed. The themes in the sermon at Friday prayer that week

brought together black Muslim and brown Muslim deaths. An email was sent to the Mustafa

Masjid listserv about the sermon being on these five Muslims. The email included a prayer that

God free all Muslims from the "mass indictments of terrorism and violence put forth by the

world-wide 'Islamophobia Machine' that seeks to incite violence against all Muslims in an

attempt to achieve our genocide!" He prayed that God accept the prayers of the rapper. "Two

brothers told me their shahadah [was] a direct result of [the rapper] telling them about Islam…So

go easy on the rappers," he advised, "you don't know who Allah loves."

The mosque was packed as the ceiling fans spun, and there was little room to sit. The imam

said these five are the bravest in our communities, and tied it to a story about a companion of the

Prophet Muhammad who was regarded as the bravest of the companions. "We will not let this

happen to any more Muslim children in this country or world and we can't get lost in the emotions of it." He went back to an example from the early days of Islam. "Prophet Muhammad getting beat down, then people came to his aid, and as bodies flew. He came through dumpin'…We're not aggressors but you're not knocking on our doors with guns on your waist." He emphasized self-defense. "People are gonna stop knocking at our doors with guns in their belts." He repeated this three times. He mentioned a hate crime that took place in the UK: "There was a hijabi in England and it was a brother. I didn't want it to be a brother. He got her from the back and she woke up in a ambulance." A black man committed the hate crime, he says, wishing it was not a fellow black man who did it, before continuing, "We have every right to equal protection under the law and we will seek it, against the media. They say 'all because he didn't like the way they [the Chapel Hill youth] parked.'" The imam rejected that analysis: "He's a terrorist. He's a terrorist. He's a terrorist. No one's gonna come running up on our sisters and hitting them in the head."

Including the two black Muslim youth in the sermon made the critique that black Muslim lives are also deserving of mourning. It is a move that tries to reframe Islamophobia as a problem impacting black Muslims also and not only brown Muslims or brown people more generally. The mourning of black Muslim deaths is integrated into an anti-Islamophobia politics at Mustafa Masjid, which is a frame that is typically used to conceptualize violence against brown Muslims.

These killings and responses to them illuminate the meanings behind "black" and "Muslim" among those who are fighting racism. While suburban and brown Muslim communities mourned the Chapel Hill victims and made use of the hashtag #MuslimLivesMatter, I did not hear of any events related to the Black Lives Matter movement in these same brown Muslim communities a few months earlier when the Black Lives Matter

movement took off. Some linked #MuslimLivesMatter and #BlackLivesMatter in their social media posts about the Chapel Hill shooting, but not all. A black Muslim activist who visited Mustafa Masjid argued against the use of the hashtag #MuslimLivesMatter, calling it appropriation. He said that the Chapel Hill shootings are not comparable to #BlackLivesMatter because the man who committed the murders is in custody, while #BlackLivesMatter is about police murder of black people in which the police are not held accountable. He added that using this appropriated hashtag could alienate "black Christian allies."

There were a variety of opinions among black Muslim participants on the use of these two hashtags and the ideas and struggles they represent. Inaya, for example, called the battle between these hashtags "hella petty." Faheem also disagreed with the black activist's approach as I learned from Malik. Malik almost joined the NOI and instead became Sunni when he converted, and he and Faheem, who is in the NOI, are close. Malik's ideas about blackness and Muslimness sometimes sound more like what I heard at the NOI mosque and at other times more like what I heard at Mustafa Masjid. Malik told me that once he and Faheem were having a conversation on what to title an event they were organizing. Malik's thinking was that they should call it "Black Muslims Matter." His reasoning was that *all* black lives matter is a critique that is being made to draw attention to the struggles of people who are black and also trans, for example. The critique is that #BlackLivesMatter should not only be used to refer to black males. "If you're gonna say 'black trans lives,' then black *Muslim* lives are black lives, too," he reasoned. "And no one is talking about that. Even when a [black] Muslim brother is killed by police, no one is talking about black Muslim lives." He gives the example of Usaamah Rahim, an African American Muslim man in Boston who was shot by police and whose case was not the subject of widespread sympathy in the Black Lives Matter movement like other shootings of black men.

Reports say that Rahim brandished a knife at police and that he was suspected of being part of a "terror plot." After referring to this story and giving his idea for a title, Malik then asked himself rhetorically out loud in front of me, "Why am I coopting that language?" Malik questioned his own idea, calling it cooptation, which has a negative connotation, because Faheem did not like it for some reason. Malik told me that Faheem asked him, "Why are you talking like that?" Malik continued to ask himself, "Why do I feel the need to say it that way?" I asked why it is cooptation. He said that he just happened to have used the word cooptation and it could have been any other. I asked why it is even that. He didn't answer and just shrugged.

This exchange says something about the categories that circulate in some strands of the Black Lives Matter movement and the ways it enters Muslim communities. The lines between blackness and Muslimness seem important to maintain for such activism except for when they meet in the identities of people who are both black and Muslim. This is not the type of approach that Faheem and others in the local NOI community have, from what I observed. They are not interested in policing the boundaries between different nonwhite identity groups. Making a link between blackness and Muslimness in this way does not appeal to someone like Faheem as useful since for him there is no difference between what it means to be black and Muslim. It is a nonstarter and may even seem silly.

The black Muslim activist, who saw #MuslimLivesMatter as appropriation, gave a talk at Mustafa Majid a few months after the Chapel Hill shootings. The topic was Black Lives Matter. He began with COINTELPRO and named the groups they infiltrated: the Black Panther Party, Malcolm X's Organization for Afro American Unity, and American Indian Movement. He mentioned H. Rap Brown as well. He said that the War on Drugs and the War on Terror are really "war on the people. We are as against drugs as terror but it's about criminalizing

communities of color. The root of this is racism. Islamophobia is just a branch on the tree of structural racism. Even if you have light skin as a Muslim, you are racialized." He then cites Noel Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White*, and spoke on how for Polish and Jewish people, "Assimilation gave them a white card. [But] Muslims are majority people of color. If you are a white person whose identity is Muslim, especially sisters who fly the flag of Islam (wear hijab)…So even…a white convert or Bosnian within this country, these people are not white." The activist argues that to be Muslim is to be nonwhite, and that Islamophobia is a form of racism. As evidence, he adds, "As much as there's Islamophobia, the majority is not about *aqeedah* (theology) but plain old racism informed by white supremacy." He then addresses the hashtag debate. "First, the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter," he begins, explaining to "Muslims who aren't African American saying "all lives matter," but the whole meaning of saying #BlackLivesMatter is because all lives don't matter. We center #BlackLivesMatter for clarification." He ties the hashtag debate to intra-Muslim racism:

> We can talk about Islamophobia till we're blue in the face but we are racist among ourselves. Where is our integrity? We want to respond to Pam Geller but we must admit we have a problem in the community. This will organically put us in solidarity with black American males and Latinos and border patrol, immigration. Would help us work on Native American…where 95% exterminated and 96% land stolen. African Americans often forget about the plight of Native Americans. For all the love we have for Palestine we don't have anything close to AIPAC (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee). We are finally past questions on "is voting *halal* (permissible)?"

A white Muslim audience member who I had interviewed prior to this asked a question about white privilege and awareness. The activist's response was to say that "At the end of the day, we need more people like Tim Wise," who is a popular white male speaker on anti-racism, "or [who] talk about Arab privilege in the Muslim community. These parallels are more effective if coming from an Arab. Me being black, nine out of ten times dismissed as complaining. Playing

the race card." But you can only play the cards you are dealt, he added. He then made a list: "Ethnic privilege – whites. Gender privilege – men. Religious privilege – Christians."

His political approach to bringing blackness and Muslimness together borrows from the black radical political tradition discussed in the previous section. The approach of this activist and others in this section includes the use of language like privilege and identity. They make the connection between blackness and Muslimness by emphasizing *differences* based on identity: the hashtag debate is about making distinctions between nonwhite people, which is where the most salient lines are drawn. Those inspired by the black radical tradition draw lines, too, and the ones they emphasize are between white and nonwhite people. The activist challenges how Islamophobia is seen as being for brown people by saying it is "plain old racism." He also says it is about all Muslims, and argues that Muslims are racialized; he sees their racialization as different from blacks. Whereas black radical tradition inspired politics link Muslimness and blackness by situating it all in black communities, approaches in black and brown Sunni communities that are trying to bridge the divide between black and brown Muslims make use of the term Islamophobia and try to redefine it. Bridging this divide is complicated, sometimes contradictory, and it can be hard to tell which racial/religious terms refer to which groups and what their relationships to one another are. I have argued that these two frameworks – a black radical and Islamophobia-based politics – are brought together in complex ways; politics based on Islamophobia are sometimes part of a politics of inclusion, and at other times is about trying to build a foundation for connecting blackness and Muslimness in a way that has not had as much time to develop as black radical tradition-inspired politics has. The contradictions and complexity in how activists navigate these categories suggest racial/religious contestation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have laid out two main frameworks among political activists and organizers who try to make connections between blackness and Muslimness. The first frame is inspired by the black radical tradition that has played a fundamental role in shaping black Islam in the US (Daulatzai 2012; Jackson 2005; Lincoln 1961; Wilmore 1998). This frame brings blackness and Muslimness together seamlessly to the point that it is hard to differentiate which aspects of their political thought are racial and which are religious. The religious meanings of blackness as Christian and American that scholars suggest have been part of what defines blackness (Carter 2008) are destabilized in this framework. In these activist spaces, participants grapple with the meanings of racial/religious categories, but they still engage both race and religion together in their fight against oppression stemming from these categories, which then supports my broader argument that race and religion are inseparable categories of difference that help produce each other.

The second framework focuses on Islamophobia and thinks about blackness and Muslimness as separate and intersecting; intersection assumes a separation (of roads, for example, to use a traffic metaphor) that then meet at certain junctures or intersections. Unlike the black radical inspired perspective that melds blackness and Muslimness seamlessly, the Islamophobia based perspective sees "the black experience" and "the Muslim experience" as largely separate and intersecting in the lives of black Muslims. Islamophobia is part of "the Muslim experience," and it is a brown experience. Carrying this argument all the way through, then, blackness is still positioned as American and Christian until demonstrated otherwise in some people's identities; these meanings are not destabilized.

When it comes to defining for themselves what it means to be Muslim, black and brown Muslims have different starting points. For black Muslims, across gender groups, blackness must be contended with and is connected to being Muslim. Aspects of a patriarchal read of Islam can be acceptable if not desirable in this context, as Chapter 5 has shown – for black and white Muslim women, a patriarchal Islam can offer them an alternative way of being women (alternative to Western feminism), and it is a way that is patriarchal. For most brown Muslims, their starting point with Islam is from birth (being raised Muslim) and with a connection to "the Orient" – constructed as uniquely patriarchal. There is no racial/religious clash for them since Muslimness is brown, so the racial meanings of Muslimness is not something that *must* be reconciled for brown Muslims. What more often requires reconciliation, what they cannot escape, is a patriarchal read of Islam, which is part of how they have been racialized as Muslim (Hammer 2013; Selod 2014). The literature on Muslim racialization points out the role of gender in producing this racialization.

This chapter's findings illustrate how knowledge of how brown people who are racialized as Muslim go about challenging that racialization. They do so through engaging aspects of it, such as the aspect that brownness and Muslimness are implicit in one another, while rejecting undesirable aspects, such as Muslimness being foreign. Further, this chapter puts this challenge and engagement of Muslim racialization in conversation with black radical-based political organizing. This has been done partially in Sohail Daulatzai's (2012) work but he analyzes black cultural production and prominent figures like Malcolm X to draw links between the Muslim international and black radical work in the US, in part to speak its future into being. My analysis here focuses on roughly the same two groups but I do so through a sociological analysis of average people (as opposed to major political figures) doing political work. Similarly, Su'ad

Abdul Khabeer's (2016) work on "Muslim Cool," draws attention to how US Muslims draw on Blackness to fashion their identities as Muslim. Abdul Khabeer argues that this process highlights connections rather than divisions between "Black" and "Muslim." I build on this work by adding another dimension to the divisions and connections through an analysis of how blackness and Muslimness are engaged in different sites: black radical focused spaces, and Islamophobia based political spaces.

This chapter drives home how the racial/religious meanings of Muslimness as brown and foreign, while blackness as Christian and American, are *dominant* meanings. This chapter shows, ultimately, that many participants are trying to make sense of the relationship between blackness and Muslimness. Even if they do it in different ways, the fact remains that they are all still trying to do it. The fact that they are trying to do this, or the fact that it requires effort, ultimately is evidence of how the dominant racial/religious meanings of blackness, whiteness, and Muslimness position them as separate from one another. If they were *not* positioned as separate from one another, it would *not* require effort to bring them together.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I begin with a summary of the key contributions and findings of the dissertation. Next, I review the contributions of this research. Lastly, I discuss how the theoretical perspective on blackness and whiteness developed in this research can advance the study of race.

Summary of Key Findings and Chapters

The first chapter introduced the study and situated it in the literatures on the historical relationship between race and religion, the black-white binary, and the racialization of Muslims literature. I argued that the literatures on the black-white binary and the racialization of Muslims fill gaps in one another. The literature on the black-white binary racial structure argues that people are positioned racially based on color, class, labor, racial attitudes, and more. But it does not consider how religion helps to position people racially as well. The literature on the racialization of Muslims, on the other hand, argues that racial meaning is applied to Muslims after 9/11, and that the racial meaning includes foreignness. This literature, however, does not situate the racialization of this group relative to a racial structure, leaving a gap in scholarly knowledge. Through my study of how Muslims, ostensibly a religious group, are racially situated relative to the black-white racial structure, I bring these two literatures together and fill their complementary gaps by asking the following questions: how are Muslims racially positioned in the US? What can their racial positioning tell us about the black-white binary based US racial structure? Beyond simply trying to understand the racial position of this particular group, which

is a relatively tiny minority in the US, I offer what their racial positioning means for race as a concept and as a set of categories. I focus my study on blackness and whiteness since they are the two poles of any concept of the racial order (whether it is a black-white bi-racial order or a tri-racial order with an intermediate group). I also focus on blackness and whiteness because all race scholarship has a stake in understanding blackness and whiteness. This focus gives my study of a small group broader relevance: I not only confirm scholars' findings that there is racial meaning associated with Muslims, but go further to say that religion initially shaped and continues to shape race conceptually and categorically, which applies to other groups as well.

Chapter 2 outlined the research design and methods of this ethnographic project. I discuss how participant observation and in-depth interviews took place, sampling and access to the populations of interest, my strategies for data analysis, and also how my positionality shaped the research. Lastly, I also offered a description of the West City metropolitan area along with its Muslim communities to give the reader a sense of the place I conducted research to contextualize my findings.

Chapter 3 serves as an introduction into the daily lives of black and white Muslims, who are a key subset of participants in this study since my focus is on understanding Muslimness, blackness and whiteness. Therefore, I first offered findings on their experiences in majority non-Muslim spaces: on the street, in restaurants, public restrooms, and more. I showed that in these spaces, they are either perceived as black/white *or* as Muslim. When they are perceived as Muslim, they are perceived as foreign – so even if they are still seen as black or white, perceptions of what that blackness or whiteness mean also shift away from *American* blackness and whiteness. This chapter thus offers a surprising finding: blacks and whites have some similar experiences relative to Muslimness; it is surprising in light of decades of literature focused on the

differences between blacks and whites. Also in this chapter, I engage with differences between black and white Muslims. I argue that being black or white and Muslim involves a rejection of whiteness in some way. These groups differ in how that rejection appears. For black Muslims, it is a rejection of white supremacy, which is both a spiritual and political act. For white Muslims, being Muslim can involve a political rejection of white supremacy but more so involves negotiating how they are not quite white, do not want to be white, or can no longer be fully white because they are Muslim.

This chapter thus contributes one of the fundamental findings in this dissertation: religion impacts racial attribution, and vice versa. Religion and race work hand in hand to shape perceptions. This chapter draws attention to perceptions of religious identity that are typically an implicit part of racial attribution. I show that religion functions at a phenotypic level; religion is not only a form of difference that is about a group's beliefs and practices. I argue that blackness and whiteness are positioned as non-Muslim, because this chapter shows that black and white participants experience a dissonance between being black/white and Muslim.

Chapter 4 complicates and refines my assertion that the religious meaning in whiteness is non-Muslimness. I do so by examining how South Asian and Arab Muslims – who I otherwise refer to as brown Muslims – are sometimes viewed as white or experience whiteness in some way. Even as they experience whiteness in ways, there is an association between Muslimness and brownness that scholarly literature has illustrated and that my study also finds. This presents a puzzle: how are Arab and South Asian Muslims racially positioned: as brown or white? This question helps us understand how Muslimness and whiteness relate since I focus in this chapter on the whiteness of a group who is unquestionably Muslim, whereas in the previous chapter I examine white American Muslims, a group whose Muslimness is questioned. Therefore, this

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chapter helps us understand how the quintessential Muslim is positioned vis-à-vis whiteness. I begin by laying out participants' experiences that suggest that being Muslim means being brown. I then offer data on the various ways that Arab and South Asian Muslims are positioned as white. I show that they experience whiteness in the following interrelated ways: economically (high paying jobs), spatially (living in white racialized urban and suburban spaces), attitudinally (distancing themselves from blacks), phenotypically (possible in some cases and through ways of dressing and behaving), and affectively (a sense of connection to whiteness, "acting white"). I show that there is a final type of whiteness that they seek but are not able to fully attain: belonging as Americans.

This one type of whiteness that Arab and South Asian Muslims do not have is also one of the key things that conflicts with Muslimness, as literature on Orientalism and the historical connection between race and religion show; Muslimness is positioned as fundamentally different from the West (Kazi 2009; Massad 2015; E. W. Said 1979; Selod 2014). For Arab and South Asian Muslims to experience whiteness in these other ways I have listed does not change the idea that Muslims are, by definition, according to Orientalist discourse, almost innately not American. Their non-Americanness is the place where their whiteness hits a glass ceiling. This is because of the roots of US whiteness in settler colonialism. The findings in this chapter contribute to the literature on whiteness and racial citizenship by highlighting this definition of whiteness in the lives of the not quite white. "Free white persons" is no longer an explicit part of the requirements for US citizenship, but data here suggest it may be a de facto requirement for being considered fully American. I connect this finding to a body of literature in which being Muslim is often posited as something that needs to be made American, as something that is compatible with being American, and so on (Abdo 2006; Esposito et al. 2004; Haddad 2002a,

2002b, 2004, 2011; Haddad and Esposito 1998; Idliby 2014; Wang 2014); I show that whiteness is the missing requirement that makes Americanness something that must be proven for Muslims rather than a given. Lastly, this chapter contributes to literature on how the black-white binary shapes nonwhite/nonblack existence (Kim 1999b; Morning 2001; Thangaraj 2015; Tuan 1998). Other studies demonstrate how critical parts of nonblack/nonwhite groups' racial lives are shaped by black-white binary logic and in turn help shape it, and I add analysis on how religion is important in that shaping.

In Chapter 5, I consider how interracial marriage, Orientalist stereotypes or images, and gender roles appear in the lives of black and white Muslim women. I do so to understand the relationship between Orientalism (East-West binary, focused on Muslims) and the black-white binary since these women's identities clearly sit at one of the meeting points of these binaries. This analysis helps us understand how racial/religious lines are drawn, which approaches the relationship between whiteness, blackness, and Muslimness from an angle that considers gender. I find that, like classic Orientalism, black and white Muslim women often conceive of Islam as a religion of rigid gender roles that is patriarchal. But instead of rejecting Islam for these reasons like most Orientalists, these factors are part of the attraction for some of these women. Their attraction is related to a desire to not be subject to the gender roles and meanings placed upon them as black and white (non-Muslim) women. This again positions being Muslim as separate from being black and white, because being Muslim can offer something that they see as an alternative to what is otherwise placed upon them as blacks and whites. I have argued that the ways gender appears here reveals where the racial/religious lines are: that those racial/religious lines show that American blackness and whiteness are positioned as non-Muslim. Race, religion, gender, and sexuality figure into the creation of contrasting, competing civilizations that also

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shape blackness and whiteness by positioning them as outside of the Orient, which is evidenced

in how gendered ways of being Muslim for black and white women are a departure from what

they otherwise experience(d) in their lives as black and white women.

Chapter 6 is an analysis of how political activists and organizers in West City make

connections between blackness and Muslimness in their political work. There are two main

frameworks of political thought in how this is done. One frame is inspired by the black radical

tradition, and another frame focuses on Islamophobia. I argue that each frame brings blackness

and Muslimness together in different ways for different ends. I further argue that gender appears

in different ways to achieve these ends, since as literature shows, race and religion are already

gendered (Collins 2000; Hammer 2013; Penner and Saperstein 2013; Puar 2007). I show how

these frames play out in participants' political engagement with the "Chapel Hill shootings" and

the Black Lives Matter movement. My findings illustrate how racial/religious categories are

contested, and how groups interpret and fight their marginalization within and through these

categories. I show how religious positioning is part of how race is contested. There is research on

how race is contested through religion, however this body of work conceptualizes religion as a

matter of beliefs and practices that shape individuals and congregations, or groups. In this study,

I conceptualize religion as a way of organizing and categorizing bodies along with beliefs and

practices that I also discuss in this chapter, but within my expanded definition of religion. My

approach thus contributes a different angle to the literature from which to approach racial

contestation.

My Critiques and Contributions

First, literature on the racialization of Muslims finds that they are racialized as foreign

and brown. My findings support this. I find that Muslims of various racial groups are positioned

as foreign when they are perceived as Muslim. My study, however, also shows how foreignness

emerges through the interaction of different identities (race and religion) within the same person.

African Americans and whites, who would not otherwise be positioned as foreign, are positioned

as foreign when they are visibly Muslim. My study confirms some of the findings of research on

the racialization of Muslims, such as the types of meanings attributed to those seen as Muslim:

foreignness, brownness. I show that it is possible to examine these meanings without the

racialization perspective. Saher Selod and David Embrick (2013) as well as Erik Love (2009)

argue that racial formation theory is an important lens through which we can understand the

racialization of Muslims and emphasize the need for more research on Muslims using the

racialization framework. Though there are other theories of racialization that are slightly

different (Banton 1987; Miles and Brown 2003), the vast majority of research on the

racialization of Muslims employs Michael Omi and Howard Winant's (1994) theory of

racialization and racial formation (Byng 2008; Garner and Selod 2014; Kibria 2011; Love 2009,

2013; Rana 2011; Selod 2014; Selod and Embrick 2013; Semati 2010; Tehranian 2008). In a

critique that is different from my critique of Muslim racialization literature, some have critiqued

Muslim racialization research for its use of the racialization concept; it is a critique from some

who narrowly view religion as only a matter of belief and practice, and race as a matter of bodily

difference (see Garner and Selod 2014:3–5 for an outline of this logic). This common and

misguided critique of Muslim racialization results in a dismissal of the notion that race is

involved in the treatment of Muslims today. Racialization theory does not fully get around this

critique. This critique instead forces researchers of Muslim racialization to attempt to tease apart

race and religion, for which they are critiqued on the basis of having slippery concepts. My

research shows that this task of teasing the two apart is challenging if not impossible because the

two concepts are entangled in one another. "Religion is racialized" again applies only if we conceptualize race and religion as discrete categories. Therefore, rather than study Muslims and other religious groups through the lens of racialization, I propose a reframing of our study of Muslims and race that begins with the theory that race and religion are always already mapped onto one another. I have argued that race and religion as *concepts* are entangled in one another, and that racial and religious *categories* are mapped onto one another (i.e. brown and Muslim, white and Christian). This mapping or overlap of categories along with the entanglement of race is a reframing that can serve as an alternative starting point so that the case for the role of race in the experiences of Muslims bypasses impossible proofs that would require the teasing apart of race and religion.

Secondly, if Muslims are racialized as foreign and brown, that means that there are groups who are positioned as neither foreign nor brown since race (and social phenomena in general) are relational. This study can tell us about such groups as well. In this study, I have looked at how Muslimness is positioned relative to blackness and whiteness. This is therefore not a study that is only about Muslimness, but also blackness and whiteness. This work sheds light on the often ignored and yet necessary inverse of the idea that (brown) Muslims are foreign: that blackness and whiteness are American or domestic. My work accomplishes what scholars who wish to move beyond the black-white binary seek, which is to think more directly on what race means in the lives of nonblack and nonwhite people. This study does so by taking seriously how the black-white binary structures the experiences and positions of nonblack/nonwhite people. Muslimness is positioned as nonblack/nonwhite to some extent, but I would not go so far as to call it an intermediate racial category. To make such an argument, more research would need to be done on how religion positions groups hierarchically. I extend Claire Kim's (1999) argument

that foreignness positions Asian Americans as an intermediate group between black and white, but there are some differences between Asian Americans and Muslims that make the analogy go only so far to help us come to some conclusion about Muslims' racial location relative to the black-white binary. The analogy holds when it comes to foreignness. But scholarly analysis of how that additional dimension of religion in producing foreignness is still in its early stages and I have shown here that religion is a major part of how foreignness works.

Thirdly, literature on Muslims and other groups positioned as neither black nor white continues to argue that we must go "beyond black and white" to understand race today, but this study's findings show that there is value in moving *back* to black and white in new ways to understand race. All other groups are positioned relative to blackness and whiteness, and we do not yet have a well-developed understanding of religion as a key sustainer of the black-white based racial structure. My finding that religion is a hidden dimension of race thus has implications for a broad swath of race scholarship. The study of structural racism, for example, requires an understanding of the working categories, which include at least black and white. It is argued that the US is moving toward a tri-racial system like Latin America in which there are three racial positions: whites, honorary whites, and collective blacks (Bonilla-Silva 2004). In line with the tri-racial thesis, I argue that blackness and whiteness remain critical poles of this new arrangement, but add that religion will continue to play a role in organizing the structure in ways that the thesis does not yet factor in. Whether in a bi- or tri-racial system, there remains a major gap in our knowledge of the maintenance of structural racism due to underestimating the relationship between race and religion.

In sum, my main argument that blackness, whiteness, and Muslimness are racial and religious concepts fills a gap in these literatures. I approached this argument from different

angles and find that it still stands: Even when we consider the differences between blacks and whites, this finding about their general positioning remains. Even when we investigate the whiteness of brown Muslim immigrants and their children whose Muslimness is not questioned, the general positioning remains. Even a close examination of political efforts to bring blackness and Muslimness together and to redefine them suggests that this general positioning remains. In these ways, the chapters in this dissertation make my main argument robust.

Looking Forward: Advancing the Study of Race

In this section, I explain how my finding that blackness and whiteness are racial and religious contributes to our understanding of race and future directions to advance the study of race and religion.

This study has clear implications for the way we conceptualize race today. Most race theory holds that notions of religious difference were replaced by racial difference with the advent of modernity. This dissertation shows, however, that religion was never quite replaced completely. If religion had been replaced, it would not be such a factor in racial attribution in my participants' lives. It would not be aligned with particular racial positions so consistently. I argue that religion was only partially absorbed into race – enough such that they cannot be teased apart with great precision - and thus the two function together.

On the whole, my research shows that religion helps produce race in ways that are not well integrated into our current arsenal of race theory but that need to be. Religion continues to be part of the foundation of race, and we will not understand race until we understand religion. That means that we will be missing key pieces in how crime, policing, politics, foreign policy, and global racial dynamics work. My work offers inroads for what the empirical study of religion and race could look like when the two are contextualized in their history together.

The religious assumptions within blackness and whiteness reflect the historical development of these positions. American blackness and whiteness developed in a largely Christian nation. Through the same trajectory that put the "American" in African American – that is, the Middle Passage – (American) blackness is also associated with Christianity. This does not mean that blacks and whites who are not Muslim are always practicing Christians, or even identify as Christian. Rather, it means that their religious position(s) are likely assumed to be Christian or a related position like secularism. The religious positions implicit in conceptions of blackness and whiteness are considered "normal" to the point of often not even being named, akin to how whites are not seen as a race, but rather as "normal" or just as "people." Future empirical research should investigate the precise assumptions about religion underlying blackness and whiteness, as these findings leave room for questions on how blackness is both associated with Christianity and malleable such that Islam has also "indigenized" in African American communities (Jackson 2005).

This study opens up doors for empirical analysis of groups aside from Muslims. For example, the theoretical perspective here can be applied to an analysis of the relationship between contemporary whiteness and Christianity, as well as how secularism is a religious position that is historically linked to whiteness and Christianity, perhaps even an extension of them. The analysis here of Muslimness in the lives of blacks and whites can help pull future scholarship on Muslimness into areas it does not venture into as frequently as it does citizenship, immigration, and racialization. These areas come with the study of blackness and whiteness, and include: residential segregation, settler colonialism, black cultural production, capitalism, and more.

Using limited data on the topic in this study, previous literature on the topic, history, and deduction, this dissertation suggests that blackness and whiteness are imbued with religious meaning of being Christian and/or secular. This hypothesis would require further study to come to more firm conclusions. The question of how Jews fit into these meanings is an interesting one given a number of factors: the commonalities between Jews and Muslims' experiences vis-à-vis European Christians in the premodern era, the argument that Jews in the US have become white, and also the fact that Jews are a multiracial group in the US like Muslims (Brodkin Sacks 1994; Mosse 1985; Thomas 2010). My findings can help address such questions to push scholarly thinking on what makes race "race," what religion means for race, and how we can understand individual choices and shifts in religion and race within this broader frame.

This dissertation opens up possibilities for the empirical study of global white supremacy beyond a comparative framework (comparing racial structures in different countries) and into a more integrated one that also takes local context seriously. For example, in a more integrated framework, difference that is articulated in terms of "race" in one region and articulated in terms of "religion" in another region may be studied in the same framework since the two forms of difference are consistently wrapped up in one another. Religion informed race and continues to shape its contours and content.

My research offers a possible answer to the question of what Muslimness does for race: it maintains the existing racial order. It stabilizes the racial order, allowing black/white unity to fight a common enemy, which has been a common narrative in the war on terror. In this study, black and white participants are themselves Muslim and did not envision themselves fighting Muslims as a common enemy, however, hundreds of years of this idea of Islam as an enemy of the West, refracted through a racial lens, brings some notion of difference that operates in

everyday life. Even if whites and blacks are not buying into the idea that Muslims are different from them and are their enemy, the notions of difference that support that idea continue. And we see those notions of difference play out in the everyday lives of the Muslims in this study. Therefore, this study may help us understand how domestic racial inequality is maintained and rationalized through religion. C. Eric Lincoln (1961:253) once argued that black Muslims "are embarrassing to both the white and the black communities, for they call attention to a situation so irrational and so ugly that neither side wants to face it squarely." The situation he refers to is racism in the US. Building on Lincoln's point here, I argue that the racial positioning of Muslimness also calls attention to this racism, as it became embedded in US social structures in a black-white binary.

In the black-white binary, the conversation has been framed as how can we tell the black from the white, and how we can explain the differences between them in terms of life chances, resources, "abilities" and more. But my research brings a different angle that draws our attention toward a dimension of the black-white binary that we do not look at but that is powerful. That dimension is religion. So rather than framing the conversation around how can we tell black from white, my research helps us think about how can we tell black and white from everything else. This frame puts "everything else" in our purview. It puts the black-white binary in a bigger conversation and framework, evoking the global-scale origins of the concept of race that we still typically only study within the context of the US and other national contexts. If a group that shapes the domestic black-white binary is perpetually cast as foreign, then one must ask what it is about the "foreign" that helps shape race today. Therefore rather than "moving beyond" it by seeing the black-white binary as applying to some and not others, I instead place it in conversation with everything else. This is not to say that Muslimness is a third racial position;

my view is that such an assertion would require far more research, and we would need to know more about how race and religion work together in everyday life to be able to say that. Rather, my point is that looking at Muslimness tells us about what blackness and whiteness are – these sturdy racial categories that have structured the US for centuries now – and that we largely miss the religious dimensions of these racial positions. Because of the magnitude of these racial categories in what they have been used to accomplish, and also because blacks and whites constitute a significant part of the US population, this hidden dimension of the black-white binary is also significant. Religion underlies the US racial structure, and illustrates a larger theoretical point: religion buttresses racial structures, and we will not understand race until we understand religion.

APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Race/Ethnicity: _____

Gender: _____

Highest Completed Level of Education (Circle One):

      Less than High School

      Some High School

      High School Degree

      Some College

      College Degree

      Some Graduate School

      Graduate Degree

Class or Socio-economic Status: _____

Yearly Household Income: _____

Current Job or Occupation: _____

Sexual Orientation: _____

Marital Status: _____

Are you from the area? Where were you born? When did you move here, why?

Tell me about how you grew up.

- What was your family like? What was the place you grew up like (i.e. house/apartment/etc, neighborhood, region, country, etc)?
- What did your parents do for a living?
- Do you have siblings?
- What kinds of schools did you go to?
- What were your friends like?

Were you raised Muslim or did you come to it later?

- If converted to Islam:
    o What brought you to Islam, or what made you want to become Muslim?
    o What was that process like?
    o How did people in your life react? (Ask about individual family members) Did you talk with one another about it much? Do you talk about it more/less now? Did they ask questions, what did they ask?
    o How did you go about learning more? What did you read? When you had questions, who did you ask, where did you look for answers? What websites did you check out?
    o How old were you? Were you raised in another faith? What did that look like at home, growing up?
- If raised Muslim:
    o Are both your parents Muslim?
    o What did being Muslim look like at home? At school/work, in public?
    o Were you part of a Muslim community, what was it like? (i.e. culturally, religiously, racially, how conservative, what was the space for women like)
    o What sorts of things did you and/or your family do as part of being Muslim?
    o Did you have Muslim friends growing up?
    o How involved were you or your family in the mosque or other Muslim organizations?
    o (if attended college) was there a Muslim organization on your campus? Were you involved? What kinds of activities were you involved in?

What does being Muslim look like for you now?

- What things do you do as part of being Muslim? (i.e. practices and prohibitions)
- What's really important to you in Islam? What isn't as important?
- Have you always felt that way, has your relationship to being Muslim changed in ways over the years?
- (if applicable) how long have you worn a hijab / had a beard? What made you want to start? Why do you do it? Do you ever want to stop wearing hijab / having a beard? Why? How do people in your life feel about it? How would they feel if you stopped?
- Do you identify with a particular sect or strain of Islam? Is that how you grew up?

Are you part of a Muslim community here?

- What is it like culturally, religiously? What are interactions like between different sects here? How much interaction is there? What kinds of things do you all do together? Why is there so little/much interaction?
- Do you go to one mosque / community center, or several? What are they like? Which one do you prefer to go to, why?
- I've heard that mosque/center is _____(i.e. welcoming, open, conservative, liberal, good/bad for women, appealing to young people, good/bad for converts). Do you think that's true? What has your experience there been like?
- What's your involvement in community stuff look like? (i.e. volunteering, attendance, organizing, etc). How often do you go to stuff?
- Do you feel comfortable in your community? Why/not?
- How often do you see people in your community? Are your closest friends part of this community as well?

Tell me about what an average day in your life is like.
You wrote on this demographic sheet that you're…
- Job/occupation: Tell me more about your work. Do people there know that you're Muslim? Did you tell them or did they find out another way? How do people respond when they find out that you're Muslim?
- Class/SES: Can you tell me more about why you wrote _____?
- Marital status: What has your experience as a single/married/divorced/etc person been like in the Muslim community? (depending on answer, some of the following questions) How did you meet your partner? What are they like? What was the process of getting married like? Have you been married or engaged or in a relationship before? Do you have kids?
  - Kids: number/gender/age? Where do they live / go to school? Still partnered with children's parent(s)? Is teaching your kids about Islam important to you? What do you want them to learn, and how do you go about it or plan to go about it?

Aside from being Muslim, how else do you identify yourself?
- How do other aspects of your identity inform how being Muslim looks like in your life? (i.e. gender, sexuality, class, etc)
- What can you tell me about yourself that will help me understand your experience as someone with those identities?
- What do you struggle with as someone with those identities? Do you think others like you have those struggles? Do you think other Muslims do too, or not?

Are politics important to you? What issues do you care about? Can you give me some examples of issues that you have cared about?
- How would you describe your political views? Do you identify any particular way, and why? What does it (e.g. liberal, conservative, progressive, etc) mean to you?

What issues do you think are important issues for Muslims in the US to be addressing?
- Do you think those issues are currently being addressed? What is working and what needs to be done?

Does race or ethnicity ever come up in your community/ies as something that needs to be addressed? Do Muslims in your community/ies address race issues?
- What do they do? How do they go about addressing race issues? Are you involved?
- What do you think of the way that it's done? How do you feel about it?

Some have said that Muslims are discriminated against after 9/11; have you had any experiences of being treated differently after 9/11? What did 9/11 mean for you?

How do you think people see you racially/ethnically when they see you out in public? Does the way that they see you mean anything for your experiences in public?

Is there anything we haven't covered yet that is important to know? What is one of the most important things we talked about that you would emphasize? I'm interested into talking to more people like you who are _____, can you introduce me to them?

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