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A Racialized Threat at the Margins:
Muslim Students' Experiences and Representation in High Schools

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

by

Rabea Qamar

September 2022

Dissertation Committee:
      Dr. Begoña Echeverria, Chairperson
      Dr. Rita Kohli
      Dr. Margaret Nash

The Dissertation of Rabea Qamar is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Racialized Threat at the Margins:
Muslim Students' Experiences and Representation in High Schools

by

Rabea Qamar

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Education
University of California, Riverside, September 2022
Dr. Begoña Echeverria, Chairperson

Anti-Muslim and Islamophobic racism often circulate undetected and unrecognized in and outside of school settings. New America's (McKenzie, n.d.) interactive timelines and maps document an increase in anti-Muslim activities since 2015, mapping incidents across US states with the highest in California. Situated in this context, this dissertation examines the schooling experiences and curricular representation of Muslim students at their California high schools. Specifically, I focus on the racialization of Muslim identity in schools, and students' interpretation of the messages they receive about Muslims and Islam.

Chapter 1 shows that (1) dominant representations and rhetoric homogenize Muslims, constructing them as outsiders; (2) textbooks maintain Eurocentric narratives; and, (3) racialized, gendered, and nationalist discourses in schools render Muslims as incompatible to western traditions and values. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework and research design for this study. Racialization and critical race scholarship provide an analytic framework to examine high

school Muslim students' experiences with overt and subtle anti-Muslim and nativist rhetoric. I use qualitative research methodologies for data collection and analysis to center the experiential narratives of the ten South Asian and West Asian/Middle Eastern student participants and capture textbook narratives about Muslims/Islam.

Chapter 3 examines the curricular representation of Islam, Muslims, and related groups of people in 2006 versions of history/social studies textbooks. These textbooks reinforce orientalist perspectives that contribute to the racialization of Muslims, constructing them as foreign Others. Chapter 4 shares the focal students' experiences with racialized rhetoric manifesting as gender and racial microaggressions framing their religious identities as security threats and oppositional to western norms. Their experiences highlight the underlying and often ignored dominance of what I call "racist religious nativism" that render Muslims violent and untrustworthy.

Chapter 5 highlights students' resistance to and resilience in navigating racialized hostility at their schools. The students' "community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005) helped them navigate school and fostered their resilience when faced with racialized hostility. For these youth, their religious identity emerged as a capital on its own. Finally, Chapter 6 presents implications of this dissertation for education research and practice.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

Introduction

The 2016 presidential race and election saw an increase in overtly racist and xenophobic rhetoric targeting People of Color. Anti-Muslim, -Jewish, -Black, -LGBTQ, and -immigrant hate crimes and harassment incidents peaked during and after the 2016 US Presidential Election (Potok, 2016). Islamophobic and anti-Muslim violence targeted Muslims and Muslim-looking people across the United States after September 11, 2001 (Panagopoulos, 2006; Singh, 2002).

Anti-Muslim assaults in 2015 and 2016, however, surpassed the documented assaults reported to the FBI in 2001, from 93 to 127 (Kishi, 2017). In addition to anti-Muslim assaults, attacks on mosques also increased in 2015 compared to the preceding years (Pitter, 2017). The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) found that hate crime incidents against Muslim communities increased 44% in 2016 in comparison to 2015, rising from 180 to 260 incidents in 2016 (Pitter, 2017). New America's (McKenzie, n.d.) interactive anti-Muslim activities timeline and map similarly documents an increase in anti-Muslim activities since 2015, mapping incidents across US states with the highest in California (56), specifically "hate incidents against mosques and Islamic centers" (23), "media reports of anti-Muslim violence and crimes" (26), "anti-Muslim actions and statements by elected and appointed officials" (5), among others.

Although Muslims represent only 1% of the total US population – projected around 3.85 million (Mohamed, 2021) – anti-Muslim discourse circulates through media and politicians' usage of language implicating Muslims, such as South Asians and Middle Easterners, as terrorists (Joshi, 2006). Although images of Muslims are rooted in Western imperialism, 9/11 and subsequent cases of terrorism intensified Muslim Americans' marginalization and homogenization, rendering them incompatible with Western ideologies and democracy (Jackson, 2007). International research institute MediaTenor collected data on Western media coverage of

Islam—specifically US American, British, and German—finding an overwhelming amount of negative reporting (Bridge Initiative Team, 2015). The coverage included Muslims as "a source of violence and a security risk" with little focus on the everyday lives of ordinary Muslims (Bridge Initiative Team, 2015). MediaTenor also found more negative news coverage of Islam in relation to other religions (e.g., Christianity, Judaism, and others). Such limited and negative coverage of Muslims affect Muslim youth in schools, as this dissertation will show.

The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding's (ISPU) report revealed that Muslim children experienced bullying by peers and teachers at a higher rate (42%) than non-Muslim children in K-12 (Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017). Muslim parents in the study reported that their children were bullied by both teachers/school officials and non-Muslim peers (19%), but majority reported bullying by non-Muslim peers (67%). California's CAIR (2021) chapter surveyed 891 students of ages 11 to 18 to understand their school climate and the manifestation of Islamophobia through "bullying" during the COVID-19 pandemic. Though some manifestations of "bullying" declined or remained consistent to previous reports, CAIR-CA (2021) documented that 55% of the Muslim student participants did not feel safe at school due to "bullying" because of their religious identity and 1 out of 4 students recalled an adult engaging in Islamophobic comments at school. Additionally, nearly 1 out of 3 girls who wore hijab shared experiences with their hijab being pulled, tugged, or offensively touched (CAIR-CA, 2021).

Contextualized in and informed by these reports and surveys, this study examines the experiences and representation of high school Muslim youth. Specifically, I examine the discourses and representations of Muslims in schools, and their effects on Muslim high school students. I use Critical Race Theory and the concept of racialization to discuss Muslim students' experiences and explore the intersections between race, ethnicity, and religion. I focus on South

Asian and Middle Eastern Muslims because these communities are disproportionately portrayed as violent, suspicious, terrorists (Love, 2009).

Purpose and Implications

The 2016 Presidential Election offered a rich (if unfortunate) context to explore Muslim American students' experiences and identity construction in the US. The dehumanization of South Asian and Middle Easterners is rampant in media and politics, but also seeps into educational spaces. Little research connects these macro-narratives about Muslims to the micro-narratives found in schools, and how these narratives affect Muslim students at schools. The purpose of this study is to identify patterns of racialization of Islam/Muslims that Muslim American students experience in schools, the extent to which racializing discourses impact students' sense of identity with their school and peers, and the effects of Islamophobia and Muslim racialization on these students' identities. In examining students' experiences and curricular representation of Muslims, I refer to the need for critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) that engages students' stories and their ethnic/racial/religious histories in the US to challenge and deconstruct dominant, marginalizing, and dehumanizing narratives that have shaped their identities. Research on education needs to address the lived realities of diverse Muslim youth, their racial/ethnic histories, the impacts of colonialism, imperialism and ongoing wars, and racialization of their religious identities in the context of schooling.

Research Questions

In the context of increased anti-Muslim hate crimes (Potok, 2016), activities (McKenzie, n.d.), and harassment in schools (CAIR-CA, 2021; Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017), this study centers Middle Eastern and South Asian Muslim students as their physical safety continues to be threatened by anti-Muslim discourses (Abu El-Haj, 2015; Lyons, 2003). Specifically, this study pursues the following questions:

Question #1: In what ways do the school structures and culture inform Muslim-American students' identities (ethnic, religious, racial, gender, and academic identities)? Specifically, which identities do the curriculum, teachers, and staff recognize, promote, or oppose?

Question #2: To what extent do schools racialize Muslim students? That is, do schools extend racial meaning to Muslim students, or racial meanings associated with Islam, to their ethnically and culturally diverse Muslim students?

Question #3: How do Muslim-American students perceive and (re)interpret the messages they receive about Muslims and Islam? How do these messages influence Muslim-American students' sense of identity?

Research on the racialized experiences of Muslim-American youth and intersections of race, ethnicity and religion inform my research questions. I focus on high school students, but I draw on relevant themes, concepts, and frameworks from primary, secondary, and higher education literature. This study approached these questions through students' experiential narratives and their perceptions, and not through a study of their schools or classrooms. Finally, this is not a study of religion or students' religiosity.

Why South Asian- and West-Asian Americans?

In the wake of 9/11, Middle Eastern- and South Asian-American communities experienced suspicion, racial discrimination, hate crimes, and Islamophobia (Love, 2009; Mishra, 2013). Media, films, political rhetoric, and policies reproduce stereotypical representations of Muslims (Ibrahim, 2008; Joshi, 2006), clumping Middle Eastern-looking people into a "racial umbrella" despite their different beliefs and traditions (Love, 2009, p. 405). South Asian- and Middle Eastern-American Muslim students experience, as this study shows, the impact of racialized images and discrimination.

Islamophobia targets Islam, but the "fear and hatred, prejudice and discrimination" is directed toward anyone that fits the image of a Muslim (such as, Sikh Americans) (Love, 2009, p. 403). Popular culture perpetuates racial slurs ("ragheads" and "towelheads") against South Asian communities (Mishra, 2013). Sikh Americans are often incorrectly targeted as Muslims (Ahluwalia & Pellettiere, 2010; Birk et al., 2015). Balbir Singh Sodhi, an Arizona gas station owner, was one of the first targets of misdirected, anti-Muslim hate crimes post-9/11 (Snow & Nasir, 2021). In 2012, a white supremacist, Michael Page, shot and murdered six Sikh-Americans at a *gurdwara* (Sikh temple) in Oak Creek, Wisconsin (Snow & Nasir, 2021).

Anti-immigrant, -refugee, and -Muslim rhetoric and policies reflect the political context of the time this study took place. The Trump administration's travel ban targeted some Muslim countries and invoked fear of state repression and effects on their civil rights. The "Muslim ban" framed Muslims as a security threat, even if it targeted a select number of countries. Given this context, I examine Muslim high school students' experiences in high schools, as well as the curricular narratives about their racial, ethnic, and religious identities. The next part of this chapter provides a review of relevant literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This qualitative study focuses on South Asian and Middle Eastern Muslim American high school students' experiences based on their religious identity. I show how Islam and Muslims are racialized through Social Studies/History textbooks, classroom experiences, and interactions with peers and teachers. I begin by grounding this dissertation in the marginalization of religious minorities in the US. My review of the scholarship on racialization and educational experiences of Muslim Americans informed this study's theoretical framework, study design, data collection methods, and data analysis.

I situate my discussion of the marginalization and racialization of Muslim youth in relation to other religious minorities in the US. During colonization, Manifest Destiny supported enslavement of Africans, seizure of indigenous land and genocidal acts against indigenous populations, including the spread of Christianity (Horsman, 1975). Religious (Protestant) nationalism bred hostility against Catholics and Jews, positioning them as "un-American" and foreign (Higham, 1955). Throughout American history, Jews, Catholics, and Mormons have been viewed as "an alien creed" in opposition to American traditions, values, and institutions (Hughey, 1992, p. 542).

Historically, religion – churches and, later, mosques – has been a site for community building for Black Americans (Mohamed, Cox, Diamant, Gecewicz, 2021). Spirituality has served as a shield against experiences with racism (Bowen-Reid & Harrell, 2002; cited in Boyd-Franklin, 2010). In Breeden's (2021) study on navigating senior-level student affairs position, some Black women identified their faith as a source of their perseverance at work. In their Pew Research Center (PRC) report, Mohamed et al. (2021) identified the Black church as a site for Black people in fighting against racial injustice. Black religious institutions have provided refuge from hostility, have served as a site for expressing their frustrations and emotions as an oppressed group (Nye, 1993; cited in Boyd-Franklin, 2010), and have advocated for racial equality (Mohamed et al., 2021). Black churchgoers identified standing up against racism as a critical aspect of their religious identity.

Students from minoritized religious backgrounds experience marginalization and challenges in navigating schools (Abo-Zena, 2011). Dupper, Forrest-Bank, and Lowry-Carusillo (2015) examine the experiences of Jewish, Catholic, Unitarian Universalist, and Muslim youth (including agnostic, atheist youth) in secondary schools with religious discrimination, bullying and "religious microaggressions" (see more on microaggressions in Chapter 3). Peers, teachers,

and friends overtly or discreetly reinforced the marginal status of non-dominant religions. Christianity in schools emerged in discreet (e.g., on-campus groups, holidays) and overt ways (e.g., field trip to a church event and additional homework for those who did not go), reflecting non-Christians' "minority status". Additionally, students' religious minority status became apparent through: media coverage (e.g., Muslim student being called a "terrorist") (p. 41); being identified as the only religious minority in class (e.g., teacher calling a student "Catholic girl") (p. 41); contesting inaccurate curricular representation, and; greater curricular coverage of Christianity. Visibility of religious symbols by non-Christians (e.g., Star of David, hijab) sometimes resulted in physical harassment (e.g., Muslim girl's hijab being ripped off). Dupper et al., (2015) also found that teachers and adults reinforced religious discrimination by ignoring harassment or failing to intervene in cases involving religion. Despite the racialized nature of many of these examples, Dupper et al. (2015) did not examine these experiences in relation to racialization and racism—an analysis this dissertation does undertake.

Finally, students of minority religions also experience tokenization of their religious identities in being asked to share about their traditions – as if a "spokesperson" (Abo-Zena, 2011, p. 17). Students from non-Christian religious backgrounds also experience feelings of isolation when questioned for their different beliefs or for not participating in some school activities, such as the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance (Abo-Zena, 2011). The subtle reinforcement of the dominant Christian identity in schools that claim religious neutrality may lead religiously minoritized youth to feel "shame about their faith" "keep their beliefs and practices a secret", "discourage them from advocating for themselves" (e.g., missing school for religious reasons), or may lead some to be more vocal about their religious identity (p. 17). Students, however, deal with these situations in a variety of ways, as can also be seen in my study participants' responses (in Chapter 4).

To contextualize the experiences and representation of Muslims in K-12 public schools, I divide this review of literature into three areas of concern: (1) the dominant representations and popular discourses about Muslims, (2) the curricular and textbook coverage of Islam and Muslims, and (3) the educational experiences of Muslim youth in K-12 and higher education. I found the concepts of "religification" (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012) and "racialization" (Omi & Winant, 2014) salient to my analysis.

I.   The Muslim Figure: Racialized Monolithic "Orient"

Political and media discourses homogenize racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse Muslims into a monolithic grouping of 'Muslim'. Rana (2011) discusses the process of racialization through which "Muslim" encompasses South Asian, Middle Eastern and Arab physical and cultural characteristics, a category subsequently incorporated within a terrorist trope. The "War on Terror", for example, targeted a broad range of countries and regions, furthering notions of Muslim-dominant countries in the Middle East as a dangerous monolithic bloc. Though research on Muslim racialization increased after 9/11, prior media and political Western discourses framed Muslims as untrustworthy, violent, and fanatical, reflecting the prevalence of Orientalist views (Akram, 2002; Rana, 2011).

Imposition and Adaptation of a 'Muslim' Identity

Homogenization and scrutiny of the Muslim identity in the US and Europe have similarly impacted Muslims despite their diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural identities (Meer & Modood, 2010; Rana, 2011). Yet racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse Muslim communities' identification with their 'Muslim' identity reflects a form of resistance that draws on their shared experiences (Rana, 2011; Zahedi, 2011), a process Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher (2012) refers to as "religification" (p. 31). Religification refers to "the simultaneous ascription and co-option of a religious identity over all other markers of difference (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender)" (p. 38).

Ghaffar-Kucher's (2012) study found this process to be culturally produced with societal/school imposition of religious identity upon students, and the youth and their families' choice to foreground their religious identity over their ethnic or cultural identities as a form of resistance (see "Muslim American Youth in Education Institutions").

Some scholarship conflates "Muslim" with "Arab," though the terms are not interchangeable. Indeed, Muslim Americans are a racially and ethnically diverse group with some of the largest subgroups being South Asian- (Love, 2009), Black-, and African-Americans (Peña, 2009); thus, they are racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically different from Arabs. Similarly, citizens of predominantly Arab-speaking countries, such as Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen, identify more with their ethnic and national identity, rather than an Arab identity (Haddad, 2011).

Naber's (2005) ethnographic study shows that 18-30-year-old Arab American Muslims in San Francisco primarily identified with their religious identity rather than national or ethnic identity. Historical shifts, such as the 1980s revival of Islam in the "Arab world", redefined nationalism (shift from "Arab nationalism") and resistance to US imperialism, while US policies and rhetoric began racializing and conflating Muslim with Arab and using those terms interchangeably (Naber, 2005). Like other racialized groups (Espiritu, 1999; Omi and Winant, 2014), Arab American youth adopted a "Muslim First, Arab Second" identity as "strategic essentialism" to mobilize, demand institutional reform, seek recognition, and resist racism (Naber, 2005, p. 481).

However, Kaya's research (2005) shows that Turkish immigrants to the US viewed their ethnic and religious identities as intertwined. In response to negative stereotyping and portrayals of Islam/Muslims in the US, some of the study's Turkish immigrant participants emphasized their European identity, distinguishing themselves from Asian and Middle Eastern Muslims. While first generation members largely identified with their ethnic identity and not as Americans,

second generation Turkish American Muslims forged a positive relationship between their

Turkish, American, and religious identities. They understood their experiences with racism as

byproducts of their religious affiliation rather than their ethnic identity.

Incompatible Outsiders

Political discourses perpetuate beliefs about Islam's incompatibility with progress,

secularism, and democracy (Jackson, 2007). According to Jackson (2007), western political

discourse homogenizes Middle Eastern/South Asians in oppositional terms while undermining the

role of Western imperialism. Political terminologies associate Islam and Muslims with religious

extremism and violence (Grewal, 2003; Love, 2009). Love (2009) describes Islamophobia and

discrimination of Muslims to involve "racial scapegoating: fear and hatred, prejudice and

discrimination" based on their physical appearance (p. 403).

The "othering" of non-Christians like Muslims has deep historical roots in the West.

Europeans (particularly in the Enlightenment period) framed Jews and Muslims as biologically

inferior to Christians (Rana, 2011). Scholars of Muslim racialization assert the importance of

recognizing religion as an identity that can be racialized and socially ranked (Rana, 2011; Selod

& Embrick, 2013). Said's (1978) *Orientalism* elucidates the ways Western imperialism--through

cultural, political, and academic discourses--created exotic, backwards, uncivilized, and barbaric

portraits about the "Orient" in relation to the "Occident". These constructions position the West

as superior to the East and portray non-Western and non-Christian "Others" as in need of Western

political and economic aid and interventions.

The outsider status and othering of Muslims has global significance and extends to non-

white and non-European/American spaces, such as South Asia and Asia more generally (Menon,

2006). Menon (2006) argues that non-Muslim Asians—e.g., right-wing nationalist Hindu groups

in the US and India—accept and reproduce Orientalist and anti-Muslim rhetoric, while

distinguishing themselves from Muslims. In the US, post-9/11 racial profiling, violence, and harassment against Muslims or those perceived Muslims showed blurred distinctions between West Asian, Arab, and South Asian groups. Menon (2006) notes that European and American orientalist rhetoric places the "Middle East" as outside of Asia rather than as West Asia, both distancing them from an Asia despite their proximity, and homogenizing their diverse ethnic and cultural identities.

Racialized and Gendered Representations

Scholars have used the term "racialization" to examine the ways religious symbols and cultural practices (e.g., hijab) become a proxy for a 'Muslim' racial identity (Rana, 2011; Selod & Embrick, 2013; Zahedi, 2011). Selod and Embrick (2013) conceptualize racialization as a process that (re)constructs race and racism to restrict people's access to whiteness and its associated civil liberties and protections. One prominent way a Muslim identity is racialized is through media portrayals.

The media portrays Muslims, Arabs, Middle Easterners, and South Asians in narrow and limited ways, disregarding their ethnic, racial, and cultural differences. Before 9/11, media portrayals of terrorists largely focused on Middle Eastern communities (Suleiman, 1999). Despite some changes in representations, negative messages about Muslims dominate (Ibid). Through media and political representations, American audiences consumed the following messages about Muslims:

> strategic region, desert, oil, Third World, dictatorship, (i.e., no democracy), enemies of Israel, anti-Jewish, violent and terroristic, fatalistic, and backward, immoral, liars, cheats, unreliable, indolent, licentious, sex fiends, exploiters, and victimizers of women--and a threat to the West, Christianity and to Western civilization (Suleiman, 1999, p. 44).

The prevalence of anti-Muslim depictions makes Muslims unrelatable, the "Other", and threatening; thus, negative depictions distance the audience from the realities of Muslims,

including their suffering (Shaheen, 2003). Like Suleiman (1999), Jackson (2010) finds that myriad representations ultimately link Muslims to conflicts, violence, and unreasonableness. As such representation "harms Muslims, making them vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination" (p. 6), Jackson (2010) suggests critical media literacy as an education tool to critique mainstream media portrayals of Muslims.

The historical construction of Muslims reflects similar forms of suspicion, otherness, and a fear of their practices and ideologies (Ali, 2017). Ali (2017) argues that institutions and policies reinforce these ideas through surveillance programs, and subsequently normalize fear and suspicion of Muslims, as well as white supremacy. Discriminatory government policies have targeted Muslim American communities and their civil liberties through racial profiling, surveillance, airport screenings, deportations, detentions, and interrogations (Akram, 2002), fueling the Muslim/Middle Eastern terrorist trope (Love, 2009). For example, policies such as the Patriot Act further Islamophobic threat narratives, restricting Muslim access to civil liberties as imperative for national security (Garner & Selod, 2015; Selod & Embrick, 2013).

Muslims also undergo a "gendered racialization" where gender identity (and religious signifiers) inform female and male Muslim experiences (Selod, 2015). Dominant discourse frames female Muslims as cultural threats (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Watt, 2012; Zahedi, 2011) and Muslim males as national threats (Rana, 2011; Selod, 2015; Watt, 2012), defining their incompatibility with Western freedoms, liberties, democracies, and lifestyles. "Gendered racialization", thus, fosters a sense of outsiderness for Muslims Americans.

Selod's (2015) study examines the challenges to Muslim American's civil liberties and their citizenship, given their racialization. Racialization of Muslims constructs males as violent and fanatical. Selod found that Muslim women who wear hijab encountered fewer questions about their allegiance to the US than Muslim men (p. 88). Political perspectives on foreign

relations can also result in the questioning of one's allegiance and citizenship, resulting in their silence and marginalization from access to citizenship in social encounters (Selod, 2015). She also describes the consequences of racialization. A white female Muslim is perceived differently based on whether she wears the hijab or not. For a racially white Muslim female, the hijab results in a 'Muslim' racialization, while removing it may result in de-racialization (Selod, 2015), suggesting the power of religious signifiers in positioning one as a foreigner or an outsider, as well as defining their citizenship in the public's eye.

Additionally, Western media's representations generally position Muslim countries and regions as patriarchal spaces that silence, subjugate, and suppress women (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Watt, 2012; Zahedi, 2011). Media and political discourses reinforce tropes of Islamic patriarchy, from which the West must save Muslim women (Abu-Lughod, 2002), ignoring how other religions further patriarchal control over women's bodies (Zahedi, 2011). (This is currently reflected in the Catholic-dominated US Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, a 1973 momentous decision that conferred the right to an abortion.) Essentialized images simplify complex narratives about Muslims and reinforce notions about the Muslim woman as an embodiment of silence, passivity, and oppression (Watt, 2012; Zahedi, 2011).

Ashraf Zahedi (2011) explores the ways Orientalist views and religious fundamentalist beliefs inform the civic and political engagement of hijabi (women who wear headscarf) Muslim American women. The Orientalist view designates the Muslim woman as in need of saving, whereas the Muslim religious fundamentalists view the woman as in need of protection and serve to reinforce "notions of authentic Muslim woman" that are "static and frozen in time" (p. 195). Muslim American women in Zahedi's study responded to both oppressive and restrictive forces by: (1) increasing their knowledge and alternative interpretations of the Qur'an that challenge the usual androcentric interpretations; (2) being civically active and participating in Muslim

American organizations; (3) countering the low-prioritization of gender issues as some organizations focus more on overall civil liberties and racial profiling; (4) fore-fronting community issues over gender issues, and ; (5) defying Orientalist norms imposed on their identities as Muslim females.

Finally, the racialization of Islam also implicates non-Muslims who appear South Asian, Arab, or Middle Eastern, i.e., brown skin, turbans, beards. Racial slurs, such as "ragheads" and "towelheads", permeate through popular culture (Mishra, 2013). Popular culture's focus on stories of violence and bombings involving South Asia and West Asia/Middle East reinforces narratives of cultural, religious, or civilizational differences as "absolute" (Mishra, 2013; Naber, 2008), normalizes "Islamic terrorism" discourse (Jackson, 2007; Joshi 2006), and justifies institutional surveillance and racial profiling of Muslim communities (Ali, 2016).

The scholarship reviewed in this section highlights dominant representations and rhetoric about Muslims that homogenizes them in racialized and gendered ways, reinforcing their otherness and outsiderness in the US. The remainder of this literature review outlines studies on the curricular representation and schooling experiences of Muslims in K-12 and higher education.

II. Textbook Coverage of Islam and Muslims

Extensive research has examined how textbooks misrepresent (or underrepresent) historically marginalized communities (Loewen, 2007). Textbooks routinely distort or selectively exclude the histories, struggles, and achievements of People of Color, normalizing and privileging white cultural identities and Eurocentrism by silencing racial and ethnic narratives (Au, Brown, & Calderon, 2016; Brown & Au, 2014). Brown and Au (2014) argue:

> racial exclusion in US curriculum history not only takes form through direct and systematic exclusion, but it also does so insidiously through a process of normalization whereby the unquestioned metanarrative of US curriculum reproduces the context for White inclusion and subaltern racial exclusion (p. 375).

Racial exclusion and marginalization are affirmed through multiple means, such as schooling, popular culture, media, communities, homes, and more. Calls for decolonizing the curriculum suggest the inclusion of racial and ethnic narratives that disrupt whiteness and the master narrative (Brown & Au, 2014).

"Mentioning" (Foster, 1999) or passive inclusion (Loewen, 2007) in textbooks minimize or exclude controversial and conflicting histories of minoritized groups. This tactic involves "adding content to the text without altering the book's organizing framework or central message" (Foster, 1999, p. 271). A mere mention of non-white groups does not complicate or distract from a textbook's central message, which generally focuses on the dominant group's history, values, and identity. This process of "mentioning" minimizes (or omits) the experiences and contributions of racially and ethnically diverse people.

Textbooks offer stereotypical, simplistic, and homogenizing portrayals of Native American peoples and cultures (Hawkins, 2002; Moore & Clark, 2004; Rogers Stanton, 2014). As Rogers Stanton (2014) argues, the current curricula misrepresent Native communities, their historical and future agency to preserve and promote a colonial, dominant culture, and narrative. Textbooks employ two strategies in their depiction of Native peoples: exclusion and passivation (Rogers Stanton, 2014). Through exclusion or controlling the narrative, textbooks include Native histories to fit the dominant historical narrative while presenting them as passive agents (Rogers Stanton, 2014). Textbook depictions locate Native communities primarily in the past and minimize their presence in the present, restricting them to reservations and gaming life (Hawkins, 2002). Similarly, teacher edition textbooks limit critical thinking and resist multicultural education "by claiming a neutral position" that supports dominant cultural narratives and marginalizes Native people's experiences and histories (Rogers Stanton, 2015, p. 188).

Textbooks also minimize and sanitize African American history. Wasburn (1997) documented textbook representation of slavery from early 1900s to the late 1990s, finding that ideological beliefs at the time of textbook production influence discussions about slavery and race. Textbook depictions remain stereotypical and simplistic (Alridge, 2006). They rarely discuss racism or discrimination (Wasburn, 1997), or worse, perpetuate "enduring racisms" by "advance[ing] ideas of race and racism" by a purposeful inclusion and exclusion of narratives (A. Brown & K. Brown, 2015, p. 106), and maintain an uncontroversial central narrative that ignores a racial and ethnic analysis (Foster, 1999; Wasburn, 1997). In so doing, textbooks discuss racial violence against African Americans as an individual person's problem, rather than an institutional and structural problem, maintaining white cultural superiority and racial inequities (A. Brown & K. Brown, 2015).

Similarly, curricula minimize Latinx experiences and contributions and treat them as a pan-ethnic group (Monforti & McGlynn, 2010; Rodriguez & Ruiz, 2000). College textbooks reference Latinx communities primarily with regards to the civil rights movements and immigration, implying their lack of integration into the political system and framing them as immigrants or "illegal immigrants" (Monforti & McGlynn, 2010, p. 311). Monforti and McGlynn found few positive representations of Latinx activists, e.g., Dolores Huerta, Cesar Chavez.

Textbooks also render the histories and experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander Americans as inconsequential to American history. Their representation positions them as passive, assimilated people within the confines of the model minority stereotype (Takeda, 2016). US history textbook coverage of Japanese American internment, for example, minimizes the racial prejudice and violence Japanese Americans endured (Ogawa, 2004). Instead, textbooks refer to "fear and the need for national security" as reasons for their internment, provide limited information about the camps, and few personal accounts of internment (p. 3). Textbooks also fail

to discuss the exclusion of German and Italian Americans (World War II enemies) from internment (Ogawa, 2004).

Finally, mainstream textbooks also underrepresent women and center the narratives of men (Gordy et al., 2004; Schmidt 2012), locating women primarily in domestic spaces (Schmidt, 2012). Schmidt examines South Carolina's US history curriculum, finding: (1) references to women appear confined to homes (e.g., family, home appliances), (2) references to women in the workplace in relation to economics and politics (e.g., war time), and (3) references to women in politics and movements (e.g., suffrage). Textbooks also marginalize African American women, their contributions, and activism (Allen & Wallace, 2010; Schocker & Woyshner, 2013). Allen and Wallace (2010) found greater representation of African American males in leadership depictions than females, and greater female representation in depictions of poverty and victimhood in college American government/politics textbooks. Schocker and Woyshner (2013) examine mainstream high school US history textbooks and a Black history textbook finding underrepresentation of African American women in both textbooks. Despite underrepresentation, the Black history textbook still showed Black women in political and public roles unlike mainstream US history texts (Ibid).

Textbook publishers and authors have long engaged in a systematic exclusion of historical events that may tarnish or be corrosive to a positive American national identity. In his essay, "The Propaganda of History", W. E. B. Du Bois (1935) discussed that textbooks advance a history in which "evil must be forgotten, distorted, skimmed over;" it "paints perfect men and noble nations, but it does not tell the truth" (p. 722). American history textbooks promote themes of nationalism, pride, and unity. They celebrate achievements, milestones, and people without a complex (racial or ethnic) interrogation of the past to foster certain values, ideas of freedoms, and

progress, resulting in a "bland" (Foster, 1999) and "boring" (Loewen, 2007) coverage of history that perpetuates hegemonic ideas about being an American.

Research shows that textbooks limit racial and ethnic groups' inclusion (stories, ideas, and people) to avoid controversial ideas and conflicting views about American history (Loewen, 2007; Foster, 1999). For example, textbooks construct narratives about changes and improvements in American society by presenting particularly abhorrent examples of racism— such as lynching (Foster, 1999)—in the past, furthering themes of progress (Loewen, 2007). Removing controversy and conflict from history positions racism, prejudice, and discrimination as "amorphous 'problems' for America", rather than as "acts perpetrated by white society" and "institutionalized racism" (Foster, 1999, p. 269). Eurocentric histories of progress maintain a white-centered narrative that ignores structural and cultural racism, obscuring the groups and individuals who benefit from that structure and culture—and those who do not.

Textbooks also limit their coverage of religion and the critical role it played development of the US (Haynes, 1993). For example, textbooks ignore the role religion played in colonization, imperialism, exploitation, and wealth extraction, limiting students' understanding of western influence around the world (Loewen, 2007). In an interview with an editor of a prominent publishing company, Loewen (2007) found religion – along with sex and social class – too "taboo" to include in textbooks (p. 27).

Muslims in Textbooks

Given the above, it is not surprising that history textbooks also provide inaccurate and stereotypical information about Islam and Muslims (Kincheloe, Steinberg, & Stonebanks, 2010; Shaheen, 2003), which coupled with media visuals and textual portrayals (discussed in the previous section), normalize the association of Islam and Muslims with violence and terrorism. These representations construct a homogenized image of the Muslim that ignores their racial,

ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and political diversity (Jackson, 2010). These homogenized portrayals intensify marginalization and misrepresentation of Muslims' nationally (US) and globally, while also rendering Islam incompatible with Western ideologies and democracy (Jackson, 2007).

Even so, some textbooks have improved their inclusion and representation of Muslims (Eisenstein & Clark, 2013). Eisenstein and Clark (2013) assess the visual representation (i.e., images) of religious groups in introductory American government college textbooks and find they included more images of Muslims than other religious groups, showing positive links between being Muslim and living in a democracy. So, while these textbooks maintain separation of church and state in the representation of religion, they depict "inseparability of religion and politics" in the US on an individual level (p. 100). For example, the textbooks included images of Muslim women participating in democratic processes, showing a "positive connection between Islam and democracy" (p. 101).

While representation of Muslims and Islam has increased due to multicultural education movements, textbooks overall continue to reinforce "Orientalist meaning-making" and monolithic understanding of Muslims (Zagumny & Richey, 2013, p. 1344). Curricular materials continue to essentialize, stereotype, and misrepresent Muslims and related racial/ethnic groups (Crocco, 2005; Douglass & Dunn, 2003; Kincheloe, Steinberg, & Stonebanks, 2010; Saleem & Thomas, 2011). Zagumny and Richey (2013) find that textbooks juxtapose and offer binary representations of the traditional (Muslim world, the East, developing/ underdeveloped countries) with the modern world (Western world, advanced and developed countries). Religious and gendered representations depict the "traditional" world as oppressive, backwards, susceptible to fundamentalism, and averse to modernity – but simultaneously emulating or desiring to be like the modern world.

Teacher reliance on textbooks as the only instructional material results in teaching a history that perpetuates a hegemonic master narrative about people, places, and identity. This may lead to "avoiding coverage of the intersectionality of religion, race, gender, and region in shaping human experiences in these societies" (Crocco, 2005, p. 564). Educators offer limited perspectives and simplistic content for various reasons: (1) constraints due to high-stakes testing; (2) coverage of multiple perspectives takes time and lengthens the curriculum; and, (3) avoidance undermining the official, patriotic history narratives (Crocco, 2005). The next section focuses on literature documenting the inaccurate and limited depictions of Islam and Muslims made available to students through textbooks.

Inaccurate and Limited Depictions of Islam

Textbooks present Islam as antithetical to Western ideas and society (e.g., Jackson, 2007), failing to acknowledge it as part of the Judeo-Christian tradition and lineage (Douglass and Dunn, 2003). Textbooks also present Islamic societies as disconnected or minimally connected to the rest of the world, particularly Western civilization, because "Islam is generally not interpreted as its adherents understand it but as the editors believe will be acceptable to textbook adoption committees" (Douglass & Dunn, 2003, p. 59). Thus, textbooks categorize Muslims as anti-Western to fit within how the West imagines Islam. Muslims in the West are also depicted as inferior and as dependent upon western, particularly white, societies (Ali, 2013).

Public school curricular coverage of Islam and Muslims is largely limited to the Middle East or Western Asia during conflicts (Jackson, 2011). Their representation remains tied to oil, Israel and Palestine, and religion (Douglass, 2009). Thus, textbooks share little content about Muslims or Islam, presenting a basic coverage that follows the "norms of neutrality" (Jackson, 2011, p. 168). This results in a teaching of history that does not include "balanced views" or

"multiple perspectives" (p. 178). Rather, the limited neutral coverage reinforces dominant narratives and stereotypes about Muslim.

Islamophobic discourses influence curricular materials (Kincheloe, Steinberg, & Stonebanks, 2010; Shaheen, 2003). The media's visual and textual portrayals (e.g., images of instability and violence in the news) normalize the association of Islam and Muslims with violence and terrorism. For example, images of the Muslim "bad guy" dominate media (news, political cartoons) and shape the general population's perspective on Muslims (Jackson, 2010, p. 13). The lack of diverse representations of the Muslim community intensifies their marginalization and misrepresentation in the United States and renders them incompatible to Western ideologies and democracy – as this dissertation shows.

American textbooks often claim that attacks against the West, in particular the United States, result from Islam's alleged incompatibility with or hatred of American values, ideas, and freedoms (Loewen, 2007). The pervasiveness of this political, media, and textbook rhetoric ignores the role of and resistance to foreign policies and actions in Muslim dominant places (Jackson, 2007). Textbooks include Muslims or Islam primarily when discussing conflicts between the Muslim-dominant world and the West (or, "times of conflict") (Eraqi, 2015a, p. 71).

Diana Hess and Jeremy Stoddard (2007; 2011) have examined various social studies curricular materials (e.g., supplementary, textbook) from 2002-2010 for their representation of terrorism, 9/11, and the War on Terror from 2002-2010. In their review of textbooks, they (2007; 2011) found a lack of specificity about 9/11 and avoidance of controversy (e.g., US invasion of Iraq) with more focus on the destruction from attack, heroes, and American nationalism. The definition of terrorism also varied across curricular materials, from exclusion of contextual information to textual inconsistencies between definitions (e.g., focusing on attacks against civilians) and examples (e.g., focusing on attacks against military) (Ibid). These materials lacked

examples of terrorism by non-Muslims, furthering it as a "Muslim" problem for the US and its allies, but not other countries. Finally, these topics emerged in sections on Middle Eastern history, global terrorism, or as a "unique event in US history" (2011, p. 176).

In a survey of middle and high school teachers, Stoddard (2019) found that teachers included references to 9/11 and the War on Terror multiple times a year, on the anniversary of the attack, or never. US history teachers, for example, taught about both events on the anniversary and/or at the end of the year, while government and civics teachers reported multiple references throughout the school year. Like Hess and Stoddard's (2007; 2011) evaluation of curricular materials, teachers continued to exclude controversial topics, such as Guantanamo Bay and the invasion of Iraq (Stoddard, 2019, p. 15). Teachers attributed their limited engagement with teaching about these events to a lack of curricular resources, concerns over the community's and students' families' reactions, time and state standard constraints, or the prevalence of misinformation and conspiracy theories. These approaches further simplistic narratives about the attack and War on Terror, as well as the terrorist stereotype about Muslims (Stoddard, 2019).

Building on the survey (Stoddard, 2019), Stoddard (2021) interviewed teachers in the context of the "Muslim travel ban" and the 20th anniversary of September 11. The teachers primarily taught about the attacks on its anniversary, using news programs from the day and documentaries as primary sources of knowledge for their students (Stoddard, 2021). Stoddard (2021) argues that these current methods of teaching memorialized the attack evoking "the same shock and horror", rather than engaging with a deeper, critical understanding of those events (p. 80). That is, students learn about the destruction from the attack, first responders' heroism, former President Bush's response to the attack, and the identification of the perpetrators. But they do not learn about the controversies around the US invasion of Iraq, Guantanamo Bay abuses, nor the complex history of US and Middle East relations. Stoddard (2021) also finds little focus on

domestic terrorism in the US (e.g., by white supremacists). This limited learning reinforces dominant narratives about US as a site of progress and freedom (Loewen, 2007; Stoddard, 2021). Stoddard (2021) suggests the need for thoughtful engagement with traumatic images and the memory to avoid simplistic narratives, and careful use of materials to avoid reinforcing stereotypical ideas about Muslims (e.g., as terrorists).

Threat narratives limit an analysis of US foreign policy in countries viewed as threats, while furthering an image of itself as an "international good guy" (Loewen, 2007, p. 267) that works towards goodwill, democracy, and human rights. In other words, even if their actions or policies do not always work or are misinterpreted by others, their motives and intentions remain good overall (p. 221).

Textbooks also suggest "American exceptionalism", hatred, and jealousy as a reason for violent acts (Loewen, 2007). In so doing, they affirm superiority of American and Western political systems. Textbooks establish the US as a "peacekeeper" and a "beacon of hope for people who wanted to govern themselves,'' despite US foreign policies and role supporting dictatorial governments and preventing some nations from achieving peace and the right to govern themselves (Ibid, p. 267). Loewen also notes that textbook discourse limits or omits locating problems within US policies or intervention because they may be interpreted as unpatriotic, which may indicate why textbooks claim to adopt a "neutral" position in recounting history.

American history textbooks highlight Western, European ideas and accomplishments, while minimizing contributions of other groups, including Muslims, Muslim Americans, and Muslim-dominant regions/nations (Douglass, 2009; Eraqi, 2015a; 2015b; Loewen, 2007). Textbooks generally include discussions about Muslims in the post WWII era regarding conflicts, but otherwise omit them from the American historical narrative and for their "cultural capital"

(Eraqi, 2015a, p. 75). For example, textbooks do not mention African Muslim enslaved people, their role, or experiences with racism and subjugation in American history. Muslims or Muslim-dominant regions are rarely, if ever, mentioned for their contributions to the fields of medicine, sciences, mathematics, and arts (Douglass, 2009). Textbooks also present the Renaissance as the sole product of Europeans, rather than as a "syncretic" process in which Muslim scholars recorded and preserved ideas that contributed to it (Loewen, 2007, p. 33). Europeans are also given primary credit for modern technology and development rather than non-Europeans, including Muslims. As Loewen (2007) explains:

> None of the textbooks credit Muslims for preserving Greek wisdom, enhancing it with ideas from China, India, and Africa, and then passing on the resulting knowledge to Europe via Spain and Italy. Instead, they show [Prince] Henry [the Navigator] inventing navigation and imply that before Europe there was nothing, at least nothing modern" (p. 38).

Instead, textbooks reference Muslims in discussions about oil, or battling religious conservatism and modernism.

Textbook representations of Muslims also suggest deficient ideas about their ideologies, religion, and lives. Ali (2013) examines Canadian (Ontario) English language textbooks for their representation of Muslims that live in the West. She finds that their textbooks include socially and culturally deficit, violent, backwards, and oppressed narratives about Muslims, constructing their immigration to Canada as a "happy ending" for them, even when they feel socially and culturally disconnected from Western identity (p. 423). As such, the next section reviews some literature that examined the impact of curricular narratives on Muslim students.

Curricular Impact on Muslim Students

Islamophobic discourses also influence curricular materials and content in schools. Scant research explores the impact of curricular materials on Muslim youth (Merchant, 2016; Saleem & Thomas, 2011) or the pedagogical strategies of educators in teaching about Islam (Brooks, 2019).

Merchant's (2016) study, for example, examines how female Muslim students interpret and react to the Social Studies curriculum on Islam, revealing that the curricula and classroom instruction on Islam essentializes and minimizes their experiences. The students identified the curriculum as holding "narrow conceptions" about Muslims and Islam (e.g., deficient, homogenized representations) which they often challenged (p. 190). For example, they corrected peers and teachers, addressing Islamophobia and essentializing narratives by taking on the role of "the expert" (p. 193), or engaged in "bridge building" by sharing personal stories and talking about religion with friends (p. 194). Merchant (2016) calls this process of narrative shifting an "agentive strategy" (p. 194). The students also faced issues with generalization, in which one Muslims student's understanding about something would also be generalized to other Muslims students' beliefs (Merchant, 2016).

Saleem and Thomas (2011) examine Muslim students' responses to textbook coverage of 9/11. The students found textbooks to associate violence and anti-American sentiments with Islam, which led them to question and reject these narratives as narrow and rooted in authors' and publishers' interpretations and "opinions" (p. 29). Textbook narratives and coverage of Islam also alienated these students from their American identity.

Brooks (2019) explores a South Asian American Muslim educator's pedagogical strategies and approaches for teaching about Islam, noting that the use of various strategies—such as incorporating news and films, reading articles, and holding student-centered discussions— fostered better understanding about Islam and Muslims. The teacher's pedagogy involved discussing misconceptions, humanizing Islam, examining diversity within Muslims, and identifying similarities between Islam and other religions. Brooks argues that these strategies could also further misconceptions about Muslims (e.g., not considering how media representation

perpetuates misconceptions), but that such methods, if used carefully and systematically, can challenge dominant ideas in our "prevailing culture of misunderstanding and fear" (p. 114).

Educational curricula position Muslim societies as uncivilized, non-contributing members of society (Al-Romi, 2000). In classrooms, oversimplified narratives of Islam and Muslims influence class content and supplemental materials, classroom discussions, and teachers and non-Muslim students' interaction with Muslim students. Racialized and gendered notions about a Muslim identity, as well as inaccurate and limited textbook portrayals, communicate dominant perceptions about Muslims and Islam. Building on the previous two parts of the literature review, the next part focuses on the experiences of Muslim American youth in schools.

III.   Muslim American Youth in Education Institutions

This section focuses on the research on Muslim American K-12 and higher education experiences. I focus on two themes in this review: (1) racialization through "nation building" discourses (Abu El-Haj, 2010) and (2) reproduction of racialized and gendered discourses in schools. Racialized, gendered, and nationalist discourses inform Muslim youth's identities, their experiences, sense of self and community in and outside of schools.

Racializing "Nation Building" Discourses

"Nation building" (Abu El-Haj, 2010) discourses and ideas about what an American identity encompasses contributes to the racialization of Muslims as the "Other". By examining teaching practices and discourses, Abu El-Haj identifies schools as sites for "nation building" in which "U.S. nationalism and national identities are produced collectively within and through racialized and gendered discourses and practices" (p. 243).

In the context of increased immigration and increasing diversity, Lash (2017) examines fourth and fifth graders' understanding of what "American" meant to them. Though these students attended school in a diverse, immigrant community, they largely defined American

identity as "English-speaking, US-born, and white" (p. 872). A small number described an

American identity to be inclusive, multicultural, and multilingual. The most prominent

descriptors for what "American" meant to them included: language (English-speaking),

disposition ("nice", "good"), customs ("going to a restaurant"), birth country (born in the US) and

residence (living in the US), opportunities (school, job), race (white), food (hamburger), income

(wealthy), and citizenship. Though Lash's elementary school participants defined American

identity in ethnocultural terms, religion did not emerge as a descriptor – as it emerges in this

research participants' responses.

Abu El-Haj (2010) identified schools as communicators of national identity. Palestinian

American youth experienced second-class citizenship or marginal citizenship, which challenged

their sense of belonging both in school and in the nation (Ibid). Palestinian Muslim students

experienced three dichotomies about nationalism in schools: the tolerant US and West versus

intolerant societies; political and social liberties versus repression; freedom versus the "cultural

captivity" of others (p. 250-262). These dichotomies position Islam as a "monolithic culture" that

limits the American Creed and US democratic values (p. 252).

The American Creed refers to elements that represent an American identity, e.g.,

individual freedom, liberty, and equality. Schools engaged in nationalist discourse that typifies

the US as representative of freedom and liberty (Abu El-Haj, 2010). By positioning Islam as

limiting the American Creed, teachers communicated that Islam contradicted the principles of

equality for all (Ibid), while positioning Muslims in opposition to Western ideological beliefs and

American national identity (Abu El-Haj, 2007, 2010; Maira, 2004; Sirin & Fine, 2008; Zine,

2006). Within nationalistic discourses, schools encourage assimilatory practices for liberating and

Americanizing Muslim youth, particularly encouraging female Muslims "to break their perceived

silence" and "have a voice" (p. 253). Abu El-Haj (2010) demonstrates nation building as a

process involving monolithic racialized and gendered discourses about Muslims, positioning them as culturally and politically in opposition to the West.

Marginalizing narratives suggest a Muslim identity to be incompatible with an 'American' identity. As such, stereotypical popular, political, and curricular discourses about Muslims influence some Muslim American youth's primary identification with their religious identity (Chaudhury & Miller, 2008; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012; Naber, 2005). Ghaffar-Kucher's (2012) ethnographic study in New York City explores the "religification" of Pakistani American youth, finding that religious identity influenced their schooling experiences more than their ethnic or racial identities. Specifically, dominant and school discourses (through teachers and peers) perceive and impose meanings (e.g., backwards, oppressed, violent) about their religious identity and perpetuate homogenized understandings about the group. However, increased identification with their religious identity does not necessarily mean greater religiosity (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012).

In another study, Ghaffar-Kucher (2015) claims that "imagined nostalgia" influences how society and schools view a Muslim identity versus how insider community and one's family understand their Muslim identity (p. 203). Both schools and families perpetuate ideas of the incompatibility between being an American and a Muslim, suggesting one can be only one or the other (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2015). An American identity is associated with the American Creed (cf Abu El-Haj, 2010) and "middle- and upper-class White Anglo-Saxon Protestants" (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012, p. 47). For example, some youth (in this case some Pakistani males) may perform a stereotypical culturally imposed Muslim identity as a "defense mechanism", demonstrating religification in how affected person may adopt an identity as a form of resistance (p. 43). I understand this process of religification as a component of Muslim racialization. Though I identify similar processes of religification across literature on Muslim youth, I find it important to emphasize the power imbalance in equating religification from outside and within one's

community. Mainstream society that impacts global, national, and local politics ultimately has more power to shape the perception of Muslims, leading this marginalized community to create communities and mobilize using their common religious identity over their ethnic/racial ones.

But other studies (e.g., Naber, 2005) suggest that leaning into religious identity can become a pathway to mobilization and advocating for change. Specifically, second-generation Muslim Americans employed "strategic essentialism" through the adoption of a "Muslim first" identity builds collectiveness "to rearticulate their religion and claim their political rights" (Naber, 2005, p. 482). Yet, Muslim American youth also found that their vocalness on issues that matter to them can be misperceived as anti-Americanness (Naber, 2005).

Sirin, Bikmen, Mir, Fine, Zaal, and Katsiaficas (2008) examine Muslim youth's dual identification, particularly how they understand their national and religious identities. They (2008) find that though Muslim youth identified more with their religious identity, discrimination did not negatively influence their association with their national (American) identity – engaging in both their religious and national identity groups.

Ahmad and Szpara (2003) interviewed Muslim American parents and youth (ages 13-22, primarily Pakistani) about their experiences in Queen, New York public schools. They found that Muslim students generally had a positive educational experience, despite their peers' and teachers' misconceptions about Islam and about the diversity within the Muslim community, as well as negative media and textbook portrayals. These students found their religious and American identities compatible and maintained "friendly relationships" with their schooling community (Ahmad & Szpara, 2003, p. 299).

Similarly, Turkish-American Muslims identified a positive relationship between their Muslim and American identity (Isik-Ercan, 2015; Kaya, 2009), possibly due to differences in experiences and representation. Isik-Ercan's study (2015) shows that Turkish American Muslim

students' religious identities were visible in certain social (dietary restrictions, dress) or curricular

contexts (teaching about Islam) – not necessarily because of their own choosing. Some of the

Turkish youth did not express their religious identity unless asked or certain conditions made

them obvious, such as modest clothing and dietary restrictions. The secular nature of US schools

made openness about their Muslim identities difficult, as did the normalcy of Christian identity.

Though they acknowledged their experiences as different from other Muslim groups, Turkish

American youth still experienced "otherness" in the prevalence of stereotypes about Islam and

their immigrant status. This exemplifies the complexities of Muslim youth's schooling

experiences based on their racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender identities, as well as the context

within which they are interacting with others.

Finally, nationalist and patriotic discourses on higher education campuses (HECs)

question Muslim students and their citizenship (Ali, 2014; Mir, 2011). Institutional and cultural

"everyday nationalism" limits Muslim's legal rights and labels them as "lesser American[s]" or

"not-quite-American American citizens" (Mir, 2011). Affiliation with Islam excludes Muslim

students from their American identity – an identity that is dominantly presumed white and secular

Christian. In groups, non-Muslims question Muslims students' sexual identities, abstinence from

alcohol, observance of the hijab (Ibid). For some Muslim students, assimilating into the American

identity involved suppressing or downplaying their religious identity to fit in. Mir found that

those who appeared Muslim or did not participate in mainstream activities may be perceived less

American.

In addition, federal politics, law enforcement, and policies (e.g., the Patriot Act) target

Muslim community, foster anti-Muslim sentiments (Beydoun, 2018), and have a detrimental

effect on Muslim American students' schooling experiences (Bonet, 2011). Bonet reviews

literature on the experiences of Muslim to examine the impact of federal policies and politics,

particularly the Patriot Act, on US secondary schools. Bonet suggests that anti-Muslim and "securitization" rhetoric and policies are detrimental to Muslim American students' education, psychological and social wellbeing, and sense of belonging and nationhood (p. 47). Muslim youth experience "othering", civic marginalization, discrimination, harassment, and violence that render them un-American, or question their American identity (Bonet, 2011).

Ali's (2016) ethnographic study with college students examines New York City's state-sanctioned surveillance of Muslim communities. He found that surveillance increased Muslim youth's self-disciplining behavior, diminished community trust, but improved solidarity among youth. Muslims occupy inhabit a "suspect class of citizenship" (p. 93) under the "panoptic gaze" that involves state surveillance of Muslims (Ali, 2016, p. 79). Using Foucault's notion of "governmentality," Ali discusses that the panoptic gaze influences a person's perception of being watching, thereby leading a person to self-discipline, or act in ways to avoid punishment – resulting in social control (p. 79-80). Ali's study participants' activism, community building, and political voice – e.g., in critiquing state policies – were diminished in some ways due to policing (intercommunity surveillance through spies and informants).

Both K-12 and higher education literature show that education settings communicate ideas about national identity. Student receive these messages overtly or discreetly through the curriculum, through classroom discourse, interaction among peers, or institutional and systemic policies and practices.

Racialized and Gendered Discourses in Education Spaces

Schools also communicate what it means to be an American through "everyday racialized and gendered discourses" (Abu El-Haj, 2010), which reinforce perceived oppression of Muslim women, violence of Muslim men (Zine, 2006), and incompatibility of Islam and the West (Abu El-Haj, 2010). These discourses have "real-life consequences" for Muslims (McQueeney, 2014).

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Hillary Clinton's and Donald Trump's distinction between "good" and "bad" Muslims in the second 2016 Presidential Election Debate demonstrates the pervasiveness of overt and covert Islamophobic and terrorism discourse. The good Muslims adopt an American identity, assimilate, and engage in intra-community surveillance to protect the US from potential threats. Bad Muslims, on the other hand, do not conform to the American identity and are viewed as potential threats. Films also perpetuate the good and bad Muslim narrative. Disney's *Aladdin* featured bad characters with a Middle Eastern accent, reserving Anglo-Western accents for good characters (Lippi-Green, 1997). Additionally, television shows, such as *Homeland*, portray Muslim-majority nations as violent and uncivilized (Zine, 2006).

Research examining the impact of anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies on Muslim youth's lived realities remains minimal (Ali, 2014; Sirin & Fine, 2008). In their ethnographic study, Sirin & Fine (2008) examine the hyphenated lives of Muslim American youth. Anti-Muslim and Islamophobic rhetoric, the politicization of the Muslim identity, global politics, and harassment shape Muslim youth's identities, experiences, and understanding of the world. They find that Muslim students experienced religion-based discrimination and harassment. Implicated in threat-based discourses, Muslims are positioned as a threat to the nation and culture. Sirin and Fine (2008) show that these youth "live at the hyphen as they embody, resist, and challenge the surveillance of the larger US society and their more immediate community" (2008, p. 19). Living at the hyphen positions Muslim students to manage two worlds that are often dichotomized, involving a negotiation or suppression of certain aspects of themselves at school and at home. For example, female Muslims experienced "heightened visibility and surveillance" by the state and their own communities (Sirin & Fine, 2008, p. 12). Similarly, Ali (2014) finds that interactions with non-Muslim undergraduate peers sustains orientalism and "pre-modern" images of Muslims

– prone to violence and constricted by oppressive gender binaries – that render them "Muslim other" (p. 1257).

Though "Muslim" as an identifier has socially constructed racialized meanings, racialization also has gendered implications. Research shows a shift in the way Muslim American women express their identities in the context of increasing anti-Islamic rhetoric (Shaheen, 2003; Sirin & Fine, 2008; Zaal, Salah, & Fine, 2007). Arab and Muslim women's gendered representations, from historically sexualized and eroticized images to terroristic threats, are evident in American culture (Shaheen, 2003) also trickle into schools (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Mir, 2011). Their portrayals are informed by the intersection of their religious and gender identities. For example, images of exotic but threatening Muslim women accompany images of oppressed "burqa-clad" women (Watt, 2012). Also, films or dominant rhetoric usually portray Muslim women as submissive and under the control of a patriarchal figure (Watt, 2012). Muslim students are cognizant of these portrayals of males and females (Ali, 2014; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012).

Dominant discourses, however, perpetuate oversimplified gendered narratives about female Muslims and the hijab, associating their religious or cultural expressions as submissive and oppressed (Zine, 2001). Some female Muslims openly embraced their religious identity and markers as primary form of identification to challenge Islamophobia, educate others about Islam, and defend their religious identity (Sirin & Fine, 2008; Zaal et al., 2007). Female Muslims must negotiate and navigate societal views of liberation/oppression mapped onto their bodies, along with the "terrorist" label (Zaal et al., 2007). The culture of surveillance affects females both at state and community levels.

Both traditional "patriarchal systems of power" and Islamophobia in secular political systems mediate Muslim youth's religious and gender identities (Zine, 2006, p. 244). Zine examines the experiences of female Muslims in the West as "gendered Islamophobia", an "ethno-

religious and racialized discrimination leveled at Muslim women" that stems from historical stereotypes and systemic oppressions rooted in orientalism (Zine, 2006, p. 240). Zine's study participants, who attended a Canadian Islamic school, encountered gendered Islamophobia, harassment, and were called "illegal immigrants" in public spaces (p. 246). In mainstream schools, girls encountered deficit narratives from their teachers implying their families, religious beliefs did not value education, resulting in "low teacher expectations" and pushing these girls into "non-academic streams" (p. 244). These instances challenged the girls' Canadian identity and positioned them as outsiders/foreigners.

Hijabi (headscarf wearing) students experience teacher and peer hostility in Canada and US (Al-Fartousi, 2016; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012; Isik-Ercan, 2015). Hamzeh (2011) refers to this gendered aspect of Islamophobia, both sexist and racist, as "hijabophobia". For example, curricular exclusion, bullying, stares (e.g., when wearing modest swimsuits), and racial jokes created an unwelcome environment for Muslim girls. Consequently, some girls removed hijab at school over fear of discrimination, to not stand out, as rebellion against parental wishes (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012), while some considered hijab transformational, i.e., female empowerment and a demonstration of commitment to religious practices (e.g., their moral compass) (Al-Fartousi, 2016).

Familial (e.g., brothers) and community surveillance of female bodies also reinforced gendered discourses and expectations (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2015; Hamzeh, 2011; Sirin & Fine, 2008). Hamzeh (2011) refers to the gendered discourses experienced by Muslim girls from their parents as the "hijab discourse" (p. 482). Hijab can be a personal choice or enforced by parents, and varies based on cultural, racial, and ethnic identities. The hijab discourse manifests in three ways in the lives of females: visual hijab (e.g., modest clothing, headscarf), spatial hijab (e.g., mobility in public, going out, staying at a friend's place), and ethical hijab (e.g., forbidden

activities, friendships with boys, dating) – impacting how they navigate their day to day lives and school situations (Hamzeh, 2011). Discourses on hijab act as a "social force" comprised of certain values and practices that regulates and influences the lived experiences of Muslim women (Hamzeh, 2011, p. 485). For example, families (e.g., parents, brothers) cite their religious beliefs to communicate their expectations of females. Muslim girls' parents enforced the three hijabs, impeding the girls' access to some learning (e.g., swimming) and socializing opportunities (e.g., interactions with males). However, the girls challenged the hijab discourse by "deveiling the hijabs" (p. 501) questioning or reinterpreting their parents' interpretation of hijabs, or arguing for alternative interpretations of the hijabs. Research (Zine, 2006; Hamzeh, 2011; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2015) suggests that the hijab can both be restrictive and liberating for females depending on the context.

Karen Aroian (2012) finds that 13-17-year-old Muslim males and females experience discrimination in predominantly White schools (teachers, staff, peers) and outside of schools. The adolescents suggest that negative media representations influence their experiences and increase their encounters with discrimination. Interestingly, Aroian (2012) found male students experience discrimination within schools through teachers and peers (e.g., labeling all Muslim dominant governments as nonsecular or as extremists, anti-Arab, and anti-Muslim jabs), whereas female students with religious signifiers (e.g., hijab) largely encountered discrimination in public settings (e.g., while driving, at malls) from strangers. These experiences indicate the prevalence of gendered racialization of Muslims, in which religious signifiers resulted in identification of the girls as Muslim in the public space, but not boys.

Adolescents cope with anti-Muslim discrimination in various ways: "laugh [it] off" or ignore, but some prefer to "educate or confront" others depending on the situation to prevent "self-harm" (e.g., surveillance) (Aroian, 2012, p. 210). However, framing repercussions of

speaking out against anti-Muslim racism as "self-harm" puts the onus of that harm on youth, rather than identify cultural and institutional anti-Muslim racism as the problem.

In her autoethnography, higher education professor Maysaa Barakat (2018), shares a shift in her religious identity expression in the context of Donald Trump's winning of the 2016 presidential election. Prior to this election, Barakat (2018) "refrained from any public display of religiosity"; after the election, she became more open and unapologetic about sharing her religious identity (p. 87). Post-2016 election and during the Muslim-ban rhetoric, Barakat recounts experiencing bigotry at the airport, as well as shock over people viewing association of Obama with Islam as an insult. Given the political and social contexts and increasing enrollment of Muslim American youth in private religion-oriented schools, Barakat stresses the importance of integrating Muslim youth in schools and need for an equitable education that acknowledges their "cultural rights" and advocates for them (p. 83, 90).

K-12 and higher education students encounter nationalist, gendered, and racialized ideas about their racial/ethnic, gender, and religious identities that rendered them foreigners and outsiders. Despite cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences, Muslim American youth have mobilized under their common religious identity, in essence showing commonalities in their experiences with anti-Muslim discrimination and rhetoric (Sirin & Fine, 2008). Though the context and rhetoric fosters development of multiple identities to navigate everyday life as a female Muslim, navigating multiple identities can become burdensome, rather than liberatory.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the ethnographic studies that have examined Muslim-American students' experiences. My review included literature from K-12 to higher education contexts for their relevance in my study – particularly in the continuation of similar patterns in my research participants' experiences in high school. I showed, first, that dominant

representations and rhetoric homogenize Muslims in vilifying racialized and gendered terms, constructing them as outsiders and incompatible to western traditions. Second, textbooks maintain western superiority narratives at the expense of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities, including Muslims. Finally, Muslim students' experiences show the dominance of racialized, gendered, and nationalist discourses that position students' identities in opposition to the dominant cultural and national identity.

Though research extensively examines the representation and experiences of Muslims in the US, in and outside of education contexts, my literature review also reveals several gaps in the research. I found that though abundant research addresses racialized discourses surrounding Muslim, little research examines racism in relation to religious identity. Relatedly, minimal research assesses Muslim youth's lived experiences with anti-Muslim and Islamophobic discourses as slurs that reinforce racial hierarchies. Finally, little research explores religious nativism or religious nationalism in the representation and marginalization of Muslims in the US context. I attempt to examine these gaps by framing Muslim youth's experiences as racial through Critical Race Theory. I explore the regularity of racialization through the racial microaggressions, examining gendered experiences and religious nativist rhetoric. My research, then, also examines Muslim youth's resistance and resilience in schools.

I explore these gaps in three data chapters. Chapter 3 examines the curricular representation of Muslims, Islam, and related groups of people in Social Studies/History textbooks. Chapter 4 shares Muslim students' experiences with racialized rhetoric and racial microaggressions. Finally, Chapter 5 highlights students' resistance and resilience in navigating racialized hostility at their schools. To contextualize this study, the next chapter outlines my theoretical framework and research design.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Frameworks and Research Design

In this chapter, I outline the theoretical framework and research design that guided this study. First, I present the theoretical approaches and concepts I use to analyze my data about Muslim youth, their educational experiences, and how high school curricula represent Islam and Muslims. More specifically, I do the following (1) provide an overview of Critical Race Theory (CRT), the theoretical framework guiding this study; (2) define race, racism, and racialization and how I operationalize these concepts to discuss Muslims; (3) discuss the relevance of "orientalism" (Said, 1978) in understanding the racialization of Muslims; (4) explain the application of CRT to examine Muslim youth's schooling experiences, focusing on relevant concepts such as "racial microaggressions" (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015), "racist nativism" (Pérez Huber, Lopez, Malagón, Velez, & Solórzano, 2008), and "community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005); and, (5) develop the term *racist religious nativism* as a type of nativism salient to Muslim youth's experiences.

Second, I describe the research design that guided the data collection and analysis to address my research questions. The research design includes descriptions of (1) the site and participant sampling procedures with a brief introduction to the Muslim youth who generously contributed their stories for this study; and, (2) the data collection and analysis procedures for data collected from textbooks, surveys/questionnaires, and interviews.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) can help us understand the curricular representation and schooling experiences of Muslim students in schools. CRT examines the pervasiveness of race and racism in the US, examining whiteness in the structural and cultural foundations that inform social, economic, and political marginalization of People of Color (Bell, 2000). CRT provides

helpful tools and language to identify and discuss racism and its intersection with other forms of subjugation and marginalized identity (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). The framework challenges dominant narratives and ideologies, highlighting experiential knowledge of marginalized communities (Solórzano et al., 2000).

CRT emerged from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) in the 1970s to centralize how racism produced inequities and impeded racial progress (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Though CLS challenged legal scholarship that protected unequal power relations, Bell and Freeman found CLS ignored the voices, histories, and lived experiences of People of Color oppressed by institutionalized racism (Yosso, 2005), or structural mechanisms (e.g., policies and laws) that subordinate, exclude, and disempower People of Color to protect the dominant group's interests (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015). Although Bell and Freeman laid the foundations for CRT, scholars such as Crenshaw, Harris, and Delgado have contributed to its development as an interdisciplinary framework used in education, feminist studies, gender studies, and ethnic studies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

This framework critiques enduring racial inequalities experienced by Students of Color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso, 2005). According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), inequality and racialization produce inequitable educational experiences, where "discussion of race and racism continue to be muted and marginalized" (p. 47). In response to economic class arguments of low-income students generally underperforming, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) found the centrality of race to understanding "institutional and structural racism" in schooling (p. 55). CRT offers:

> a set of basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to
> identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education
> that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the
> classroom (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 25).

Five main tenets guide critical race scholarship. CRT: (1) acknowledges the pervasiveness of race and racism in American life, (2) challenges the notions of neoliberalism, equal opportunity, and meritocracy, (3) confronts racism in institutional and cultural systems that protect white interests, (4) centers the experiential knowledge, or lived experiences, of marginalized communities to examine the relationship between race and other intersecting forms of oppressions, and (5) examines the racialization of People of Color in multifaceted ways that extend across various factors and disciplines in our society and scholarship (Solórzano, 1998).

This framework opposes the notion of colorblind and meritocratic institutional structures and laws (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015). Rather, racial colorblindness and meritocracy maintain and protect the power, privilege, and wealth of dominant groups (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Meritocracy ignores systemic inequality and institutional racism, assuming the accessibility of upward mobility through hard work. Racial colorblindness, or race neutrality, implies that one's race does not perpetuate inequality or inequity. Yet, cultural racism associates certain cultural or group traits as inferior to white American, middle-class norms (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). According to Bonilla-Silva (2010), colorblind racism construes race and racism as a thing of the past, allowing the dominant group to ignore past racial inequities and the continued persistence of racism in US society. The minimization of structural and systemic racism privileges the dominant group's interests and contributes to inequitable access to resources (e.g., social programs, parks, economic access, political leverage) throughout history for Communities of Color. Furthermore, through educational curriculum and state standards, schools offer students a Eurocentric history, ideas, and values, reinforcing the status quo racial hierarchy (Pérez Huber, Johnson, & Kohli, 2006). A CRT approach, in contrast, centers issues of race and power to disrupt white cultural superiority by highlighting marginalized voices. However, the CRT framework does not address racial experiences in relation to religious identity. My study extends

this framework to examine the curricular representations of Islam and Muslims, and schooling experiences of Muslim students.

The CRT framework recognizes "intersectionality of oppression" (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012, p. 445), thus, providing me the necessary language to explore anti-Muslim racism as it interconnects with race, ethnicity, gender, and religion. Despite its expansion over the years across disciplines and areas of research, little CRT-focused research examines the intersectionality of race/ethnicity and religion, a reality largely understated or ignored in both academic and popular discourse. In centering racialized experiences of marginalized communities, CRT offers conceptual tools (e.g., "racial microaggressions", "racist nativism" – discussed in this chapter) to identify and examine the consequences of institutional and systemic racism, covert and overt racism, as well as "identif[y] the perpetrators and victims of racism" (Kohli, 2014, p. 3).

This study specifically draws upon the following CRT conceptual tools: (1) "racial microaggressions" (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015), (2) "racist nativism" (Pérez Huber et al., 2008), and (3) "community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005). I extend CRT to address the religious identity-based experiences of Muslim students by drawing from "orientalism" (Said, 1978) and "racialization of religion" (Joshi, 2006) to show how a Muslim religious identity has been "raced" and "gendered" (Housee, 2012; Garner & Selod, 2015). Figure 2.1 illustrates the theoretical framework.
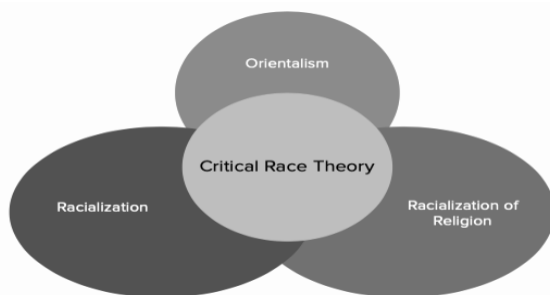

Figure 2.1 – Theoretical Framework

'Racializing' Muslims

This section outlines frameworks that guide my application of CRT in this study. First, I briefly discuss Omi and Winant's (2014) concept of "racialization" and its relevance for discussing religious identity in racial terms. Second, I specifically draw from Joshi's (2006) extension of racialization to religion. Third, I discuss Said's (1978) "orientalism" to situate the historical "othering" of the East by the West and its role in the racialization of Islam and Muslims.

Racialization

I operationalize the definitions of race and racialization to situate the rhetoric Muslim youth encounter in schools (e.g., via curricula or interaction among peers) as racial. Critical race scholarship considers race a dynamic, social construct that changes over time (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Black and White racial categories, for example, developed from "the erasure of tribe, ethnicity, and nationality" (Gotanda, 2011, p.187). Beyond its common use as an identification category, race as a construct both structures and maintains social order, power differentials, and relations through history, politics, economic structure, and culture (Bell, 2000; Omi & Winant, 2014). The construct of race has supported both white cultural superiority and racial subordination (Gotanda, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lee, Park, & Wong, 2016).

Hierarchies in the US positions the colonizer as superior to the colonized (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Scientific racism and the eugenics movement systematically defined non-whites as inferior, and as a threat, to whites. Sciences have played a role in validating theories of racial superiority and inferiority. Through phrenology, for example, scientists defined African Americans as "brutish" and unintelligent and Native Americans as intelligent, but aggressive and violent (Horsman, 1975). Interactions between macro- (institutional) and micro- (individual) level forces influence popular understandings of race (Omi & Winant, 2014).

Omi and Winant (2014) define the ideological process in which racial meaning extends to a "previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group" as "racialization" (p. 111). Political and social conditions also influence popular understanding of race and racial categories. Popular discourse, political rhetoric, and media representations contributed to the creation of a pan-Asian, Asian American category, or the conflating of multiple ethnicities into one through racialization. Immigrant and US born Asian Americans adopted this political pan-ethnic Asian American racial identity to resist racialization (addressing hostility) and access resources (Espiritu, 1992).

In recent years, race scholarship has shifted from a Black/White binary to encompass and explore other forms of racism and oppression (Yosso, 2005), such as cultural racism (Selod and Embrick, 2013). Cultural racism refers to the reliance on certain cultural or group traits "to explain the standing of minorities in society", positioning their culture as responsible for their place in society -- reflective of colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 28). Thus, in addition to race and ethnicity, racism also intersects with culture, language, and religion (Kohli, 2009). This dissertation specifically focuses on cultural identities and traits commonly associated with Islam to discuss the intersection of racism with religious identities. Little research explicitly examines racism in relation to religious identity; my dissertation addresses this gap.

Some scholars who study race and racism in relation to Muslims note the exclusion of religious identity from Omi and Winant's conceptualization of racialization. Omi and Winant (2014) began their discussion of race and racial formation with "the rise of Europe and the arrival of Europeans in the Americas" (p. 61). Researchers (Meer, 2013; Rana, 2011; Selod & Embrick, 2013) have noted that this conceptualization of race formation excludes religion, even though colonizers viewed non-Christians as inferior. Meer (2013) argued that race and racism literature largely frames race as a "modern" phenomenon with origins in colonial encounters and Atlantic

slavery. This limits "precursor articulations of antipathy toward Muslim and Jews as expressions of *religious* bigotry" and marginalizes racial/racist experiences based on religious identity (p. 386-387, emphasis in original). Racialization of Jews and Muslims drew on their phenotypes and cultural practices, placed them in subordinated positions in European society (Rana, 2011). Meer and Modood (2010) argue that religious differences influenced social hierarchies before the rise of the Europeans and their colonial expansion. The social construction of racial and religious differences helped justify violent colonization; hence, racialization can help us understand the (re)construction of race boundaries depending on changing contexts (Selod & Embrick, 2013).

Religion also played a role in the colonization of the Americas, casting Indigenous nations and people (Takaki, 1993; Joshi, 2006) and enslaved Africans as non-believers (or, not Christian) (Takaki, 1993). Both the colonizing group's religious and racial identity have been foundational in US history, and socially and politically dominant in ways that impact the experiences and representations of other races and religions. Joshi (2006) argues that "Christian normalcy or hegemony can be traced to the Colonial Era", including some efforts to declare the US a Christian (in particular, Protestant) nation (p. 215). Joshi's (2006) integration of religion into racialization helps situate my analysis and clarify the way religion, religious expression, and religious identity become racialized.

Racialization of Muslims and Islam

Little research on Islamophobia approaches Muslim experiences as racial (Garner & Selod, 2015; Meer, 2013; Selod & Embrick, 2013). Garner and Selod (2015) discuss race as a combination of physical and cultural (language, religion, practices) attributes. Racialization of Muslims relies not just on religious identity, but also cultural and physical characteristics. Garner and Selod (2015) define Islamophobia as racism, and racialization as the process through which to understand the extent of Islamophobia across time and places.

Joshi (2006) examined the racialization of South Asians and their religious identities in relation to the norms of whiteness and Christianity in the US. She argued that racialization of religion occurs when "an individual's *race* creates a presumption as to her *religious* identity" (p. 212, emphasis in original), or "a process whereby a specific religion becomes identifies by a direct or indirect reference to a real or imagined ethnic/racial characteristic" (p. 216). In other words, religion is racialized when certain phenotypes become associated with a particular religious identity, and thus, results in essentialization (Joshi, 2006).

According to Rana (2013), scholarly traditions differentiated between Islam (theology) and Muslim (person engaging in that world with Islam), rather than as a group of people that reflect "*both* a faith-tradition *and* social practices" (p. 52, emphasis in original). However, the racialized image of a Muslim includes different groups of people with different practices and traditions, into an amalgamation and placed into "racial hierarchies and structures" (p. 52). These processes contribute to the difficulty of identifying anti-Muslim racism related abuses as hate crimes or religious discrimination, normalizing some forms of anti-Muslim racist actions. For example, hate crimes do "not include everyday harassment, verbal abuse and discrimination" (Rana, 2013, p. 57). A broader conception of race and racialization allows us to recognize the pervasiveness of racism in portrayals of Muslims not purely focused on Islam, but also on groups of people, practices, and those misidentified as Muslim.

The 'Muslim' identity is loaded with racialized undertones in everyday discourses, becoming a substitute for race (Rana, 2011), or becoming "raced" (Garner & Selod, 2015). The conflation of religious and racial identity reinforces South Asians' racialization (Joshi, 2006). Joshi also argues that "racialization of religion mean[s] nothing until [it is] given social meaning" (p. 211). In other words, popular discourse clumps different South Asian ethnic and religious identities as brown (Joshi, 2006). Symbols and practices associated with a Muslim religious

identity are conflated with diverse groups of people and their practices as cultural traits, resulting in monolithic racialized representations (Rana, 2011).

Neil Gotanda (2011) argues that the racialization of Islam and Muslims goes beyond popular culture into American laws and institutions history of racializing Asian Americans; American understandings of Islam have become racialized because of Muslim racialization. Gotanda's theorization of the racialization of Islam involves three dimensions: "raced body", "racial category", and "ascribed subordination." These draw from historical legal experiences and racialization of Asian Americans that render them as "foreign" and "model minorities" (Lee et al., 2016), and Muslims as "terrorists" or "good Muslims" (p. 185). "Raced body" refers to our "commonsense" descriptive "racial body types", particularly skin color, hair color, etc., used to distinguish people by race and define racial hierarchy and power relations in our society (Gotanda, 2011, p. 187).

In the case of Muslims, the terrorist trope is particularly applied to brown people, while white perpetrators of violence or extremism are considered "racial anomalies" (see Gotanda, 2011, p. 193). Gotanda (2011) refers to "racial category" as the grouping of people as a race or ethnic group "through the erasure of tribe, ethnicity, and nationality" (p. 187). "Muslim," for example, has come to signify a group of people that come from predominantly Muslim regions, regardless of their religion. "Ascribed subordination" is the "active process of hierarchy and subordination", in which the dominant group uses racialized ideas about other groups to subjugate them (genocide of Indigenous, enslavement of Blacks) (p. 188). The "ascribed subordination" comes into two ways that still essentialize Muslims: good vs. a violent threat. These racialized images of Muslims have consequences not only for Muslims, but also Muslim-looking people. Post-9/11, Sikh American community's religious symbols, such as the turban, became targets of racialized hate (Joshi, 2006; Mishra, 2013). Mishra (2013) explained that Sikh Americans

experienced "racial targeting" through a case of "mistaken identity" (p. 117). This is one prominent example of a community that continued to be incorrectly profiled as Muslims, encountering racialized hate and violence – a manifestation of the ways religion and race intersect in the context of vilifying discourses.

The racialization of religion framework shows that the historical, social, and political relationship between the dominant racial and religious identities racializes Muslims and 'Muslim-appearing' people while considering a white Christian American identity as the norm and viewing practices and values associated with Muslims as opposed to American values and identity, driving cultural racism (Selod, 2015). Popular perceptions about Muslims, Arabs, West Asians, North Africans, and South Asians position them in opposition to a Western or American national identity (Abu El-Haj, 2007; 2010; Love, 2009; Gotanda, 2011; Selod & Embrick, 2013; Sirin & Fine, 2008; Zine, 2006).

Building from these conceptualizations of "racialization" and "racialization of religion", I attempt to explain Muslim youth's schooling experiences with subtle and everyday forms of anti-Muslim racism, experiences that would not normally be perceived as racism due to their seeming central focus on religious identity. However, as research shows (Housee, 2012; Garner & Selod, 2015), cultural and political discourses racialize Muslims. The 'American' label, for instance, refers to a white identity, despite the various racial and ethnic groups that make up US demographics (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). This racialization of Muslims can also be traced in the West's "Orientalism" (Said, 1978) of the East, discussed in the next section.

Orientalism and Muslims

Said's (1978) "orientalism" offers a useful framework to understand colonial and imperial relationships between the "Occident" (Western groups) and the "Orient" (Eastern groups), including Muslims and the Middle East. Said defines Orientalism as an ideology that

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constructs the West as normal, ordinary, and superior, and the East (including Islam and Muslims) as exotic, backwards, inferior, and barbaric. Such viewpoints continue to dominate political and media rhetoric about Muslim communities, particularly the Middle East. Dichotomous depictions and discourses have supported and justified Western colonial expansion, imperial projects, and subjugation of non-Western people perceived as uncivilized and inferior (Said, 1985).

Maira (2010) argued that "US imperialism is marked by invisibility, secrecy, and flexibility in its operation of power" as it exists through "non-territorial forms of domination that do not resemble traditional forms of territorial 'colonialism'" (p. 34). She also argues that the discourses about democracy, freedom, and modernity "evade or erase" how the US has imposed and extended its imperial power (p. 34).

Western politics, media, religious and cultural superiority narratives spread fear and uncertainty about Muslims. As a result, Orientalist imaginations continue to (mis)define diverse Muslim communities. Stereotypical depictions and racism have psychological, physical, social, political, and educational consequences for people who experience them (Housee, 2012). Racialization, racialization of religion, and orientalism help situate my understanding of how the term 'Muslim' evokes stereotypical images about a diverse group of people. These concepts furthered my research purposes to explore the racialization of Muslim youth in the context of schools (from curricular representation to one-on-one interactions), its impact on their experiences and representation, and their sense of self and community with others at school. As such, this study is grounded in CRT.

Applying a Critical Race Framework to Muslims Students

Critical race scholarship that examines private religious school's structures and students' experiences remains largely absent (Burke & Gilbert, 2016). However, other research has found

connections between one's racial/ethnic identities and understanding of religious identity (Stewart & Lozano, 2009). CRT has been used to study the racial experiences of Muslim students in other international contexts, such as the United Kingdom (e.g., by Damian Breen, Reza Gholami, Nasar Meer). Drawing from scholarship on racialization of Muslims (Meer, 2013; Meer & Modood, 2010; Rana, 2011; Selod & Embrick, 2013), I situate Muslim youth's experiences in the current social and political context and the normalization of anti-Muslim racism (commonly referenced as Islamophobia, prejudice, or bigotry). CRT offers necessary language to look at how othering and racialization sustain racial hegemony and power relations. To discuss Muslim students' experiences and representation, I focus on the first and fourth tenets of CRT: the centrality of race and racism in the lives of Muslim American students, and their experiential knowledge.

Race and racism impact the experiences of marginalized communities. I use this tenet to discuss the normalcy of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism and the covert ways it manifests in schools. Muslim students' curricular representation, classroom experiences, and interactions with peers and teachers demonstrate the ways race, ethnicity, and religion intersect to reproduce racialized discourses. This study reviews previous research focusing on the experiential knowledge of Muslim students, their understanding of Muslim representation, and its effect on Muslim students understanding of self in relation to their school community.

Understanding the ordinariness and maintenance of the dominant racial identity in traditions, norms, and laws helps clarify its extension into religious identity – what is valued or considered normal and what is not. Whiteness affords access and privileges that benefit the dominant group at the disadvantage of others, maintains racial hierarchies, normalizes oppression People of Color (Roediger, 2007), and "delineate[s] who is White and who is not" (Lee et al., 2016). The history curriculum, for example, confers privilege on white youth by centering

histories and people that reflect their racial identity. It also takes for granted the prevalence of the dominant group's representation over other racial and ethnic groups in media and textbooks.

Corbin (2017) used CRT to examine two dominant narratives about the word "terrorism": (1) its routine association with Muslim (including brown) communities and (2) its lack of association with white communities. Corbin found these narratives reflected in politics, news coverage, and other media, perpetuating "racist stereotyping" and "the myth of white innocence and white superiority" (p. 456). For example, Corbin noted that white perpetrators of violence, rooted in their racial or religious supremacy, do not routinely get labeled as terrorists, nor are they expected to denounce these acts of violence (as has been expected from Muslim communities). CRT helps reveal the privileges attached to the dominant group's identities even in cases of violence and extremism that compromise people's security.

Undoubtedly, not all members of the dominant religion are treated the same way. As Stewart and Lozano (2009) note, "white racial privilege may shroud worship, traditions, and language that actually reflect racial and cultural inflections rather than anything that may be understood as authentically or universally "Christian or "culturally Christian"" (p. 25). In other words, the dominant group's relationship to their religion and religious identity differs from non-dominant groups who identify with the same religion. Grounded in CRT, I focus on the following concepts to support my analysis of Muslim students' narratives: "racist nativism", "racial microaggressions", and "community cultural wealth".

Racist Nativism

Nativist ideologies in the US render those who do not fit the Anglo-Saxon category as foreigners (Higham, 1955). Higham (1955) described nativism as "intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., "un-American") connections" (p. 4). Within this "inflamed and nationalistic type of ethnocentrism", the dominant group views itself superior

to other groups, positioning others as foreign and a threat to national identity (p. 335). The

dominant group's nationalistic ideologies view non-dominant groups' beliefs and identities as an

internal threat to national identity, furthering their opposition to these groups (Higham, 1955).

Nationalistic ideologies and nativism in the US manifested through racial nativism, anti-

Catholicism (religious nativism of Protestants), and anti-radicalism to maintain Anglo-Saxon

superiority (Ibid). As such, the colonizers consider themselves native and entitled to the land they

seized from indigenous peoples, and do not extend this privilege to communities of color and

immigrants.

The search for religious freedom ostensibly justified the seizure and occupation of this

land: Puritans fled England for "a place where all people can be religiously free" (Joshi, 2006, p.

215). But Joshi (2006) argues that Puritans pursued religious freedom for themselves, rather than

for all. The colonizers adopted an ethnocentric lens that centered their own traditions, values, and

beliefs (including religion). The imperialist and colonialist mindsets of the Manifest Destiny to

spread Christianity (Lyons, 2003) and the republic form of government (Miller, 2011) reflect both

the colonizer's superiority and claim to indigenous lands.

Building on Higham's (1955) and others' (e.g., Audre Lorde, Manning Marable)

conceptualization of nativism, Pérez Huber, Lopez, Malagón, Velez, and Solórzano (2008) link

racism and nativism under a CRT and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) framework, offering a

nuanced definition of nativism that focuses on "native-ness" not "foreignness" (p. 42). They

(2008) conceptualize "racist nativism" as:

> the assigning of values to real or imagined differences, in order to justify the
> superiority of the native, who is to be perceived white, over that of the non-
> native, who is perceived to be People and Immigrants of Color, and thereby
> defend the right of whites, or the natives, to dominance (p. 43).

This conceptualization specifically places emphasis on the "native", their perceptions, identities, and actions that subordinate or other non-natives (De Genova, 2005; cited in Pérez Huber et al., 2008).

Pérez Huber et al. (2008) trace racist nativism from the nineteenth century to encompass northern European Anglo-Saxon Protestants – considered superior and native, founders of the land. Eugenics research provided legitimacy to their nativist attitudes and superiority alongside justifications for discrimination, racism, and violence against those deemed outsiders or inferiors (non-whites, which at that time included Italians). Racist nativism manifested through immigration policies, such as the Johnson-Reed Act (1924) which increased immigration from western Europe. Pérez Huber et al. (2008) argue that, later in the 20th century, previously excluded white ethnic groups were incorporated into the white racial category and became beneficiaries of the privileges afforded to the dominant group. For immigrant communities, particularly People of Color, racist nativism manifested in strict and exclusionary immigration policies as well as restricted access to citizenship benefits.

Pérez Huber et al. (2008) argue that non-white immigrants and People of Color are deemed unassimilable, rendered foreigners, and "racialized as non-native regardless of their citizenship status" (p. 46). Subsequent research on the experiences of Latinx communities has revealed the salience of racist nativist rhetoric in immigration policies and policy discourse (Pérez Huber et al., 2008), as well as racialized representations of Latinx communities (e.g., "criminals") (Gomez & Pérez Huber, 2019). For example, California's Proposition 227 in 1998 banned bilingual education, but this ban largely affected Spanish-speaking students who, according to California Department of Education (2006), made up 81% of CA English Learners (Pérez Huber et al., 2008, p. 46). Pérez Huber et al. (2008) argue that this proposition (and others) revealed "the fear of the 'browning of California and the United States'", hence about race (Ibid).

Racist nativism identifies the dominant group's nativist and superior attitudes as the "disease," or the lead cause of racist nationalism and nativism in discourses about immigration (Pérez Huber et al., 2008). Previous work on racial nativism (i.e., Sanchez, 1997; cited in Pérez Huber et al., 2008) details its "symptoms," or its manifestations in contemporary US society (e.g., restrictive immigration, "English Only" propositions), rather than the cause (Pérez Huber et al., 2008). As such, racist nativist discourses institutionalize stereotypes and perpetuate xenophobia ("fear of the other") about those perceived non-native (Pérez Huber, 2011, p. 380). Racist nativism affects different Communities of Color in different ways; thus, its conceptual use must be situated and contextualized in a specific social, historical, and political context (Pérez Huber et al., 2008). This study examines and extends racist nativism in the racialized experiences and representation of Muslim youth in schools.

<u>Racial Microaggressions</u>

Introduced by Chester Pierce to describe everyday experiences of Black people, racial microaggressions are "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are 'put downs'" (Pierce et al., 1978, p. 65). Studies have examined microaggressions targeting racialized groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, language, dis/ability, and religion (Nadal et al., 2015). CRT scholarship addresses racial microaggressions as subtle, everyday indicators of racism, enacted by groups who view themselves as superior at the expense of others (Solórzano et al., 2000). Recent CRT scholarship defines racial microaggressions as "a form of systemic, everyday racism used to keep those at the racial margins in their place" (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012, p. 7; Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015;). Racial microaggressions are slights and insults that manifest in the experiences of People of Color in subtle, layered, and cumulative ways based on race and other intersecting identities that take a detrimental toll on People of Color (Ibid). The

cumulative, harmful impacts of persistent racial microaggressions can affect one's psychological and physical health (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015).

Critical race scholars examine the impact of racial microaggressions on educational inequity (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015). The mispronunciation of names of Students of Color, for example, can have a lasting impact on how such students "see themselves, their culture, and the world around them" (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012, p. 5). Pérez Huber & Solórzano (2015) advance racial microaggressions as a CRT research tool to examine ordinary and unconscious everyday racism in education settings and interactions with others. This conceptualization of racial microaggressions connects everyday experiences with racial slights to institutional racism and macroaggressions. They (2015) define institutional racism as:

> formal or informal structural mechanisms, such as policies and processes that systematically subordinate, marginalize, and exclude non-dominant groups and mediates their experiences with racial microaggressions. Institutional racism is a key component to understanding the function and permanence of racism in the US (p. 301).

I use racial microaggressions as a tool for analysis (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015) to illustrate the everyday slights experienced by Muslim youth and discuss the types of messages Muslim youth receive about their ethnic/racial, religious, and cultural identities. To examine the racialized experiences of Muslim youth, I also draw on the concepts, "racist nativist microaggressions" and "gender microaggressions".

Racist Nativist Microaggressions

Racist nativist microaggressions refer to the "systemic, everyday forms of racist nativism that are subtle, layered, and cumulative verbal and non-verbal assaults" that justify white (or, native) superiority (Pérez Huber, 2011, p. 388). Using a LatCrit, Pérez Huber (2011) examines the institutionalization of racist nativist discourses about immigration and language that reinforce native (or, white) cultural dominance in the experiences of Latinx students in California public

schools. The hegemony of English appears in classroom through English dominance that positions Latinx students through a deficit lens (Pérez Huber, 2011).

Racist nativist rhetoric manifests as racist nativist microaggressions in the experiences of undocumented college students, which they navigate through resilience, resistance, and protecting self (Gomez & Pérez Huber, 2019; Pérez Huber, 2010; Ramirez, 2021). In framing my dissertation through CRT and racist nativism, I situate Muslim students' experiences in the context of dominant group's religious nationalism and nativism in the US which illustrates the unique ways nativist microaggressions manifested in schools.

Gender Microaggressions

Solórzano (1998) examines the role of racial and gender microaggressions in the career paths of doctoral Chicanx students, from "feeling out of place" to navigating low teacher expectations (p. 127-128). Gender microaggressions include "sexual objectification, invisibility/second-class citizenship, denial of individual sexism, and assumptions of traditional gender roles" (Nadal, 2008, p. 23).

Islamophobic microaggressions emerge at the intersections of Muslim communities' ethnic/racial, gender and religious identities (Azim & Happel-Parkins, 2019; Nadal et al., 2015; Ramadan, 2022). Nadal et al., (2015) found that their Muslim participants experienced racial microaggressions based on gender and racial stereotypes, such as the controlling Muslim man and passive Muslim woman who veils. Azim and Happel-Parkins (2019) found Islamophobia to manifest in Saudi international graduate students' experiences in the US, from their professors' or peers' stereotypical assumptions about their ethnic identities to scrutiny over their clothing choices. Similarly, Ramadan (2022) found "religio-gendered" identities as central in the experiences of Muslim women in British academia, sharing their challenges around being "hijabed" due to their hypervisibility as Muslims resulting in "gendered-Islamophobic

microaggressions". Additionally, research shows the prevalence of "gendered racialization" (Selod, 2015) and "gendered Islamophobia" (Zine, 2006) in Muslim communities' experiences. Building on the literature and CRT, I examine Muslim youth's everyday experiences at the intersection of their ethnic/racial, gender, and religious identities at their schools.

Community Cultural Wealth

Embedded within CRT and an analysis of race and racism, Yosso (2005) challenges notions of Communities of Color as lacking capital by centering marginalized communities, their knowledge, and experiences. Yosso (2005) develops the concept of "community cultural wealth" as "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). This framework allows shift focus from White, upper- and middle-class values to centering marginalized groups, revealing "assets and resources in the histories and lives of Communities of Color" (p. 77).

Yosso (2005) describes six dynamic and interrelated forms of capital that build on one another: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capitals (pp. 77-81). Aspirational capital refers to families' and children's resilience and ability to pursue goals, ambitions, and wishes despite actual and perceived barriers. Linguistic capital encompasses social, intellectual and language skills acquired through communication and is reflected in various forms of communication (e.g., storytelling, recounting, visuals, poetry, music, etc.). Familial capital includes the knowledge of culture passed through generations and families, including extended families that communicate the significance of sustaining ties within communities and resources. The maintenance of relationships, networking with people and community is social capital; these contacts provide support in navigating institutions and sharing information. Related is navigation capital, referring to resilience and skills for traversing through social institutions, as well as individual agency through social networks and community

knowledge that aid maneuvering institutional obstacles. Finally, resistant capital refers to "oppositional behavior that challenges inequality", historical resistance to oppressive and racist policies/practices, as well as the interaction of other forms of capital to navigate (Yosso, 2007, p. 80). Community cultural wealth centers communities of color to show how they navigate institutions through the various forms of capital that they build throughout their lifetime from their families, communities, and resources.

For example, whereas racist nativist rhetoric about undocumented Latinx immigrants views them through a deficit lens, Mexican female college students challenge this rhetoric through the rich community cultural wealth of their families and communities (Pérez Huber, 2009). That is, the ten women in the study demonstrated the links between their aspirational (e.g., to be a doctor, lawyer, etc.) and familial (e.g., migration stories) capitals in supporting their motivation at their research university. Additionally, Pérez Huber (2009) identified the emergence of a "spiritual capital" – "a set of resources and skills rooted in a spiritual connection to reality greater than oneself" – encompassing ancestral histories, religious, and indigenous practices, and viewpoints (p. 721). Faith, for example, played a role in these college students' resilience in navigating institutions and became a source of hope. Their rich capitals, nurtured through families and communities, contributed to these young women's resilience in navigating racist nativist rhetoric.

Building from this concept of "community cultural wealth", I explore Muslim students' experiential narratives to understand how they navigate schools and the types of cultural capital they bring to schools. This framework also guides my analysis of how youth respond and react to their everyday experiences.

Conceptualizing Racist Religious Nativism

Building on Pérez Huber's conceptualization of "racist nativism" and research on nativism's impact on the experiences of minoritized religions, I develop the term *racist religious nativism*. Additionally, I draw from Edward Said's (1978) framework of "orientalism" to emphasize the construction of Western identity in opposition to Eastern, particularly Islamic/Muslim identities, casting them as "others". Othering and foreignness of those perceived "non-native" manifests through racist nativist discourses, such as anti-immigrant political rhetoric (Pérez Huber et al., 2008) and, as I argue in this chapter, exclusionary and racializing tones. Anti-immigrant sentiments and threat-based narratives about Muslims minimize threats, harassment, and physical violence against South Asians, Arabs, and others perceived as Muslims (e.g., Sikhs) (Lyons, 2003). More recently, Whitehead, Smith, Williams, and McDaniel (2019) examined newspaper articles containing Muslim college students' experiences surrounding Trump's "Muslim ban", finding that such nativist and nationalist ideologies reinforce Muslims as "outsiders and potential national threats" (p. 209).

This dissertation shows that racist nativism also manifests in the strategic superiority of the dominant group's traditions and beliefs, including religion. Higham (1995) identified religious nativism, specifically Protestant nativism, as a type of nationalism that viewed Catholicism as foreign or "un-American" "because [American institutions] did not harmonize easily with the concept of individual freedom embedded in the national culture" (p. 6). In addition to associating Catholicism as not affording individual and political liberty, Protestant nativism viewed Catholic immigrants as "minions of the Roman despot, dispatched here to subvert American institutions" and thus "unfit for citizenship" (p. 6). Across US history, nativist ideologies have targeted Jews, Catholics, Mormons as "an alien creed" in opposition to American traditions, values, and institutions (Hughey, 1992, p. 542) – hence un-American and contradictory

to "Protestant-republicanism" central to being US American (p. 546). According to Hughey (1992), "values, images, and ideals that originated in Protestantism influence the organization of race, ethnic, religious, and other group relations in America" (p. 535), then shifting towards the "threat of biological un-Americanism" to Anglo-Saxons (p. 546). After all, President James Buchanan (among others) advocated for the US to be labeled as a Christian nation (Joshi, 2006). Religious advocates also succeeded in instituting Christmas as a national holiday in 1870, and state and federal funds for private education ventures of Protestant denominations until the late 1870s (Library of Congress, 2006; cited in Joshi, 2006).

Muslims have also encountered religious exclusion, but specifically as a threat to the nation's security and culture (Braunstein, 2017). Dominant rhetoric has framed Muslims as un-American (other), non-American (outsider), and anti-American (enemy) (Ibid). This is but the latest example of ethno-religious nationalist discourses which has viewed Jews, Catholics, Mormons, and atheists as outsiders or in opposition to American ideals. This religious nativism coupled with racial nativism of Anglo-Saxon superiority (Higham, 1955), racist nativism (Pérez Huber et al., 2008), orientalism (Said, 1978), and racialization of religion (Joshi, 2006) contribute to my conceptualization of *racist religious nativism.*

Nativist and nationalistic discourses also convey what it means to be American. The different ways nativism manifests throughout American history conveys those meanings of who is native and who is foreign (Higham, 1955, 2002), or who is considered American and who is not (Dahab & Omori, 2019). Dahab and Omori (2019) examine public attitudes toward Muslim civil rights, arguing for the need to examine Muslim experiences through the framework of nativism to understand the marginalization of and citizenship of Muslim Americans. They draw on research on Christian nationalism and its role as a proxy religious identity and conflation with being American (Coles, 2002; cited in Dahab & Omori, 2019). They argue that in addition to

religious nationalism, nativism also impacts Muslim American experiences, positioning Muslims as foreigners and "morally incompatible" with the "native's" imagined Christian nation, as well as who is imagined as part of the "American" identity rooted in cultural imperialism.

For example, right wing factions labeled Barack Obama, the first Black president of the US, a Muslim and foreign-born during his presidential campaign and presidency, possibly amplifying it as a threat to Christian nationalism (Braunstein, 2017). The 2016 presidential election demonstrated how political rhetoric defined Muslims as outsiders, enemies, and other, challenging their place in the US and positioning them as "uncivil threats to American values and norms, including religious freedom itself" (p. 356). Meanwhile, Obama has reiterated that he is not a Muslim. Both arguments imply that a Muslim identity is a disqualification for the presidency of a secular nation.

Grace and Heins (2021), on the other hand, discuss "white Christian nationalism", building on racist nativism, manifesting in anti-refugee bills in South Carolina associating refugees with being brown, Muslim, terrorists, and third world in contrast to a white, civilized, Christian US. They argue that this communicates who belongs and does not belong in the US – the dominant group's nationalism manifested in Islamophobic rhetoric as a manifestation of racist nativism as well as in "good" refugee rhetoric. One side views refugees as a threat to the US, whereas the other adopts a "good" refugee stance.

Smith (2016) examined "Britishness" in the United Kingdom as racist nativism that manifests through media and political narratives that "other" immigrants. Ethnically and religiously diverse people are constructed as failing to assimilate British values, positioning Britishness (including a Christian identity) as the norm. In an Australian primary public school, Keddie et al., (2018) examine cultural and religious inclusion amid calls for a multi-faith education in a space saturated with norms of secularity (e.g., keeping religion out of school) with

little recognition of the ways Christian norms (e.g., in calendar, Eurocentric values) seep into schools. Beyond general education about world religions, school leaders and teachers dismiss discussions about religion on grounds of secularity and inclusion, but subconsciously privilege the dominant group's religious identity embedded in the public schooling system by marginalizing diverse religious identities in the context of "religious racism and Islamophobia" (Keddie et al., 2018, p. 2).

Building on Pérez Huber's racist nativism, I define *racist religious nativism* as the hegemonic group's perceptions, informed by racialized assumptions about religious differences, against which people of non-dominant racial and religious groups are judged and rendered foreign threats. In this study's context, northern European Anglo-Saxon Protestant (Pérez Huber et al., 2008) nativism viewed other religious groups as foreign to the land (Higham, 1955) and in opposition to American values, traditions, and institutions (Hughey, 1992). Muslim Americans experience the hegemonic group's *racist religious nativism* informed by their racializing narratives, orientalist assumptions, and inaccurate and/or incomplete portrayals that maintain the dominance and ordinariness of a western religious identity at the expense of other religious identities not deemed American or Western, thus foreign to the land. *Racist religious nativism* may show up differently depending on the context, such as who the dominant, hegemonic group is and who is not.

In the following section, I outline the Research Design I used to apply the theoretical frameworks discussed above to my study of Muslim-American student experiences at school.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This qualitative study examined the experiences of Muslim American high school students and the curricular representation of Muslims and Islam in History and Social Science textbooks. Specifically, this study explored focal students' perceptions and recollections about

their schooling experiences as they navigated classrooms, curricula, and interactions with peers and teachers at the intersection of their racial, ethnic, religious and gender identities. To explore curricular and experiential racialization of Muslim youth, I employed a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2007) for data collection, with some methodological inspiration from critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996). Critical Race Methodology (CRM) (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) guided my data presentation and analysis to center the voices and experiences of participants. This approach involved the use of counter-narratives for students to share their experiences and interpretations of their school experiences.

Site and Sample

Through personal and professional contacts, online research of school websites, and searching for mosques and *halal* stores (that sell food products that meet Muslim laws/standards), I identified a few schools and school districts in southern California to research. When searching school websites, I examined their lists of clubs/organizations on-campus, specifically looking for the Muslim Student Association (MSA) or ethnic clubs to identify potential sites. I contacted the schools and schools district and completed their research requests. However, the school districts denied my research requests to study the experiences of Muslim youth at their schools. This led to the search of a new research site – a mosque. I reached out to a mosque and a youth group organizer for study recruitment purposes. I attended a youth group meeting and presented my research plans to the attendees, circulating a flyer. This resulted in the recruitment of four female participants. Additionally, I reached out to my social and professional networks to disseminate my flyers among their networks, which resulted in six additional research participants.

The research flyer included the study's purpose, data collection methods, compensation for participation, and eligibility criteria. Flyers informed students that the study intended to learn about their schooling experiences, curricular observations, and relationship with peers, friends,

teachers, and school administration/staff. It also informed them about the different ways they could participate in the study, e.g., one-on-one interviews, diary log, surveys/questionnaires, and an optional focus group interview. Ultimately, those who participated in the study only engaged in one or two one-on-one interviews and surveys/questionnaires. Participant selection criteria included criterion-based and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2007). The flyer indicated the following eligibility criteria: (1) identify as South or Middle Eastern Muslim; and, (2) attend a public high school. For participation in the study, the flyer also indicated the following compensations: (1) $15 Barnes and Noble gift card; (2) interview transcript upon request; (3) college application, financial aid, and scholarship guidance upon request.

A total of ten students completed and returned the parent and student consent to participate forms. These students participated in the following ways: first, they completed an introductory questionnaire (see Appendix A); second, they engaged in one to two semi-structured one-on-one interviews (see Appendix B); third, they filled out the post-interview questionnaire (see Appendix C). Though my sample criteria (Creswell, 2007) intended to only include South Asian and West Asian/Middle Eastern identifying Muslim youth, one participant did not meet the racial/ethnic criteria, but her participation enriched my arguments about racialization of religion (Joshi, 2006). Table 3.1 provides basic information about the students. All names are pseudonyms.

Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Grade Level	Appear Muslim?
Aisha	Female	Caucasian	Senior	Yes
Daniyal	Male	South Asian, Pakistani	Sophomore	No
Fahad	Male	South Asian, Pakistani	Junior	No
Hala	Female	West Asian/ Middle Eastern	Sophomore	No
Hania	Female	South Asian, Pakistani	Senior	Yes
Imran	Male	South Asian, Pakistani	Senior	No
Leila	Female	Arab, Palestinian	Freshman	No
Misbah	Female	South Asian, Pakistani	Freshman	No
Sanam	Female	South Asian, Pakistani	Junior	No
Zaynab	Female	Arab, Syrian	Recent Graduate	Yes

Table 2.1 – List of Study Participants

Participant Profiles

All ten participants attended high school in California (from grades 9th through 12th), specifically eight in Southern California and two in Northern California. Only two student participants were born outside of the United States; all participants, however, attended preschool through high school in the US. Except for Zaynab, all students attended a high school at the time of their participation in this study. Additionally, unlike the rest of the participants, Aisha did not identify as West Asian/Middle Eastern, Arab, or South Asian; she identified as a 'Caucasian' and a convert. Seven of the study's participants self-identified as females, and three self-identified as males. Nine of the ten participants identified themselves as Sunni Muslims, with one participant who just identified herself as Muslim.

In the introductory questionnaires, Zaynab, Aisha, and Hania responded 'yes' to a question about "appearing Muslim" to others. The interviews revealed that Hania perceived her clothing as indicative of her religious identity, whereas the other two participants referred to their *hijab* (Islamic veiling) as indicative of their religious identity. The following provides a brief introduction to the student participants, particularly how they described themselves and the school they attended. These participants shared their lived experiences through in-depth

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interviews and questionnaires. Pseudonyms used for all identifying information (e.g., student names, school name/location).

Aisha

Aisha was a senior at Central High School. In the introductory questionnaire, she identified her racial/ethnic identity as Caucasian. She shared that both her physical appearance and clothing (particularly hijab) indicated her religious identity. Unlike the other participants, Aisha converted to Islam. She described herself as a 'school enthusiast' and a 'spiritual' person, who enjoyed spending time with her family, hiking, exercising, and reading. At her school, Aisha was not involved in any on-campus or off-campus extracurricular activities. She described her school as "diverse and understanding" with a few Muslim students. In an introductory questionnaire about feeling like a part of the school community, she selected 'maybe'.

Daniyal

Daniyal is a South Asian, Pakistani, who was a sophomore at Legacy High School. He was enrolled in Advanced Placement courses and involved in on-campus extracurricular activities, such as an honors society, Tennis, and a Robotics club. He is also a hafiz-e-Quran (someone who has memorized the Quran). In the introductory questionnaire, he responded 'no' to a question on whether his physical appearance suggested that he is Muslim. Responding to a survey question about feeling like a part of the school community, Daniyal selected 'yes'. He described his school as "diverse", "pretty happy, laid-back school", and inclusive where "everybody is a part of something".

Fahad

Fahad is a South Asian, Pakistani who was a junior at Aim High School. He was enrolled in an IB (International Baccalaureate) program; he did not participate in extracurriculars on- or off-campus. In his free time, Fahad liked to play video games, watch movies and sports,

listen to music, and hang out with his friends. In the questionnaire, he shared that his physical appearance does not suggest that he is a Muslim. He responded 'maybe' to feeling like a part of the school community. He described his high school as "open and inviting".

Hala

Hala was a sophomore at Inland Valley High School. She identified her racial/ethnic identity as West Asian/Middle Eastern. Hala described herself as an artist who enjoys writing and painting. Though she did not participate in on-campus extra-curricular activities, Hala interned for and participated in her local government. According to Hala, her appearance did not suggest that she is Muslim, but discussed that her religious identity emerged in the context of schooling. In the questionnaire, she responded 'maybe' to a question about feeling like a part of her high school community. During the interviews, she compared her experiences at her current and former high school in California. She described her current high school as "more liberal", "easy going", and diverse, compared to her former high school which she described as "really conservative" serving predominantly white families.

Hania

Hania is a South Asian, Pakistani who was a senior at Legacy High School. She identified herself as an academic, athletic, introverted person, as well as a hafiza (a female who has memorized the Quran). She explained that her academic engagement and involvement in rigorous programs at school was not a "choice" but rather a feature of her being "desi" (people, cultures from South Asia, Indian subcontinent). In the questionnaire, Hania indicated a lack of involvement in on-campus extracurriculars, but shared previous participation in the on-campus Muslim Student Association (MSA). Off-campus, Hania enjoyed playing the piano and jiu-jitsu. On a question about religious (Muslim) appearance, Hania responded 'yes' (discussed in Chapter 4). She also responded 'yes' to feeling like she was part of her high school community. In the

interviews, she described her city and school as "predominantly white", demographically, but "getting more and more People of Color". Hania described her schooling environment to involve "cliques" where "you have to make yourself inclusive". In her observation, Legacy High was not "very warm and inviting yet".

Imran

Imran is a South Asian, Pakistani who was a senior at Inland Valley High School in California. He described himself as an athletic, outgoing person who likes to play sports and games with friends. According to him, his appearance does not suggest that he is Muslim. At Inland Valley High, he was involved as an Advanced Placement (AP) Ambassador and was a member of Key Club. He also engaged in community service off-campus. In the introductory questionnaire, he responded 'yes' to feeling like a part of the school community. During the interviews, he described his high school as "diverse", "welcoming" and "inclusive".

Leila

Leila attended Inland Valley High School as a freshman. She identified herself as Arab and Palestinian. She shared that her appearance did not indicate her religious identity. In the introductory questionnaire, she described herself as an author and an artist, working on short stories that honored her Palestinian roots. She responded 'yes' to a question about feeling like a part of the school community. Leila engaged in extra-curricular activities on- and off-campus. At Inland Valley High, she participated in Debate and Journalism; Leila also volunteered at other schools for off-campus extra-curriculars. She described her school as "inclusive" because of her peers, but also "misunderstood" by the surrounding community.

Misbah

Misbah was a freshman at Aim High School. She identified herself as South Asian and Pakistani. In the introductory questionnaire, she described herself as a cat-person and a fan of the

Harry Potter series. In her free time, she liked to hang out with her friends and watch television. According to Misbah, her physical appearance does not suggest that she is a Muslim. She was enrolled in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program offered by her high school. Her on-campus extra-curricular activities included MSA and community service. In the questionnaire, she responded 'yes' to a question about feeling like a part of the school community. She described Aim High as "diverse", "accepts all", and "super free".

Sanam

Sanam was a junior at Green Heights High School. In the introductory questionnaire, she referred to herself as South Asian and Pakistani. She described herself as an animal person, an avid reader of comic books, and a fan of *Friday Night Lights*. She also enjoyed spending time with her family and friends. She shared that her physical appearance does not suggest that she is Muslim. In the questionnaire, she responded 'yes' to feeling like she was part of the school community. At Green Heights High, Sanam actively engaged in clubs pertaining to community well-being, community service, and the environment (oceans and earth). She described her high school as "inclusive" with "cliques" based on students' grade point averages (GPAs).

Zaynab

Zaynab recently graduated from Green Valley High School in California at the time of the interview. She identified herself as Arab and Syrian. Zaynab enjoyed singing, drawing, exercising, and helping people. In the questionnaire and interview, she emphasized her community-involvement and service to her community. In the introductory questionnaire, she answered 'yes' to a question about religious visibility. Zaynab participated in both on- and off-campus extracurricular activities. Her high school activities included tennis, choir, MSA, and UNICEF; off-campus, Zaynab volunteered at her local mosque and participated in youth groups. At Green Valley High, she responded 'yes' to feeling like a part of the school community.

Zaynab described her high school as "diverse" and "accepting" but clarified that her sense of community and perspectives about her school experience likely reflected her extracurricular involvement.

These ten students generously shared snippets of their lived experiences from high school and other previous schooling with me. As I did not receive approval from school districts to conduct research in any of their respective high schools, I found these students through mosques and reaching out to the Muslim community.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study relied upon various data sources to describe Muslim students' experiences and representation within their respective high schools. It employed data collection methods that allowed me to gain a closer and deeper understanding (Becker, 1996) of high school Muslim students racialized experiences and their meaning making processes. I collected data through the following methods: (1) textbooks, (2) qualitative questionnaires, and (3) in-depth interviews.

Textbooks

I analyzed textbooks to understand American Muslim youth's representation in schools. According to the American Textbook Council (ATC, n.d.), three major publishing companies produce most of the textbooks used in schools: Pearson, McGraw-Hill, and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. In US schools, popular textbooks include *American Vision*, reviewed in this chapter (ATC, n.d.). I examined textbook discourses about Muslims and Islam by analyzing the following set of California state-approved Social Studies and History textbooks (excluding Advanced Placement) used in grades nine to twelve:

- *World History: Modern Times* (Spielvogel, 2006)*, Glencoe (9th or 10th grade).
- *American Vision: Modern Times* (Appleby, Brinkley, Broussard, McPherson, & Ritchie, 2006), published by Glencoe/McGraw-Hill (11th grade).

- and, *Magruder's American Government* (McClenaghan, 2006), published by Pearson/Prentice Hall (12th grade).

The textbook analysis intended to address research questions 1 and 2. That is, it examined the types of information textbooks – an official source of knowledge and tool of teaching in schools – disseminated about Muslims and related racial, ethnic, and gender identities. Additionally, it investigated the extent to which textbooks contribute to or perpetuate racialized ideas about Muslims. To fully capture Muslim youth's experiences and representation in school, I positioned textbooks as official documents that provide a deeper and meaningful understanding of the studied phenomenon and social worlds (Mason, 2002).

Despite having access to some of these publishers' older textbook editions, I focused my review on 2006 editions to examine curricular and textbook narratives about Muslims that some of my research participants may have encountered in their Social Studies and History classes, and, as a result, in their day-to-day interactions with others. The examined textbook editions presumably share and reflect similar social and political contexts given the time, context, and social world of the textbook production (Crocco, 2005). The use of outdated textbooks, which may be reflective of school funding issues, also suggested the undisrupted continuation of racialized narratives about the diverse Muslim community. Since other scholars have analyzed newer editions of these textbooks, I reference their contributions to build my analysis, and to identify continuity and changes in Muslim representation.

Textbook Data Collection Process and Analysis

I began my textbook discourse data collection by identifying the textbooks used in regular, non-Advanced Placement, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade classrooms. I reached out to local libraries and found these textbooks. Used by staff at the library's tutoring program, I reviewed the textbooks at the library. I examined all textbook references related to Muslim ethnic,

racial, cultural, gendered, religious, regional identities, and related events. My selective and procedural approach to collecting data from these textbooks consisted of five steps. First, I examined the Table of Contents and created a list of chapters and sections that cover Muslims and related topics. I also examined the indices of the textbooks alphabetically to make a note of all the terms and page numbers that may include references to Muslims (including Muslim Americans), Islam, Muslim-dominant regions, and countries, and related historical or recent wars (War on Terror). I also looked for Muslim-sounding names, well-known Muslims (Muhammad Ali), regions (Africa, Middle East, Asia, Pacific Islands), countries (Somalia, Pakistan, Indonesia), conflicts (Iran hostage crisis). Second, I took pictures of all the pages referencing the aforementioned categories using my phone due to the limited textbook availability at the library. Third, I recorded all references about Muslims, Islam, and related terms verbatim. In so doing, I also conducted a preliminary analysis by developing codes to categorize the data, informed by my literature review of similar research. Fourth, I used *Dedoose*, a qualitative and mixed methods coding and analysis program, for a systematic coding of textbook data to identify emergent themes and patterns. Finally, I triangulated the textbook data with my other sources of data (such as questionnaires and interviews).

Conducting document analysis (Bowen, 2009; Mason, 2002;) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (van Leeuwen, 2008), I explored written and visual portrayals of Muslims and the ways culture and religion-based racialization inform their representation. The written discourse includes chapter overviews, authors' textual narrative, direct quotes, aside boxes/examples, stories and primary source documents. The visual discourse includes maps, timelines, and images. I analyzed textbooks as a form of "physical evidence" (O'Leary, 2014) that play a prominent role in a student's educational experience. Physical evidence includes material located in a study's setting -- i.e., students' high schools (O'Leary, 2014). While high

schools use other forms of physical evidence available at high schools, I only had access to textbooks.

Document analysis involves a "researcher's interaction and involvement with documents" (Altheide, 2011, p. 2) and is used to examine the ideas, stories, and images found in the textbooks (Bowen, 2009). A "systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents," it interprets the meaning and implications of the narratives found in a source (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). This method of analysis provided a strategic way to examine and interpret the meanings and shared knowledge obtained from various types of documents, including textbooks (Bowen, 2009).

I used CDA to situate my analysis and findings in critical race research and critical research on Muslims. I considered the historical and social situatedness of Muslims in textbooks by analyzing the language used to discuss them, what is included and excluded about them, and how that fits into the larger narrative about Muslims (van Leeuwen, 2008). To understand how the textbook narratives fit into the larger social and political culture, I chose to focus on some historical and contemporary media- and politics-based representation of Muslims.

As discussed in Chapter 2, multiple theoretical frameworks and concepts informed my analysis: critical race theory, racialization, and orientalism. My analysis involved the development of open coding categories in three-stages: (1) themes and findings raised in the review of literature; (2) terms found in the Table of Contents and Indexes; and (3) lessons and narratives presented in the textbooks. I used "line-by-line" analysis (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 172) for a meticulous and rigorous examination of all the direct and indirect references of Muslims. I organized the references into categories and code to identify themes and patterns across texts. After identifying coding categories, I assessed the coded data with my selected theoretical frameworks and concepts to discuss the types of messages these textbooks (found in chapters, sections, primary sources, direct quotes) send about my research participants' religious, racial,

ethnic, cultural, gendered, and American identities, and explore how textbook narratives may impact their sense of identity. This assessment process involved memo writing. In these memos, I specified and elaborated upon themes and patterns found in the coded data, and their connection to students' experiences in schools (Malagón, Pérez Huber, & Velez, 2009). My textbook memos also resulted in the development of interview questions and a textbook questionnaire to explore the types of information about Muslims, Islam, and related groups of people that the participants recalled learning about in schools. This also contributed to the triangulation of my textbook data with students' recollections through interviews and the textbook questionnaire.

Surveys/Questionnaires

Student participation in the study began and ended with a qualitative questionnaire/survey. Participants completed a total of three questionnaires: (1) student background, (2) high school history/social studies, and (3) post-interview. These questionnaires provided a better understanding about the students and allowed me to do a member-check with participants to ensure corroboration between collected data. As a research method, surveys provide an "explanation" for something based on differences between what or who is being studied (Becker, 1996).

The student background questionnaire provided me with introductory knowledge about possible study participants. This survey also helped ensure that participants met the research participation criteria outlined in the flyers. I used participant responses to develop additional interview questions to address their specific responses. One student, Aisha, did not meet these criteria, but her narratives provided insight into racialization of religion. After the interviewing stage, participants received a questionnaire inquiring about their high school history/social studies textbooks, focusing on their recollections of textbook coverage of Islam, Muslim, and related groups of people and places. Finally, participants completed a post-interview questionnaire for

member-checking my understanding of their interview responses. The final questionnaire also provided students with the opportunity to share their suggestions for schools and educators, as well as their perspectives on changes they would like to see in schools.

<u>Analysis of Surveys/Questionnaires</u>

Surveys/questionnaires helped corroborate other collected sources of data (interviews and textbooks). The final two surveys/questionnaires were implemented after the first stage of data analysis to check for accuracy (Bailey, 2006). The textbook and post-interview questionnaires helped me ensure the validity of my data collection methods. These questionnaires also contributed to the triangulation of the collected data. The triangulation process refers to the use of "multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (Stake, 2005, p. 454). Thus, the post-interview and textbook questionnaire cross-verified patterns and themes found in interviews and textbooks. I used memo-writing to collect my reflections and make connections between the three research methods. These processes helped me affirm accuracy and validity of my findings.

Interviews

Interviews were my primary method for gathering research data from students. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach supported the reconstruction of participants' experiences in their respective schools (Seidman, 2013). Specifically, I used a conversational interview structure (Hermanowicz, 2002; Seidman, 2013) with semi-structured, but open-ended, interview questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Seidman, 2013). These methods facilitated students' recollections of their schooling experience as Muslims in relation to their interactions with administration/staff, curricula, teachers, peers, and friends. As a research method, interviews helped me address my three research questions.

I developed the semi-structured interview protocol using Mason's (2002) seven-step process. First, I developed a set of mini-research questions from my research questions. Second, I created topics and interview questions based on research questions and mini-research questions. Lastly, I cross-referenced the topics and questions for this phenomenological inquiry. Relevant research informed the interview questions and the topical stage-based organization of the protocol (Hermanowicz, 2002). This process encouraged a conversation between me and the research participants about their schooling experience. The textbook data and background questionnaire helped the revision and refinement of the interview protocol for each participant. I divided the interview protocol into sections to maintain a coherent, organized structure for an open conversation. Originally, I also intended to use focus group interviews, but was unable to do so. Instead, I used my reflexive notes from interviews to remove or add questions to my interview protocol for other interviews. Thus, interviewing involved a reflective process that resulted in the constant revision of interview questions.

I developed semi-structured interview protocols to address the influence of various aspects of schooling (from curricula to peer interactions) on students and the different manifestations of racialization of students' religious identities. The interviews involved an "active listening" structure that determined follow-up questions; thus, follow-up questions emerged in the interview process (Bailey, 2006, p. 103). These one-on-one interviews ranged from forty minutes to two hours long, occurring in one-to-two semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The length of the interview depended on participant responses. Despite the structured and topical interview protocol, I allowed students to guide the conversation in ways meaningful to them (Seidman, 2013). For example, when I asked a question, and my question reminded participants of another issue or situation, I let them guide the conversation in that direction. Finally, I situated the interview questions in the political and social context, drawing on recent

events, immigration policies, and narratives about Muslims found in and outside of school to elicit participant recollections and thoughts about their identities. These interviews offered insight into the ways anti-Muslim sentiments, racism, racialization, and orientalism emerged in the context of schooling. This provided me an opportunity to obtain participants' understanding of their schooling structure, policies, and culture.

Surveillance programs and intracommunity informants target Muslim Americans (Ali, 2016), so I developed non-invasive questions for interviews. I attempted to develop rapport with my student participants to earn their trust and comfortability in sharing their schooling experiences with me. To build rapport, I shared my Pakistani American Muslim identity to evoke trust and comfort, or "reciprocal vulnerability" (Kohli, 2014, p. 7). My identities possibly granted me access to information that may not be accessible to others (Burgess, 2002). I shared my personal experiences to build rapport with the participants but was vary of my role as a researcher and tried to avoid leading and influencing the participants (Seidman, 2013). In my interviews and on the questionnaires, I noticed that female student participants were largely more communicative about their experiences surrounding their racialized religious identity than male student participants (except for Imran). This could possibly be because of my gender identity.

<u>Analysis of Interviews</u>

The one-on-one interviews largely occurred over a phone call. To maintain accuracy of participant narratives, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Then, I followed Harding's (2013) four-step coding process for interview analysis. First, I carefully and thoroughly read the interview transcripts (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Harding, 2013). I conducted a "line-by-line" reading of each transcript to identify ideas, themes, patterns, and issues (Emerson et al., 2011). Second, through transcript reading, I marked up the transcripts with initial codes. I uploaded the transcripts and initial codes onto *Dedoose*, a

qualitative research software. Third, I reviewed the codes using my conceptual framework (racist nativism, religious nativism, racial microaggressions, orientalism, religification, racialization) and literature review, combining related codes under initial or new categories. Finally, I looked at themes and patterns in the coded categories to identify findings based on my research questions. After the completion of data analysis coding procedures, I reviewed and coded student questionnaires to ensure commonalities and validity. In other words, I triangulated analyzed interview data with survey/questionnaire data.

CONCLUSION

Grounded in CRT, I examine the schooling experiences and curricular representation of Muslim students in public high schools. I extend this framework to Muslims by connecting "orientalism" and "racialization of religion" to study Muslim students' experiences in racial terms. I specifically draw from the conceptualization of "racist nativism", "racial microaggressions", and "community cultural wealth" to guide my data analysis.

This study employed qualitative research methodologies to collect and analyze data. The following chapters present the research findings. First, I examine the racialized and orientalist ideas about Muslims/Islam disseminated through state-mandated textbooks. Second, I present and examine students' stories demonstrating religion-based racialization, violent and oppressed gendered stereotypes, racial microaggressions, and nativist rhetoric. Third, and finally, I offer different ways students resisted dominant narratives and demonstrated their resilience in navigating schools using their community cultural wealth.

Chapter Three: Racializing Muslims in History and Social Studies Textbooks

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine textbooks to understand the institutional knowledge students receive in regards to the how Muslims and Islam were mis- or under-represented in their schooling. While my focal students did not necessarily use the particular textbooks I examined, similar ideas about Muslims, Islam, and Muslim dominant countries emerged in interviews with them (see Chapter 4). Similar narratives persist in more recent books, as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 1). Thus, this textbook analysis provides a way to frame the interviews, i.e., serving as a basis for what Muslim students encountered in curricula, the media, and in political discourse.

Specifically, I examined textbooks used in grades 9th to 12th to answer the following research questions: (1) How are Muslims and Islam discussed in the textbooks? (2) To what extent do the textbooks racialize Muslims? (3) What types of messages do textbooks present about Muslim-identifying people's racial, ethnic, gender, religious, and American identity? In addressing these questions, this chapter provides critical contextual insight on institutionally-disseminated knowledge about Muslims, Islam, and related groups of people.

I found, first, that textbook coverage of Muslims and Islam focused narrowly on West Asian/Middle Eastern, North African, and South Asian Muslim-dominant countries, with little to no references to Muslim Americans, rendering them "foreigners". Second, textbooks offered incomplete narratives and portrayed Muslims (specifically, in representation of Muslim-dominant countries) in passive roles that both explicitly and implicitly furthered orientalist and racialized ideas about Muslims. Overall, these representations and discourses constructed Muslims and people from Muslim-dominant regions/countries as "other" and foreign, while simultaneously preserving the dominance, normalcy, and nativism of a white religious identity in the US and

other western spaces. As an institutional tool of knowledge, textbooks communicate messages about national identity, about who belongs in a particular nation and who does not. I call this intersection of faith, racial identity, and nativist attitudes *racist religious nativism*, informed by Critical Race Theory's concept of "racist nativism" (Pérez Huber et al., 2008).

Why Textbooks?

Textbooks are official and trusted sources of knowledge, serving as primary instructional tools in classrooms (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2010). History and Social Studies textbooks have the power to influence how students understand and perceive themselves as well as other people and cultures (Eisenstein & Clarke, 2013; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2010). "Curricular agents" (Rogers Stanton, 2014) or "message senders" (Moore & Clark, 2004) such as textbook publishers and authors have immense power in shaping students' understanding of the past, as well as about race, ethnicity, religion, national identity.

However, research suggests that textbooks are not neutral or objective; they further particular historical, political, and social understandings of the world (Zagumny & Richey, 2013). Textbooks serve as "gatekeepers of ideas, values, and knowledge" (Foster, 1999, p. 253), and their power lies in the type of representation given to different racial and ethnic groups. Textbooks strategically neglect the histories and perspectives of marginalized communities to normalize dominant narratives and cultures (Loewen, 2007).

Textbooks also present a selective history. They empower and enfranchise the histories and cultural identity of the dominant group at the expense of other groups (Apple, 1993). Textbooks offer a Eurocentric and White male dominated history (Foster, 1999). In *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, James Loewen (2007) claimed that US history textbooks present limited, uncontroversial, predictable content, and lacked accurate portrayals of people and events and thus were intellectually unstimulating. Loewen also argues that textbooks exclude information and

ideas that question US actions and policies to preserve its "international good guy" image, presenting history with caution: "the less said about the past, the better" to preserve a positive American identity bereft of conflict (p. 260). The official knowledge in textbooks, then, constructs a benign and minimal understanding of current and historical issues of race and racism (Brown & Brown, 2015).

Besides being a teaching tool, textbooks serve as social and cultural artifacts, because they represent the dominant culture, knowledge, and values within which they are produced (Phelps, 2010). Media, politicians (and other government officials), textbooks, and popular culture often spread misinformation and stereotypes about people, places, cultures, and religions (Abu El-Haj, 2002; Douglass, 2003; Jackson 2010). This supports the dominant group's cultural, economic, and racial superiority at the expense of other groups (Brown & Au, 2014).

As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 1, negative representations of Muslims and Islam abound in mainstream media and public discourse (Abu El-Haj, 2010; Jackson, 2010; McQueeney, 2014; Shaheen, 2003). These representations make Muslim youth vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and violence (Abu El-Haj, 2007).

But, plans to improve curricular representation of Muslims have met with resistance. For example, in 2016 the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) unanimously voted to create plans and policies to address Islamophobic bullying and harassment at their schools and increase lessons about Islam in partnership with Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) (Garske, 2016). In response, a legal group, six parents, and two organizations filed a lawsuit against SDUSD, claiming that such additions and changes could violate the separation of church and state and favor Muslim students over others (Schroeder, 2019; Warth, 2017). Both sides filed a motion to dismiss the case, and SDUSD settled and sent out memos on "treating each religion with equal respect and affirm[ing] that education materials must be neutral about religion"

(Schroeder, 2019). This case is one example of resistance to increasing curriculum representation and addressing anti-Muslim harassment.

The normalcy of negative images and representation, as well as resistance to address these concerns, affects Muslim youth in schools, their encounters with anti-Muslim rhetoric, Islamophobia, and their interactions with peers and teachers.

Findings

The reviewed textbooks were published in 2006 and still used in some participants' schools (see chapter 2 – "Research Design"). *World History* referenced Muslims, Islam, and related regions more than *Magruder's American Government* and *American Vision.* This analysis, therefore, includes more references to *World History* than the other two textbooks. American history and government textbooks' exclusion and minimal representation of Muslims implied Muslims' lack of significance and presence in American history, social, cultural, and political life. When textbooks did include Muslims and Islam, they used racializing narratives, orientalist assumptions, with inaccurate and/or incomplete portrayals. These textbooks, I argue, marginalize and racialize Muslims (including related groups of people and places), upholding the hegemonic religious identity as native to the land - what I call *racist religious nativism*.

Racializing Muslims

These high school textbooks perpetuate a racialized understanding about Muslims. As discussed in Chapter 3, Omi and Winant (2014) define "racialization" as an ideological process whereby racial meaning extends to "a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group" (p. 111). Joshi (2006) extends this term to encompass "racialization of religion," i.e., the ways in which certain characteristics associated with a group of people or race become conflated with a certain religion or religions. I show that textbooks generally focus on Muslim issues in South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Arab spaces and thereby perpetuate the "Islamic

terrorism" discourse (Joshi, 2006; Kincheloe, Steinberg, & Stonebanks, 2010), reinforcing ideas of "absolute" (Naber, 2008; Mishra, 2013) differences between the West and Muslim-dominant places or Muslim people.

These textbooks produce racialized discourses about Muslims by: (1) normalizing the ideological incompatibility of Islam with the Judeo-Christian norms of the West; (2) presenting Muslims and Islam as a social and cultural threat to Western ideological systems; (3) portraying Muslims as incompetent and invisibilizing them; (4) reproducing gendered notions about Muslim men and women; and (5) minimizing Western imperial reach into the Muslim world. Taken together, these processes render Islam and Muslims as un-American, narrowly defines Muslims in monolithic terms, and sustains an impoverished view of their diverse communities and cultures. Textbooks' purposeful and strategic racialized representations of People of Color position them as outsiders and their traditions as inferior.

Ideological Incompatibility

Politicians and Western ideological beliefs portray Islam as incompatible with progress, secularism, and democracy (Jackson, 2007). Textbooks further this view by systematically excluding and rendering inferior Muslims and Islam, as compared to Christians and Christianity. *World History* (2006), used in grades 9 or 10, states that "Jewish beliefs are markers of the Western tradition" (p. 126). Simultaneously, *World History* informs us that "[t]hese beliefs are not prominent in civilizations of the East" (Spielvogel, 2006, p. 126). The Western identity consists of modernity and secularism (Akom, 2003). This discourse disassociates Judeo-Christian traditions from the Eastern world and fails to acknowledge Islam as part of the Judeo-Christian lineage (Douglass & Dunn, 2003), even though, as referenced in *World History*, Muslims recognize Jews and Christians as part of their Abrahamic religious lineage and faith, as "People of the Book" (p. 154). Textual vagueness and omission of Islam as a continuation of the Judeo-

Christian line of tradition creates a sense of difference, distance, and incompatibility between a Western and Islamic identity.

Though *World History* suggests that the three Abrahamic religions -- Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – "shared many values", it also states, "Because of their history in the Roman Empire, Christians had some room for the idea of separate recognition for state power. In the world of Muhammad, Islam and the state were virtually identical" (Spielvogel, 2006, p. 154). This reinforces ideas of Judeo-Christian difference, particularly Christians establishing secular societies, and a religion-based racialization of Muslims (e.g., not capable of secularism) that upholds what I am calling *racist religious nativism.* This distinction suggests not only that Islam-dominant countries and regions values differ from the Judeo-Christian tradition, but it also homogenizes the diverse histories, political and cultural systems among Islamic countries and regions. The textbooks position the incompatibility of Islamic values and Western values as rooted in their inherently different religious ideologies, informing all other aspects of Muslim identities in absolutist terms (Mishra, 2013).

Textbooks also suggest incompatibility between Islam and the West in discussing religion's role in schools. *World History* discusses non-Christians as struggling to find a balance between their Western citizen identity and their religious identity (p. 638), indicating normalcy and ordinariness of a *racist religious nativism* in American society. In other words, a white religious identity (Christian) represents normalcy and balance between religious and a secular identity, representative of an American or Western identity, while others seemingly lack this balance. For example, *World History* discusses the French government's issue with Muslim girls wearing headscarves (hijab) in school as a parental and religious imposition that exposes them to possible "ridicule" from peers and creates "distraction" in school (p. 638). The phrasing implies that the French government stands in favor of and protects Muslim girls from bullying, whereas

the Muslim families represent cultural and religious rigidity, forcing girls to "obey the dictates of her religion" (p. 638). This suggests Muslim backwardness, conservatism, and perpetuates the act of veiling, wearing a hijab as a tool of oppression and patriarchal/religious control over female bodies.

Additionally, *World History* states that "some Europeans feel that non-Christian immigrants are threatening their culture" (p. 638), positioning increases in Muslim immigration to the West as a challenge, threat, and a concern for predominantly Christian spaces. Specifically, immigration into Europe from former colonies has contributed to "large Muslim communities in France, Germany, and Great Britain" (p. 638). Increased immigration comes with a threat of a growing Muslim communities in countries that formerly colonized them. Though textbooks opt for omitting or limiting the representation and role of religion in the US (Haynes, 1993; Loewen, 2007), they imply the centrality and normalcy of Judeo-Christian traditions, particularly Christianity, in shaping American (and Western) culture and politics.

The narratives of American vulnerability to threats also communicate ideological incompatibility. *American Vision* (used in 11th grade) cites part of President G. W. Bush's speech, delivered at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. on September 14, 2001, about "unity against terror" across the world against "enemies of human freedom" who targeted the US, "freedom's home and defender" (Appleby et al., 2006, p. 963). The narrative of exceptionalism positions the west as vulnerable to threats from those who oppose such values (Loewen, 2007), located (in this case) in predominantly Muslim regions.

In reference to Iraq, *Magruder's American Government* (used in 12th grade) discusses the US' "commit[ment] to building a democracy in that still strife-torn country", calling it a "challenge" because Iraq has "no history of free institutions upon which a democracy might be built" nor any "unifying traditions" that would result in tolerance and peace (McClenaghan, 2006,

p. 644). Like the narratives of incompatibility found in other textbooks, *Magruder's American Government* positions Western ideological and political systems as exceptional in fostering tolerant societies; this text implies its exclusiveness to Western spaces. In this way, *Magruder's American Government* suggests a lack of Judeo-Christian traditions (as mentioned in *World History*) in this Islam-dominant space, casting these spaces as intolerant, violent or uncivilized. I argue notions of incompatibility are embedded in orientalist perspectives that depict the "other" as backwards and in need of western intervention (Said, 1978). These narratives reinforce orientalist perceptions about Muslims, Islam, and Muslim-dominant countries, contributing to their racialization. This is furthered by a systematic exclusion of or incomplete historical accounts, such as the lack of information about the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement. During World War I, a secret convention between Great Britain and France with Soviet Russia's support led to an agreement over splitting the Ottoman Empire (Britannica, n.d.). This agreement also influenced the construction of modern Arab nation-states/borders (e.g., Syria, Iraq) with implications for the diverse Arab populations in the Middle East (Ibid). For example, these modern borders split up some groups, like the Kurds and the Druze, turning them into minorities in different countries, negatively affecting their rights to self-determination (Ibid).

Finally, even efforts in predominantly Islamic countries at democracy suggest incompatibility. *World History* described Turkey's modernization under their President Kemal (Ataturk) to include imposing a Roman alphabet, creating a popular education system, implementing economic changes, and using a European practice of family names. The textbook states, "A democratic system was put in place, but the president harshly suppressed his critics" (p. 504). *World History* (2006) also explicitly states, "Perhaps the most significant reform was Ataturk's attempt to break the power of Islam" in order to "transform Turkey into a secular state", by abolishing the caliphate and forbidding female religious veiling (p. 504). The text implies both

what constitutes modernity and democracy and what does not. Yet, Turkey, a NATO ally, has

been excluded from entry into the European Union on grounds of not meeting European

Commission expectations (Emmott, 2020). My analysis shows textbooks exclude reference to

Turkey's attempts at joining European Union at the time of textbook production.

Social and Cultural Threat

Besides messages of ideological incompatibility between Islamic and Christian norms,

textbooks also construct Muslims and Muslim-dominant regions/countries as a social and cultural

threat. Textbooks do this by overrepresenting Islam and Muslims in discourses on violence and

terrorism framing them as anti-American or anti-Western.

Textbooks mention Muslims directly or indirectly by referencing violence and terrorism.

In a chapter header titled, "Modern Terrorism", *World History* identified terrorism as a global

problem, discussing both the "Irish Republican Army" (IRA) and "Muslim countries" (p. 694).

My text analysis showed that the textbook directly references Muslims in relation to terrorism.

Such statements include: "In some Muslim countries, terrorists often target places where

Westerners are often found"; "deadly Bali bombings" in Indonesia (though not explicitly stated

who conducted the bombing); and "Militant governments in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, and North

Korea have sponsored terrorist acts" (p. 694). In a section titled, "Islamic Militants: A Clash of

Cultures," *World History* discusses terrorism as "practiced since ancient times" (p. 694), without

providing specific examples. Instead, the textbook mentions one "modern" example, regarding

1800s Russian "radical reformers [who] bombed trains or assassinated officials to fights the

czar's repression" and "recent world terrorism" associated with Islam. In addition, the text offers

the following four viewpoints on terrorism: (1) identifying it as "complex" and "rooted in the

clash of modern and Islamic cultures", (2) referencing Christian and Muslim hostility since the

Crusades, (3) claiming poverty and ignorance further "extremists…resentment against wealthy

Western societies", and (4) proposing resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian "conflict" could make terrorism "rare" (p. 694). These viewpoints describe terrorism as a problem caused by Islamic or Muslim-dominant societies against Western societies. Textbook coverage implicates Muslims in this discourse but provide no other examples that implicate any other group at such a scale.

Images and maps also reinforce threat-based narratives about Muslims. For example, *World History* includes a map (see Figure 3.1) that points to terrorism or terrorist groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Israel (p. 696). *American Vision* includes a map (see Figure 3.2) that refers to fourteen acts of terrorism (all Middle Eastern, Central Asian, Muslim) that have affected Americans since 1970-2003 (p. 956). These maps implicate terrorism as a problem that emerges from Muslims or Muslim-dominant spaces, normalizing "Islamic terrorism" (Jackson, 2007) discourse, perpetuating Islamophobia, and racializing Muslims. References to terrorism by non-Muslims, white domestic terrorism, or terrorism targeting Muslim communities remain absent.
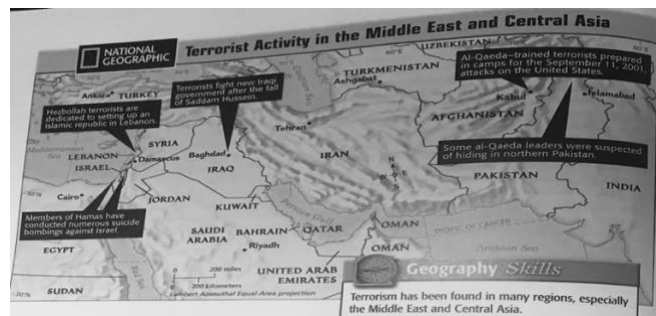

Figure 3.1 – map from *World History*

Figure 3.2 – map from *American Vision*

Textual references to Muslims also largely reinforce threat-based narratives. All three textbooks reference the Israel and Palestine, the War on Terror, naming pre-dominantly Muslim countries for sponsoring violence, presenting Muslims as "hostile" to non-Islamic and Western beliefs, perpetuating the association between religion and ethnic identity to terrorism and violence. For example, textbooks communicate the West as a "target of Muslim hostility," naming Libya, Syria, Iran, and Iraq for "state-sanctioned terrorism" (Appleby et al., 2006, p. 956). This example not only furthers violent tropes in relation to Muslim-dominant countries, but also positions Muslim/Muslim-dominant spaces as anti-West. Concerning Palestinian representation, *American Vision* mentions Palestine for "guerilla raids," "hostility," and "terrorist attacks" against Israel (p. 956).

Image-based coverage of Palestinians implicates them as a threat. For example, *Magruder's American Government* includes an image that justifies Israel's construction of walls to separate and protect themselves from West Bank's Palestinian community (p. 494) (see Figure 3.3) and an image titled "Palestinians clash with Israeli soldiers" (p. 691) (see Figure 3.4). As such, Palestine's coverage furthers the threat-based and violent tropes while excluding the Palestinian history and realities, furthering a narrow understanding of this "conflict". Such coverage, I argue, reinforces stereotypical and racialized ideas about Palestinians and Muslims.
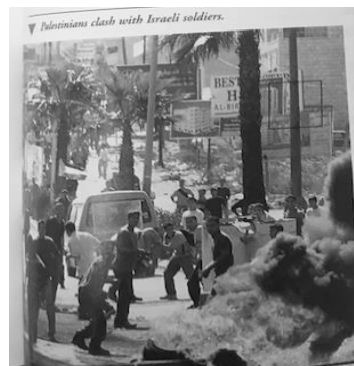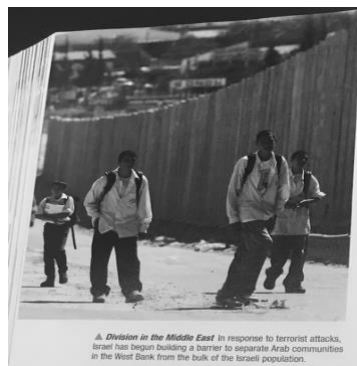

Figure 3.3 and 3.4 – Depictions of Palestinians in *Magruder's American Government*

Threat-based narratives dominate in the coverage of Muslims and related people/places. For example, *World History* references anthrax-filled letters sent after 9/11 that killed several Americans as "biowarfare" (p. 747), but not as terrorism. Though presented in a chapter section on terrorism, the authors do not provide any details about this act of violence, or that FBI looked at suspects with access to anthrax, and not necessarily Muslims. While *World History* references use of chemical weapons in the war between Iran and Iraq as bioterrorism, *American Vision* describes US military's use of Agent Orange during the Vietnam War ("enemy") as "[taking] away the Vietcong's ability to hide in the thick jungles by literally destroying the landscape" (p. 782). This differential coverage continues to implicate Muslims in threat-based narratives.

Textbooks discuss the invasion of Iraq in 2003 within the terror framework. *Magruder's American Government* used the following terms to describe Iraq: "dangerous," experiencing "ongoing violence," "shattered" country, and "troubling" for the United States (p. 488-89). All three textbooks reference former President Bush's fear of Iraq building weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) but do not mention that WMDs were not found in Iraq. Furthermore, textbooks fail to mention the prior relationship between the US and Iraq and label Iraq as "aggressive" (Spielvogel, 2006, p. 698), reinforcing the notion of these Muslim-dominant nations as a threat. However, *World History* is the only textbook to address: (1) anti-war protests, (2) how UN inspectors perceived lack of effectiveness of Bush's administration, (3) the lack of support for the invasion from other nations (such as France and Russia), and (4) that WMDs were not found, which is briefly mentioned. Finally, all textbooks evade discussions about the effects of war and violence on Iraqis. Instead, the focus remains on a predominantly Muslim country's instability, as well as American intervention in rebuilding the country.

Similarly, textbook references to other regions participating in similar security tactics reinforces the notion of "Islamic terrorism" as a global issue. *World History* briefly mentions that

the Philippines "also faces terrorist threats" from Muslim "rebels" who "have used terror to promote their demands for independence" (p. 725). Yet the textbooks fail to provide additional information about the Muslim population in the Philippines. Instead, the textbook adds that European and Asian governments also engaged in efforts to "track down terrorists" (p. 698), perpetuating notions of Muslims as hostile and a social, cultural, and ideological threat.

Textbooks reference the Patriot Act of 2001 as a policy which legalized "secret searches," "wiretap," monitoring of library cards, emails, voicemails, medical records, and school records to "prosecute suspected terrorists" (Spielvogel, 2006, p. 697; McClenaghan, 2006, p. 554). *World History* mentions that some debated the constitutionality of the Patriot Act but omits its violation of privacy – and its ramifications for Muslims, Arabs, and South Asian Americans (see Ahmed & Senzai, 2004). But *Magruder's American Government* includes that the bill drew criticisms for impeding people's privacy and other freedoms, investigations of ordinary crimes and not just for suspected terrorists (p. 554).

Thus, these three textbooks provide a limited narrative about Muslim-dominant places and further the dichotomy between them and the West. Most of the textbook discourse on Muslims focuses on threat-based narratives, limiting or omitting positive or uplifting messages and histories of Muslims. *American Vision* labels supporters of violent movements as "fundamentalist militants", but also adds that "the vast majority of Muslims believe terrorism is contrary to their faith" (p. 956). Yet similar statements do not identify Christians, or other religious or ethnic groups in "terrorist" terms, nor in religious terms; Islam remains the only religion constructed as potential threat for the world. This illustrates the violent, racialized portrayal of Muslims, simultaneously establishing a vulnerable image of the West. The abundance of violence, threat-based narratives about Muslims frame their beliefs as aberrant for

Western society, which upholds the dominant religious identity and ideological beliefs as the norm for Western spaces.

Incompetent and Invisibilized Muslims

Textbooks perpetuate narratives of violence and instability about Muslims and Muslim-dominant nations by minimizing their contributions to the world (Douglass, 2009; Eraqi, 2015a; 2015b; Loewen, 2007). All three textbooks reference Muslims only in passing, for the sake of "mentioning" them (Foster, 1999). This takes multiple forms: lack of inclusion, incomplete and simplistic (one-sided) narratives, and presenting Muslims as incompetent Others. I discuss incompetence and invisibilization through the framework of Orientalism (Said, 1978). In other words, non-Western cultures have been historically construed as archaic, backwards, uncivilized, and in need of Western intervention (Said, 1978).

<u>Incompetence</u>

Through "mentioning" (Foster, 1999)**,** textbooks render Muslim and Muslim-dominant societies as incompetent and in need of Western intervention. For example, textbooks reference early Pakistan only for its internal political and economic problems (and split with Bangladesh (Spielvogel, 2006, p. 723). *World History* described the Ottoman Empire's fall as a fault of "nationalism", which led the British to "destroy" the Ottoman army (p. 502, 433). Similarly, this textbook utilized terms like "destroyed" or "wipe out" to describe Israel's victory over the Egyptian air force during the Six Day War (p. 690). The use of such terms implies weakness of Muslim-dominant countries or regions. This kind of mentioning reinforces oversimplistic, racialized and Orientalist understandings about Muslim-dominant nations and regions.

Textbooks construct Eastern governments, including Muslim-dominant ones, as incompetent or inferior. For example, *World History* describes Palestinian Arabs as "frustrated with their failure to achieve self-rule, [so they] became more militant" (p. 691), a prevalent theme

in textbooks' framing of Muslims and Muslim-majority nations. Such racialized and Orientalist framing occurs with careful omission of the ways Western policies and cultural racism undermine the lived realities of Palestinian people. Additionally, *Magruder's American Government* uses the following terminology for Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, and East Africa: "failed states", "lawless lands", "refuge" and "haven" for terror groups (p. 645). *Magruder's American Government* discusses Afghanistan, for example, regarding these factors, but fails to discuss the Reagan Doctrine by which the US provided arms to Afghani "rebels" to prevent the USSR's expansion (*American Vision*, p. 897). This gap, sharing only parts of the narrative or dividing the story between different textbooks, undermines a fuller understanding of historical or contemporary situations. By not presenting complete historical narratives, or altogether omitting details about events, sustains a positive, "international good guy" image (Loewen, 2007). An "international good guy" image frames US policies and actions to be rooted in goodwill, democracy, and human rights; policy failure or misinterpretation of policy by others does not undermine their motives and good intentions (Loewen, 2007, p. 221).

Multiple instances show instances in which a Muslim-dominant nation or community has received Western assistance. *World History* discusses a weakening Iranian empire under the Shah, for example, that received help from Russia and Britain to protect itself from its own people (p. 505). However, the text also mentions the discovery of oil as a reason for foreigners' interest, not pure altruism. Textbooks often mention Muslim-dominant countries for their oil resources (Douglass, 2009). Similarly, *American Vision* presents Egyptians as "eagerly" accepting President Eisenhower's financial offer to build a dam on the Nile River, even though the US Congress retracted the offer (p. 654). Though Egypt built the dam through profits from the Suez Canal, the US stopped France and Britain from retaliating as USSR threatened to defend Egypt, which encouraged "other Arab nations" to accept aid from the Soviets.

Both economic and military aid also suggests goodwill and altruism of the West. Textbook authors and publishers do this through images, primary source documents, and their historical narrative. *Magruder's American Government* mentions Asian, Middle Eastern (e.g., rebuilding and government establishment efforts in Afghanistan) and Latin American countries as recipients of the "largest amounts" of US aid (p. 491). Narratives of Western countries (NATO and the US) aid to foreign nations omit the political and economic conditions of those receiving the aid, such as the ways imperialism, history of colonialism, and militarism has affected those nations (e.g., interest in oil). Similarly, textbooks depict the US as active in helping others during "international crises" (p. 402). Four of the eight resolutions discussed regard stabilizing, assisting, and rebuilding Muslim-majority countries (p. 402). These references support the "international good guy" image of the US (Loewen, 2006).

Though the textbooks locate the Muslim world largely in the Middle East or conflates Muslims with "Arabs," *World History* referenced "Southwest Asia" as a "site of great empires" (p. 153). The use of a different regional term (i.e., Southwest Asia instead of the Middle East) constructs Muslims as different people, which, in a sense, they are because of time and the sociopolitical changes experienced by that region. However, different terms to describe the same area implies the region comprises of another's history, not their history. A distinct term and labeling disassociate and discursively disconnect the descendants of those "great" societies from their own histories, potentially leading the reader to assume these "great" societies do not include Muslims. Simultaneously, this change in locational terminologies constructs the recent and current Muslim world (violent, unstable) as something other than "great."

These excerpts identify different ways textbooks position these diverse communities as incompetent, or inept. The textbooks do not directly mention incompetence; rather, textbooks imply a connection between religion, violence, and incompetence. This is another facet of the

process of racialization strengthened by the lack of active and meaningful inclusion of Muslims in all three textbooks.

<u>Invisibilizing Muslims</u>

Furthermore, textbooks do not include or reference Muslims as Americans and rarely include them as part of American history. *Magruder's American Government*, for example, mentions Christian (both Protestant and Catholic) and Jewish religious organizations that try to influence public policies (p. 247), but not any Muslims. Textbook exclusions and minimizations of Muslim contributions to American history and culture render them invisible and unimportant. It also limits them to largely negative representations that further racialized and Orientalist notions about their cultural, ethnic, gendered, racial, and religious identities.

First, textbooks offer minimal representations of Muslim Americans or Americans who may identify as Muslims, either directly (mention religion or specific names) or indirectly (do not mention religion or names). My finding that textbooks portray Islam as incompatible with Western societies and ideas may explain why high school textbooks do not meaningfully integrate Muslims into their narrative.[1] Across all three textbooks, I found only three examples that passively reference Muslims in the US. After the bombing of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the US attacked Afghanistan and Sudan (Appleby et al., p. 962). *American Vision* includes President Clinton's televised speech from August 1998 as a primary source document, referencing Muslims as "millions of good, peace-loving people all around the world, including the United States" (p. 962). The speech also included that "No religion condones the murder of innocent men, women, and children" (Ibid). *Magruder's American Government* includes a

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[1] Muslims' lack of integration into America's historical narrative resembles that of other racial and ethnic group's minimal or inaccurate representation, such as Native Americans (Hawkins, 2002; 2005; Rogers Stanton, 2014), African Americans (Washburn, 1997; Alridge, 2006), Asian and Pacific Islander Americans (Takeda, 2016), and Latinx Americans (Salvucci, 1991; Rodriguez & Ruiz, 2000; Monforti & McGlynn, 2010) exemplifying the ways history and social studies textbooks center European American histories and nativism (including religious nativist attitudes).

primary source document from the Freedom Forum that mentions Muslims as a religious group in the US, alongside Christians and Jews, who would be affected by those who want to establish a "Christian America" (p. 545). These references illustrate the boundaries of "mentioning" (Foster, 1999) in primary source documents which may or may not be used in classroom instruction. In addition, these references do not address any aspect of the Muslim experience in the US, but Clinton's speech offers a different narrative about Muslims, as "good, peace-loving" (Appleby et al., 2006, p. 962).

Moreover, *American Vision* briefly references Islam in a short paragraph on Malcolm X for being a symbol of black power, black nationalism, and member of the Nation of Islam (NOI) – described as having different beliefs than "mainstream Muslims" - which he left after visiting Makkah (also spelled Mecca), Saudi Arabia and "seeing Muslims from many different races worshipping together, he concluded that an integrated society was possible" (p. 761-62)[2]. This textbook offers an example of Islam in the US, but fails to discuss what black nationalism and black power represented, how it emerged, and what it symbolized for people, including Malcolm X. Furthermore, Malcolm X is referenced for witnessing the possibility of racial integration, but the textbook does not discuss what that meant for the US or him, his experiences, his conversion to Islam, nor his understanding of US society.

Textbook references to Muslim-sounding names also locate Muslims in the US. *American Vision* shares that Muhammad Ali's army draft refusal as a "conscientious objector" to the Vietnam War resulted in him being stripped of his heavy weight champion title, fined, and imprisoned in 1967 (p. 713). The textbook does not define "conscientious objector," nor mention

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[2] I chose to include this reference because it disrupts the monolithic understandings of Islam as Arab and Middle Eastern. However, Black American Muslims experiences differ and require an assessment that address: European imperialism, forced enslavement of Africans, forced conversions, disenfranchisement, systemic and institutional racism, the prison-industrial complex, exclusion, and more.

his refusal based on religious reasons. Though referenced, and his name alludes to a Muslim identity, Muhammad Ali is included in a timeline of a chapter which could easily be missed.

In addition, *Magruder's American Government* refers to Guantanamo Bay in a section on overreach of presidential powers, particularly *Rasul v. Bush (2004)* and *Hamdi vs. Rumsfeld (2004)*, in which "detainees [were] allowed to use the federal courts to challenge the lawfulness of their confinement" (p. 392). The textbook does not include why they were given trials, why they were detained, details about the cases, their release, nor their British and US citizenship, respectively. Instead, the textbook passively mentions these cases without any explanation or information about the cases. The passive "mentioning" (Foster, 1999) of these cases suggests their lack of educational importance in textbook discourse and limits the possibility of students and teachers understanding the nature of these cases. Such passive inclusion ensures that students have examples of the overreach of presidential powers with limited knowledge about the cases. *Magruder's American Government* also makes a reference to Arabs in the US under the 13th amendment, specifying its protections for Jews and Arabs from "intentional discrimination" based on ethnic characteristics and ancestry with reference to *St. Francis College v. Al-Khazraji (1987)* (p. 570). But the textbook does not specify the types of discrimination Arab communities faced, nor much information about the case.

Textbooks invisibilize Muslim and Muslim-dominant countries and regions' role in history and society (Loewen, 2007). For example, *World History* (2006) passively mentions the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) that included Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan as allies of Western and Eastern (non-Muslim) nations to prevent Soviet expansion.

Invisibilization also occurs in building up threat-based discourses while erasing or minimizing the violence against Muslims throughout the world (e.g., the cost of wars). For

example, *World History* shows an image, captioned "A Doctors Without Borders worker examines a patient in Afghanistan" (see Figure 3.5), of a turban-clad man with a child, and a doctor treating the child (p. 753). Yet, the textbook does not discuss nor provide the context of this image, nor what is happening in the image. Similarly, *World History* includes images of the "United Nations troops giving food to starving Bosnian Muslims" (p. 751) (Figure 3.6) with little to no context or discussion about the images to help students understand these issues. Textbooks also minimize the conflict between Russia and Chechnya (a mostly Muslim region) by referencing Chechens as "even more radical [with] religious motives" and a vague presentation of the conflict between the two (p. 619). *American Vision*, however, addresses the "ethnic cleansing," "brutal expulsion," and "slaughter" of Bosnian Muslims in a civil war between Christian Serbs, Bosnian Muslims, and Catholic Croatians (p. 940).
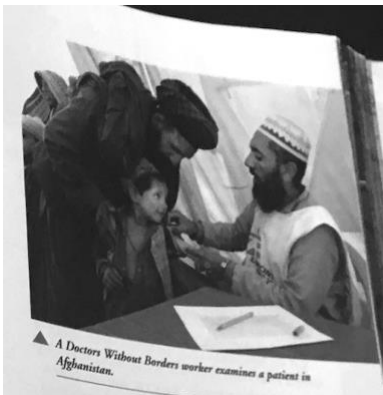
Figure 3.5 and 3.6 (left to right) – Images of Muslims Receiving Aid in *World History*

Textbooks also render Muslims invisible by passive, superficial inclusion. Even *World History* (2006) mentions Muslims largely in the post-World War II period (Eraqi, 2015a) but as "volatile" (*American Vision*) (Appleby et al., 2006, p. 869), and for oil resources. While textbooks use language (e.g., "radical," "anti-American") that normalizes threat-based discourses and identifies people and places as potential threats to Western ways of life, they do not provide any context, conditions, or information about them. Minimal coverage also marginalizes the

histories, ideologies, goals, struggles, and effects of Western imperialism. These discourses influence the production of standardized curriculums and textbooks.

Though these textbooks focus primarily on the US and other Western countries, they largely omit details of Western imperialism, colonial histories, militaristic and economic dominance, and social and cultural influences (e.g., ideological beliefs, media). As such, these textbooks empower Eurocentric narratives that center western traditions and values, while subtly or overtly furthering racialized images of Muslims rooted in Orientalist beliefs.

Gendered Racialization

Textbooks play a central role in offering not only racialized discourses but also furthering problematic gendered notions about Muslims, particularly females. That is, textbooks engage in gendered racialization by positioning veils as oppressive and no veils as symbolic of progress and modernity. Simultaneously, textbooks present Muslim males as controlling and dominant patriarchal figures in concealed ways.

Textbooks contain limited but gendered and racialized depictions of the hijab. Mainstream media, political and cultural discourse often identify hijab as a tool of oppression to maintain patriarchal dominance and control female bodies (Watt, 2012). Textbooks echo these narratives. *World History* states that the US victory in Afghanistan meant women would not have to wear burkas, and the men would not have to wear a beard (p. 697). Other textbook examples also construct these symbols (i.e., veiling) of an Islamic religious identity to be repressive, oppressive, restrictive, and anti-Western/modernity. *Magruder's American Government* references Iran and Turkey for restricting women from veiling in public as a modernizing tactic, reinforcing an Orientalist perspective about these symbols of religion which equates modernity with the West. Textbooks portray de-veiling as a liberating and modernizing tactic, but not forced de-veiling as a tool for patriarchal dominance and control over female bodies. This juxtaposition

between Muslim dominant and Western regions reinforces orientalism and positions Muslims as opposed to modernity (Zagumny & Richey, 2013).

While *Magruder's American Government* discusses the modernization of Turkey and Iran to include de-veiling of female Muslims in public, *World History* describes that this "expansion of women's rights and freedoms" regressed post 1970s (p. 696). Though both forced veiling and de-veiling exemplify male-dominant, patriarchal societies exerting control over female bodies, the textbook discourse suggests the acceptability of forced de-veiling over forced veiling, reinforcing the ideas of a de-veiled woman as a symbol of modernization and Western identity, thus reinforcing the notion of hijab as archaic, backwards, un-secular and non-democratic. Textbooks' over-simplistic narrative renders Muslims backwards, affirming and reinforcing Orientalist ideas about the Eastern, particularly Muslim, world.

This is exemplified in *World History's* discussion of French Muslim females. It states the French argument that "by forcing a girl to wear a headscarf, her family sets her apart for ridicule from her peers and causes distraction in the school", whereas "Muslims argue that a girl needs to obey the dictates of her religion" (p. 638). As a Western country, France's position on headscarves suggests the incompatibility between being a French (or, Western) citizen and a hijabi (hijab wearing person) Muslim. Textbook discourse positions France as a benefactor (protecting girls from bullying) interested in the wellbeing of female Muslims, despite pushing for restrictive and invasive policies that police and exert control over women's bodies. Simultaneously, *World History* presents Muslim families as strict and seeking obedience from females, furthering notions of Muslim female submissiveness, their lack of agency, as well as cultural and religious rigidity. By limiting further viewpoints about this issue, particularly from female Muslims, the text offers a racialized and gendered narrative about Muslim women as submissive, oppressed, while simultaneously constructing the superiority of the West, its ideas,

and values. Embedded within orientalist and racializing discourses about Islam and women, this also suggests Muslim backwardness, conservatism, and perpetuates the act of veiling, wearing a hijab as a tool of oppression and patriarchal/religious control over female bodies. This issues relevance spans from the publishing of these textbooks to today.

This debate over controlling women's bodies also occurs outside of schools (e.g., French Burkini ban and policing). While the text mentions possible bullying of female Muslims, it includes no discussion of why bullying happens or attempts to remedy it, or systemic or institutional racism, nor popular culture's influence on people's perception of Muslims. Despite textbooks furthering notions of the "separation of church and state" in Western secular nations, they omit any interrogation of the ways secular nations impose or privilege certain policies or ideas contrary to those secular beliefs and pursue ways of controlling women's bodies. Banning a religious symbol or practice that is not harming others positions one an outsider and instils normalcy of the dominant religious beliefs. In this way, Islam could be interpreted as inferior and incompatible, while Western ideologies, associated with Judeo-Christian traditions, appear as superior. The textbook does not discuss why for France wants to limit or ban the hijab, and why it becomes a problem for other school children so that they cannot focus.

Lastly, the hijab ban implies the centrality of hijab in all Muslim female lives. Thus, the textbook, overall, purport female Muslim identities to be, what I refer to as, "hijabified" or limited to the hijab which is perceived and presented simplistically (purposeful feminism) as an oppressive, restrictive practice of religion, rather than a choice, one's personal relationship with religion, or other complex factors. Textbooks perpetuate imperial, Western, particularly white feminist ideas of female empowerment, while ignoring or marginalizing intersectionality of gender, race, and religion. Oversimplified narratives reinforce a singular notion about a female Muslim identity - that is, "hijabified".

Female Muslims also appear in threat-infused representations. Shaheen (2003), for example, finds that Arab and Muslims women's gendered representations include both historically sexualized, eroticized images but also as untrustworthy. *World History* references an Egyptian singer and dancer, Hekmath Fathmy, who spied on British troops and relayed the information to a German spy (p. 547). This reference fits within the orientalist boundaries of an exotic, untrustworthy woman. As Watt (2012) finds, images of exotic but threatening Muslim women accompany images of oppressed "burqa-clad" women. Though the text does not center always discuss religious affiliation, a reader could assume religious culpability as people from these ethnic groups are assumed Muslim. None of the reviewed textbooks offer empowering representation of female Muslims, nor show female Muslims in leadership and political roles (e.g., Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh, Mame Madior Boye of Senegal).

World History briefly discusses rights of Muslim women in Islamic societies. For example, the text states that militant and extremists receive "so much media attention" but "they are in a minority, however, especially in their view toward women" (p. 694). *World History* provides the following examples to discuss their claims: (1) the text references Muslim women's social and political rights in the early 1900s and early Islamic societies, stating "Restrictions on women came later" (p. 694) and (2) 19th and 20th century scholars debated "expansion of women's rights and freedoms" especially in Turkey and Iran until the 1970s with movement toward traditional role for women in Iran (p. 696). First, the text mentioned that early Islamic societies afforded political and social rights to female Muslims but does not offer a comparison to Christianity or Judaism, nor any critical thinking questions to encourage students to examine the implication of this on their understanding of Islam. Second, the text suggests regression of women's rights in Muslim societies, or Muslim dominant nations with those two examples. To the unsuspecting reader, this limited coverage may support orientalist ideas about Muslims. A

lack of this discussion also furthers dominant group's traditions as progressive, and Muslim traditions as regressive and repressive.

Minimizing Western Imperialism

While textbooks sometimes discuss Muslims without mentioning religion, they continue to maintain a Western superiority narrative. Though they mention some Western political and economic influence and interest in predominantly Muslim nations, they omit details that could tarnish the "international good guy" image (Loewen, 2007). For example, *World History* references Native Libyan resistance leader, Omar Mukhtar, for using "guerilla warfare" against Italian colonists, for which the colonists reacted "ferociously", establishing "concentration camps" and crushing revolts, and mention that only his death put an end to the resistance (p. 508). The textbook does not mention Mukhtar's execution (North, 2011), rather sanitizes it as "death" to minimize the extent of colonial violence against Libyans. To further sanitize colonial violence, the textbook authors add that colonial powers reacted to resistance with "force", but "also began to make reforms" (p. 508), cleansing colonial violence rather than addressing the harsh realities for those colonized.

While textbooks offer numerous examples of unrest and violence in Muslim-dominant states, they only mention the role of Western colonization, imperialism, or militarism a few times. For example, in a discussion of ethnic conflicts in Sudan, *World History* states, "Conflict among ethnic groups has survived in part as a result of Western imperialism" (p. 682). Western colonial powers drew arbitrary border lines, resulting in the grouping of ethnically, tribally, and linguistically diverse people -- the first and only reference made to the impact of Western colonialism in a predominantly Muslim country.

American Vision offers the example of an American orchestrated coup in Iran based on its own economic interests (petroleum resources). The text states that Iranian Prime Minister

Mossadegh nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and planned to make a deal with the Soviets; in response, the US Secretary of State Allan Dulles "sent agents to organize street riots and arrange a coup that ousted Mossadegh, and the Shah returned to power" (p. 655). This provides an example of what US intervention and influence in other nations may look like, but this minimal, surface-level discussion about the coup limits understanding of its impact. Furthermore, the textbook does not offer critical thinking questions to encourage students to consider how their own country would react if another country organized a coup or caused riots for their own benefits. Evading these questions, minimizing the Muslim, Arab, Middle Eastern experience, and sanitizing Western role influence furthers discourses about Muslim incompetence, instability, and violence. Furthermore, textbooks offer these narratives while simultaneously excluding American Muslims, their role and presence in American history. I find that these exclusionary tactics and presentation of incomplete narratives preserves the superiority of Eurocentric traditions and norms, including religious identity in subtle ways.

Discussion

High school textbooks and curricular coverage of Muslim, Islam, and related groups of people advances orientalist perspectives and serves as a racializing source of knowledge for both Muslim and non-Muslim readers. Though this chapter does not address the impacts of such curricular narratives on Muslim-identifying youth, it provides insight into the schooling context in terms of Social Studies/History curricula. In this chapter, I identified the following themes as reflective of racializing and orientalist narratives about Muslims and Islam. In contrast to the West (and western religious traditions), Muslims are constructed as: (1) ideologically incompatible with the West, (2) social and cultural threats, and (3) incompetent and passive actors with little historical visibility, and (4) racialized and gendered Others. Simultaneously, textbooks minimize Western imperialism's impact on Muslim-majority countries. My findings demonstrate

the type of limited but racialized knowledge schools, perhaps inadvertently, transmit to high

school students through state-sanctioned textbooks.

The next chapter provides insights into the threat-based and gendered discourses students

encountered at schools, examining their interactions with class content, teachers, and peers.

Finally, the last data chapter examines various manifestations of student resilience and their

resistance to racial microaggressions and racialized hostility.

Chapter Four: Racialized Insults and Microaggressions

Introduction

The previous chapter showed that textbooks overtly and covertly associated Islam and Muslims with violence, backwardness, and anti-American attitudes, constructing them as social, cultural and security threats. These textbook themes also emerged in my interviews with my focal students, who reported experiencing racialized insults (e.g., hijab as oppressive, association of Islamic phrases with violence) in their interactions with non-Muslim peers, and sometimes, their teachers. Contextualized in the textbook discourses, this chapter examines the everyday experiences of ten high school Muslim students. Using conceptual tools from Critical Race Theory (CRT), racialization of religion (Joshi, 2006), racist nativism (Pérez Huber et al., 2008) and orientalism (Said, 1978), this chapter draws on data from interviews and questionnaires with Muslim-American high school students to address my three Research Questions:

> Question #1: In what ways do the school structures and culture inform Muslim-American students' identities (ethnic, religious, racial, gender, and academic identities)? Specifically, which identities do the curriculum, teachers, and staff recognize, promote, or oppose?
>
> Question #2: To what extent do schools racialize Muslim students? That is, do schools extend racial meaning to Muslim students, or racial meanings associated with Islam, to their ethnically and culturally diverse Muslim students?
>
> Question #3: How do Muslim-American students perceive and (re)interpret the messages they receive about Muslims and Islam? How do these messages influence Muslim-American students' sense of identity?

In addressing these questions, this chapter shows the different types of intersecting racial microaggressions and racialized discourses (i.e., on racial/ethnic, gender and religious identities) that students encountered at their respective high schools.

Ten Muslim youth shared their everyday high school experiences through interviews and questionnaires. These high school students, nine current and one recent graduate, discussed the different types of racialized discourses they encountered within schools, from classrooms to among peers. The previous chapter identified textbooks as a source of institutional or structural aspect of racialized discourses. This chapter's findings address the culture found within schools as cultivated by interactions among peers, friends, teachers, staff, and administrators. Grounded in CRT, the findings solely focus on student narratives that show racialization of religion (Joshi, 2006) and subsequent racial microaggressions (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2014) embedded in orientalism (Said, 1978) and racist nativism (Pérez Huber et al., 2008), specifically race- and religion-based nativist attitudes. I argue that racialization and racial microaggressions ultimately communicated the outsiderness and foreignness of these youth as a result of their multiply marginalized racial/ethnic, religious and gender identities. That is, this chapter examines the typical kinds of racial microaggression that Muslim youth encountered at schools, occurring at various levels of their schooling (e.g., curricular content, interactions with peers, teachers, and friends).

In this chapter, I argue that Muslim-American students suffer two particular kinds of racial microaggressions at school: (1) peers, some teachers, and curricular materials engaged in monolithic ideas about Muslim thereby reinforcing racialization of a Muslim identity and conflation of religion and racial/ethnic identities; (2) students, particularly females, encountered gendered discourses at the intersection of their religious and gender identities, rendering them oppressed and outsiders; and, (3) curricular, class discussions, and interactions with peers often

advanced the terrorist trope about Muslims, with overt discriminatory remarks being minimized as jokes.

Students identified three ways that others perceived Muslims: racial/ethnic phenotype, cultural practices, and gendered religious signifiers (specifically, hijab or headscarf). I discuss these three aspects in the subsequent sections. I will demonstrate how institutional discourses and one-on-one experiences reflect racist nativism (Pérez Huber et al., 2008) and orientalism (Said, 1978). Building on these concepts, I define *racist religious nativism* as a set of norms constructed from racializing narratives, orientalist assumptions, and inaccurate and/or incomplete portrayals that maintain the dominance and normality of western religious identity at the expense of other religious identities not deemed American or Western, thus foreign to the land. *Racist religious nativism* emerges as a discursive process that exacerbates the differences between western white religious and cultural identities to those of Communities of Color, in which western white religious identities are positioned as the norm, superior, and native to the land.

In the next few sections, I discuss subtle and overt manifestations of racial microaggressions that Muslim students encountered at their respective high schools that reinforce *racist religious nativism.* In schools, *racist religious nativism* manifests in curricular discussions of religion and religious minorities of the US, Muslim students' interactions with teachers and peers, lack of support systems for Muslim students at school, policies and framing of anti-Muslim racism, and ways teachers and school administrators respond to anti-Muslim racism.

This chapter begins by discussing the types of discourses that racialized a Muslim identity in monolithic terms. Then, I discuss my findings on racial microaggressions as ramifications and manifestations of the racialization of Muslims. These findings on racialization of religion and racial microaggressions, I argue, show that Muslims continue to be (1) perceived through orientalist perspectives, (2) rendered outsiders and foreign based on their religious

identity and other intersecting identities, particularly gender; and, (3) viewed as security and cultural threats – thereby reinforcing *racist religious nativism*. These findings have implications on Muslim students', and the overall community's, limited social and symbolic access to their American identity.

Findings

I. Racialization of Religion – Phenotype and Culture

Students encountered oversimplified comments and assumptions about their religious identity at schools that reflected racialization of religion (Joshi, 2006) based on phenotype, appearance, and cultural practices (e.g., brown skin, hijab, names, and distinct cultural and religious practices). My focal Muslim-American students reported that their non-Muslim peers conflated their South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Arab racial and religious identities (Naber, 2008). Drawing on CRT, I show how racial microaggressions against Muslim-American students have been normalized, further marginalizing them and reinforcing their foreign and Other status.

To understand Muslim students' perceptions of how people at school perceive or imagine Muslims, I asked: "Do people at school have a particular idea about Muslims? Do you hear things that accurately or inaccurately describe Muslims?" Zaynab, who described herself as a Syrian American and a "community involved person", shared her observations of how others perceive Muslims:

> Text 4.1
>> People assume when someone like has a brown skin tone, they think they're automatically Muslim, which isn't true. Some of them are like Hindu, some of them are like atheists, like all that stuff. So, I think that plays a role. Of course, the name. People would assume they're Arab, Muslim. Like Mohammad, Ahmad, all that. But there wasn't a lot of stereotyping [at my school].

Interestingly, Zaynab did not identify any female gendered characteristics or religious signifiers to describe how others perceived a "Muslim", instead focusing on racial/ethnic appearance and commonly used male names. Dominant images and representations essentialize Muslim males

with brown skin, turbans, and beards (Gotanda, 2011; Joshi, 2006) and associate them with suspicion (Ali, 2014; 2016), fear (Love, 2009), and terrorism (Gotanda, 2011). Gotanda (2011) described a "raced body" as embodying "commonsense" understandings of a racial group rooted in phenotype and appearance. Zaynab's description of how people at school perceived Muslims offers a common racialized image reflective of dominant political and media images encompassing a Muslim identity. Popular culture couples such representations (as described by Zaynab) with violence and terrorism (Joshi, 2006; Mishra, 2013; Naber, 2008).

Dominant racialized representations of Muslims emerged in conversations among peers, as well in participants' understanding about others' perceptions of them. Participants discussed two different ways this manifested in school: recollection of specific interactions or overheard comments, or their perceptions of how others viewed them. Like most of the participants, Sanam shared that people at school do not overtly discuss Muslims as "that kind of topic doesn't really occur a lot", but she added that "visually they have to wear hijab" (headscarf) to be identifiable as Muslim. Racialized assumptions and images about Muslims reflect dominant representations of the veiled Muslim woman, becoming a commonplace gendered religious signifier in how peers perceived Muslims. This conversation prompted Sanam to recall a peer's comment during a substitute teacher-led in-class group activity on different types of cyberbullying, including Islamophobia. She shared:

> Text 4.2
>> So, one time we were doing this thing and this girl saw being Muslim as kind of like belonging to a certain race rather than it being a religion. And this other girl who had a Muslim father, she was like, "No, it's more religion rather than race". I think most people think that Muslims are only South Asians rather than like multiple races. I think that caught my attention because they pulled up an article and something about Islam came up. So that's the only time I heard it. But I think in general that's what people have the mentality of.

While Zaynab discussed monolithic assumptions to be tied to phenotype, Sanam's observation identifies South Asian communities to be conflated with Muslims. Though Sanam recalled this

conflation as a one-time occurrence, she found it to align with people's general perceptions about Muslims. Mishra's (2013) article discusses similar conflation despite South Asian religious diversity (e.g., Hindu, Sikh) (Mishra, 2013). Sanam's observations of both the hijab and South Asian physical features as evoking images of an Islamic identity reflect the dominance of such images in the representation of the Muslim community. The normalcy of such images dominate people's mindsets about what a Muslim person looks like and reinforces racialization of religion through racial, ethnic, and phenotypical characteristics.

Leila, a Palestinian American, also observed that people incorrectly conflated religious and cultural identities. In explaining how she viewed herself based on her ethnic/racial and religious identities, she shared:

Text 4.3

> They're completely different things. Cultures, I think, are like your ethnicity, where you're from. Culture and your religion are two completely separate things. Because I have Palestinian Christian and Palestinian Catholic friends that basically have the same culture. They have the same rules or like how they grew up. It's the same. And what they eat and what they do is the same as us and like traditions. But what they believe in, like when it comes to God, and when it comes to their actual religion, it's different. It's a slight difference in what we believe in and yeah. So, I think that they are two completely different things. I see a lot of people confuse that.

Leila's observation indicates the normalcy of "religification" in how others perceive Muslims (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012), wherein cultural practices are conflated with religion, thus, racialized as Muslim. Orientalist assumptions and representations support monolithic ideas about the cultural and regional diversities of Muslim communities (Ali, 2016) and consolidates Muslim as an umbrella identity (Maira, 2010). In a study on Pakistani migrant laborers, Rana (2011) argued that the racialization of Muslims is embedded in a "global racist system" post-9/11, resulting in the emergence of a new, unofficial racial category perceived as a threat. Similarly, in this study, participants noted the dominance of Arab, Middle Eastern and South Asian features in the monolithic phenotypical assumptions of their peers and others at school in how they perceived

Muslims. Such assumptions become dangerous as not only certain racial/ethnic and phenotypical appearance dominate media and political presence, but because those representations have generally included violence, terror, fundamentalism, and suppression. Rana (2011) argued:

> The conceptual history of Islamophobia is based in a theory of racial ascription of bodily comportment, superimposition, and dissimulation—that is the assorted ways to define 'race' based on visual attributes such as skin color and phenotype, as well as customs and costumes. The process of racializing Muslims involves placing biological and cultural determinism in a contradictory logic purporting that race is immutable and essential but simultaneously mutable and fluid (p. 28).

Participants' descriptions of how others perceived Muslims indicate the dominance of South Asian and Middle Eastern phenotypes and practices (traditions, names). This racialization connects to Muslim representation in media, as well as textbook representation (see Chapter 3). Findings in the next section probe deeper into the types of vilifying discourses that surround these youth, and how they position a Muslim identity as a security and cultural threat.

Students observed dominant stereotypical depictions to affect how others, particularly peers, perceived the Muslim community. These students did not necessarily make such observations based on one-on-one interactions, rather based on peer "jokes", discourse about Muslims, curricular coverage, and dominant stereotypes as they circulated in schools. The uncontested normalcy of such representations has been consequential for Muslims and Muslim-appearing folks. For example, post-9/11, people who fit stereotypical descriptions encountered increased discrimination and hate (Love, 2009; Zahedi, 2011). Students, like Zaynab, Sanam, and Imran, shared the types of implicit messages they received about their religious identity in and outside of school. Imran, for example, further elaborated on how others perceived Muslims:

> Text 4.4
>> Imran: It would be somebody, like not a physical character trait, but like a characteristic somebody that may be strict on women, abusive… Somebody who is kind of like, who would kick somebody out of a group because they aren't Muslim. Somebody who's an isolationist.
>> RQamar: Have you heard anyone say that?

Imran: Yea. But whenever they do mention that they do mention them being extremist and all that.
RQamar: Who talks about them like that?
Imran: Students. Kids, some kids are like that. Parents. Students' parents. So, it's like a thing that maybe gets passed down.

Imran's description exemplifies the prevalence of gender and racial microaggressions (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2014) occurring at an individual level but invoking racialized images of oppressive males and oppressed females. This demonstrates how peers perceived Muslims as outside of dominant societal norms. Interestingly, while students clarified that such overt occurrences were infrequent, their descriptions of how others perceived them evoked the ordinariness of stereotypical, racialized, and gendered assumptions about Muslims (specific instances discussed in the remaining findings).

Racialization of religion and subsequent microaggressions reflect institutional and systemic racism seeping into schools. In the interviews, students recalled their experiences or observations of anti-Muslim rhetoric. Imran's comparison of his general experience as a Muslim within his community and at school focused on institutional and systemic processes as impacting others' perceptions of the Muslim community. Specifically, he described:

Text 4.5
There's a lot of stereotypes that are negatively portraying us, as something more radical, or maybe something that is almost inhuman in how we act or how strictly we follow something.

He observed that peers' perception fit the violent and oppressive conceptualizations of Muslims found in media. Muslim American students in K-12 to higher education are aware of the ways Islamophobia and anti-Muslim rhetoric seeps into schools and informs how their peers or educators perceive them (Wheatley, 2019). Imran's understanding of the role of media representation shows his critical awareness of its impact on people (specifically, peers and their parents). In this way, his explanation suggests that misconceptions or stereotypical labels reflect institutional racism (e.g., media representation). Pérez Huber and Solórzano's (2015) model of

racial microaggressions demonstrates that racial microaggressions reflect institutional racism and macroaggressions. They define institutional racism as:

> formal or informal structural mechanisms, such as policies and processes that systematically subordinate, marginalize, and exclude non-dominant groups and mediates their experiences with racial microaggressions. Institutional racism is a key component to understanding the function and permanence of racism in the US (p. 301).

Domestic and international policies, political rhetoric, and media coverage continued and fostered mistrust and vilification of Islam and Muslim communities. These processes influence the perception of Muslims and these youth's experiences in schools. Similarly, Hala observed that dominant discourses perceive Muslims through a religious lens, not their cultural, racial, ethnic identities. In other words, "religification" (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012) dominates in how others perceived Muslims. The erasure of those other identities results in a stereotypical homogenization of the group that consists of violence, terror, oppression, and religious fundamentalism. This standardization of a Muslim identity is not reflective of people's individual beliefs, but rather dominant set of beliefs about Muslims. Hala, like Imran and some other students, suggested that misconceptions about Muslims reflect societal beliefs, media, and what young people may often hear at home; in other words, it is a normal part of their social environment.

Students who do not fit the essentialized notions of an Islamic identity or appearance were not as easily presumed Muslim. Aisha, a visibly Muslim female who identified as Caucasian, believed that her Muslim peers at school could evade detection as Muslim based on their attire. She compared her schooling experience as a Muslim to her Muslim peers, stating:

Text 4.6
> There are people who do stereotype me. Like there are Muslim kids in my school. You can't even tell they're Muslim because they like, they blend in so well and they do that to like kind of like avoid on people messing with them. I think like one kid has an earring just to like make people think, hey, I'm like you, you know.

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Aisha experienced gendered racialization as a Muslim at school (discussed more below), which she connected to her religious visibility (hijab). Her observations exemplify the role of appearance in shaping one's experience and relation to others at school. She suggested that her peers rendered her an outsider as she was unable to "blend in" like some of her Muslim peers, who presumably did not wear hijab like her, implying that her hijab superseded in other's racial perception of her. Her response also suggests that "blend[ing] in" with school peers reflects a school navigational strategy (explored further in Chapter 5) to avoid racialization, faith-based racism, and harassment.

From curricular and classroom discourses to interactions with peers, student participants encountered a reproduction of racialized and gendered notions embedded in the dominant rhetoric (political and media) about their religious identity. Dominant and peers' perceptions racialized Muslim students and the overall community based on essentialized depictions focusing on racial/ethnic appearance, culture, hijab, and clothing. At the intersection of their religious, racial/ethnic, and gender identities, these youth shared snippets about their schooling, showing the normalcy of subtle and overt racial (Kohli, 2012; Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015) and gender microaggressions (Solórzano, 1998). Yet, these microaggressions, as a few of the students explained, reflected ideas that their peers heard and internalized about the Muslim community (e.g., through media, political beliefs, etc.). As the excerpts in this section show, some peers at school conflated South Asian appearance, brown skin, hijab, and certain cultural practices with Islam – this conflation appeared to harbor negative connotations.

II.   Racializing "Allahu Akbar" as a Racial Microaggression

Participants overwhelmingly shared the recurrence and dominance of threat-based racial microaggressions about Muslims circulating at their middle and high schools, specifically reinforcing "terrorist" stereotypes and the phrase "Allahu Akbar" as a "terrorist" slur. Their

encounters with these racial microaggressions exemplify the normalcy and minimization of hostility reproduced in schools through some peers.

Racialized and orientalist rhetoric about Muslims manifested as racial microaggressions in students' experiences. When I asked Leila when and what she has heard about Islam at school, she recalled a "trend going around in [her] middle school and high school":

Text 4.7
> They would yell Allahu Akbar, and everybody would actually get scared and it would cause like a huge argument between like us and them. Truthfully, that's not something that should be said in like a rude way. And that nobody should disrespect another religion like that.

In the introductory questionnaire, Leila entered a 'maybe' regarding whether she encountered bullying at school on account of her religious identity. In her interview, she explained her response, drawing on the circulation of the phrase "Allahu Akbar" at her school:

Text 4.8
> I feel like people sometimes say things that hurt others without knowing that it hurts them. And someone will always say something that's like rude or insensitive, like the whole Allahu Akbar thing. When people first started saying it, yeah, I got very offended because it was, in my view, they had no right to say something they didn't understand. They didn't understand why we said it. They didn't understand… It offended me very much because it gave everybody the idea, it kind of spread the idea that most, like all Muslims are terrorists. I usually just stayed quiet because this was like in sixth, seventh grade. I would stay quiet, and I would just like keep going, like move on with my life and it would annoy me. And I would get like a different view on that person. So, it wasn't until like one of my closer friends said it and like I automatically stopped her. I was like, you don't say anything like that. And then I had to go into like an explanation of like why that offends me, why it's wrong, and why it's disrespectful. And right after she automatically says she's sorry. And every time now that she hears someone else say it, she'll stop them too.

"Allahu Akbar" is an Arabic phrase that translates to "God is the greatest;" it is a common phrase used by Muslims around the world during prayer, for greeting, to praise. Not surprisingly, the phrase evokes images of violence and terrorism for many non-Muslims as media portrayals reinforce its vilification on films, television, talk shows, and more (Beydoun, 2018). Some peers'

use of this phrase evoked images of the Muslim threat – reinforcing ideas about a Muslim

religious identity as violent. Textbook coverage, as the previous chapter shows, also presented

Muslims, Islam, and Muslim dominant countries as a social and cultural threat. As such, some

peers used this everyday Arabic phrase, with religious significance for Muslims and used by non-

Muslim who grew up in Muslim-majority countries, as a form of racial microaggression that

reinforced the terrorist threat stereotype about the Muslim community. The occurrence of this

racial microaggression across different schools indicated not only its normalcy, brushed off as a

"joke", but also reinforced the acceptability of racialized slurs about Muslims.

Sanam experienced this racial microaggression blurted at her high school. When asked if

she has encountered any situations in which others perceived Muslim or Islam negatively, Sanam

clarified:

> Text 4.9
>
> I guess we don't really talk about it that much…In ninth grade when I was in bio, and they would shout random things like Allahu Akbar. That would be like the only time I have experienced it.

Throughout the interview, Sanam noted very minimal discussions or references to Islam or

Muslims at her schools. Yet, some peers engaged in using racialized slurs that reinforced the

"terrorist threat" stereotype about Muslims.

Hala also recalled the use of this racialized slur by her peers at her middle and high school

at times Muslims or Islam, and related topics, came up in her classes. When asked about the

representation of Muslims in schools, Hala observed that course coverage of Muslims in

classrooms tends to be negative, which in her perspective reinforced ideas that "Muslims are the

bad people." She explained:

> Text 4.10
>
> Every time Islam is brought up in a class, you'll hear kids like in the background making fun. They'll be like Allahu Akbar. They mock it a lot. And that's not something like, I'm not joking about that, you know. They will say it so many times, every time that it's mentioned and they're making fun. They mock it, you

know. Something that is so serious to us, they mock it. They definitely do not know what it means. It really does piss me off. Yeah. It also kind of saddens me.

Hala expressed her irritation and sadness over these derisive utterances, but also stated that she tried to ignore them and did not want to address these concerns to protect herself from harassment. Given that this occurred in the context of her former middle and high schools, she was concerned about her "safety" because of her school. Hala said, "I know I would not be safe, you know." During the interview, she also shared that a Muslim hijabi girl was physically attacked, beaten outside of the school by peers. In addition, she had mentioned tensions between White students and non-White students that sometimes erupted in "fights between races".

Aisha shared multiple instances in which one or more of her peers, in and outside of class, made what she referred to as "jokes". When asked if she has had to share anything related to her religious identity in school, Aisha referred to her CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) course, where Muslim identity in relation to violence materialized through course content and in peer-to-peer interactions. Aisha described herself as vocal about Islam in her CSI class, because that space afforded her and her classmates time to converse during group work or independent work, which she referred to as "free time". During a conversation between Aisha and a few of her classmates about Christian baptisms, one of her peers asked "Oh, how do Muslims get baptized?" to which she replied, "We don't get baptized". Then, another one of her classmates said "Oh, they get vests". Aisha explained that by "vests" her classmate meant "suicide bomber vest". Aisha recalled:

Text 4.11

I was so offended, but I knew the person so I didn't think they were being offensive. They were just trying to be funny, which by the way, wasn't funny. But um, yeah. I was like, no, we say our Shahada [profession of faith]. Basically, and this kid goes, "Oh my gosh, isn't that…?" I didn't say it was the shahada, but he was like, "Oh wait, is that the shahada?" And I said, yea. Like I brought it up so much like people were actually googling it and trying to figure out what it was.

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This class included the topic of terrorism and related video content as part of the curriculum. In this instance, the reinforcement of violent tropes about Muslims appeared as racial microaggressions which Aisha described as a joke. Aisha, instead, attempted to divert such narratives into sharing her religious identity, finding that it ultimately encouraged and led others to learn a bit more about Islam. Aisha remembered a substitute for the CSI course who "mispronounced [her] name on purpose" and showed videos that involved the use of Arabic language in audio and written forms which were not translated and presented in a violent context. Aisha assumed "it might've scared people" around her, but it made her "slightly uncomfortable" because she was the only visibly Muslim student in the classroom. She mentioned that her friend in the class was also surprised at the content being shown in class. Aisha, however, "took this to the principal" and the substitute teacher "eventually stopped". Aisha's experience in this course offers a glimpse into how course content and material can be used to marginalize and reinforce a violent racialization of Muslims. Besides creating a hostile environment for her in the classroom, the racialized othering of Muslims through language and images renders them as violent and threatening.

Peers usually made offensive comments which Muslim youth, including Aisha, perceived as "jokes". In her experience, class materials or topics could sometimes result in the use of racialized epithets and both subtle and overt cases of racial microaggressions. Aisha also shared other instances in which the phrase "*Allahu Akbar*" was used in the school setting. During a lunch period, Aisha and her friend joined a group of their peers to play Frisbee. She described, "This kid threw [the frisbee] at me and was like Allahu Akbar. And I just kind of looked at him like, don't say that. And he's like, what's so wrong about it?" Aisha remembered another student, who was playing Frisbee with them, asked if he knew what the phrase meant, making him "chill out a little bit". Aisha added, "I don't know if he was backing me or like trying to like put it out there".

Often racialized slights appear in the form of jokes, are brushed off as jokes and minimized. Yet, they are still reflective of how Muslims are framed in society and influence how people think about Muslims. The minimization of such forms of racial microaggressions is embedded in how Muslims are perceived and have had real life consequences for people who identify as Muslims. Joking about a stereotype that evokes fear of the Muslim in people's minds is a harsh reality for people who suffer the consequences of these fears (e.g., dehumanization, silencing of violence against Muslims, etc.).

Misbah also experienced and observed that some peers frequently engaged in similar "jokes". That is, they considered Muslims "not safe to be around" and as "terrorists". Misbah explained these occurrences were "uncalled for" but appeared "in a joke manner than a serious matter". Hania remembered that once a peer "bullied" her about something related to 9/11 by another student at her school, illustrating how Muslim youth encounter narratives that largely position them within discourses of violence and threat. Perpetrators of anti-Muslim slurs minimize their prejudice as jokes (Chaudry, 2021) and maintain racist religious nativism by rendering Muslims as the Other and a foreign threat. Muslim youth's interpretations of racialized slurs as jokes indicate the normalcy of such slurs within the school context amongst peers, and as will be discussed later, by some institutional actors.

Most student participants experienced stereotypical remarks or comments about Muslims from their peers "whom [students did] not know too well." Imran shared that his peers have engaged in "mostly name-calling" but he has "never been like physically attacked". Imran also explained:

Text 4.12
I have never felt that need to [talk to a teacher] because a lot of people they joke around. They're not too serious and it's a topic that stays around me for like, I think the longest has been like a week after something major has happened. And I don't believe like that they're like solely just wrong or like bad because they have these beliefs. Media portrays us as something big, so it's obviously a lot on

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what [peers] watch and that's really hard to control. And it really shouldn't be controlled because it's their own personal choice to watch that. But you know just the idea, like them being ignorant enough to watch one certain thing, that can be a problem. They should like diversify themselves in what they view. They would be a bit more knowledgeable.

Imran categorized name-calling, what I understand as a racial microaggression rooted in anti-Muslim sentiments and racialization, as trivial because he interpreted them as jokes. But he also expressed awareness of how his peers' negative, stereotypical remarks were a product of what they may have heard in the news. As such, he pointed out systemic issues as a root cause for Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments, but also found that people can be more critical of what they watch and where they get their information from. Imran implied that anti-Muslim sentiments are more prevalent in "times of conflict" (cf Eraqi, 2015a, p. 73) or negative media coverage (cf. Dupper, Forrest-Bank, & Lowry-Carusillo, 2015).

With the dominance of racialized and gendered ideas about Muslims embedded in Orientalist and threat-based discourses, it was troubling to find that most students internalized racialized epithets and slurs as jokes. I argue that this internalization is intensified when anti-Muslim rhetoric is institutionally perceived as harmless or as jokes. Yet a few students, depending on the situation, viewed subtle and overt encounters with racial microaggressions as problematic and upsetting. However, those students also voiced concerns over not being able to do something about it for a variety of reasons that largely echoed confusion over whether the situation warranted teacher or administrative action. Seven of the ten student participants identified their experiences with racial microaggressions as "jokes" whereas the other three discussed some ways they experienced racial microaggressions but did not view them as jokes.

III.   Gendered Racial Microaggressions Reinforce "Religification" and Racialization

Layered racial and gendered microaggressions at the intersection of religious identity impacted the schooling experiences of Muslim youth, reinforcing racialization and "religification" rooted in orientalist rhetoric. Building on the previous sections, this section focuses on the gendered aspect of these conflations and subsequential othering with implications for Islamic religious identity to be viewed as outside the norms and as a potential threat. I found this to also have implications for students' sense of community with others in and outside of school.

Muslim youth noticed dominant perceptions that rendered the Muslim community as "pre-modern", "anti-American", and prone to violence (cf Ali, 2014). In addition to phenotype and culture, hijab was identified as a key marker of how others imagined a "Muslim", highlighting the salience of a female gender identity in understanding "racialization of religion" (Joshi, 2006). Participants also discussed how dominant societal and school narratives were constricted by oppressive gender binaries (Ali, 2014). This section particularly focuses on the gendered experiences of Muslim females, both those who wore hijab and those who encountered assumptions about hijab. These narratives highlight racist assumptions at the intersection of faith and gender identities circulating within schools--classrooms, interactions with teachers, and interactions with peers. Encounters in non-academic settings also contributed to students' layered experiences with gender and racial microaggressions at the intersection of their religious identity.

Religious Signifiers – Stereotyping Female Muslims

Religious symbols, appearance, and other cultural practices become proxy for a 'Muslim' identity (Rana, 2011; Zahedi, 2011). Besides racial/ethnic identity or features, hijab carries racialized meanings about religion for my focal students. Imran described the following characteristics in how he thought others perceived Muslims:

Text 4.13
> They do associate things like a hijab to Muslims. If they're not wearing one, they can't distinguish them as Muslim. [People] think they all do [wear hijabs] and have beards, longish beards. I mean they don't often really bring it up. It's not really a general conversation we have.

Racialization of Islam involves gendered assumptions that limit others' perceptions of Muslims. Imran, and other participants, clarified that peers did not overtly engage in discussions about Muslim appearance; rather, he assumed these signifiers (e.g., beards, hijab) or "religionized" (Mir, 2014, p. 6) images dominated his peers' assumptions.

Popular discourses in and outside of schools imagine a Muslim identity to include religious veiling. Aisha's story, an outlier in my study, demonstrates how the hijab not only evokes gendered ideas about a religious identity, but also assumptions about one's racial/ethnic identity. She provided insight into how her peers engaged in raced and gendered assumptions about her, clarifying the process of racialization in how her conversion and adoption of hijab affected how others perceived her. Aisha shared:

Text 4.14
> People have all these like stereotypes. As an American normally, like I grew up thinking that certain people are better than other people, whether it's religion or race or whatever. And a lot of Americans had that tendency. I have noticed after like I've become Muslim, because lots of people assume that I'm Arab or Irani or Pakistani or something that's like from another country, they don't see me as I'm White.

Post-conversion, Aisha was de-raced as white and raced as racial/ethnic groups commonly associated with Muslims, illustrating the way Islamic religious veiling positions one as a foreigner and outsider (even if temporarily). According to Selod (2015), societal perceptions of white female Muslims differ depending on whether they practice religious veiling or not. For a racially white Muslim female, a *hijab* results in their racialization as Muslim, while its removal may result in their de-racialization as Muslim (Selod, 2015). Thus, dominant discourses position people with Islamic religious symbols as Others, as well as reinforce other assumptions about

one's ethnic/racial identity in the public's eye. For white Muslim converts, conversion into Islam in combination with adopting Islamic religious signifiers compromised access to whiteness, or the privileges and rights afforded through whiteness (Galonnier, 2015; Selod, 2015).

Though the terms "Muslim" or "Islam" generally evoke images of brown people, Aisha's racialization involved religious signifiers, or religious visibility (Husain, 2019). This adds another dimension into the racialized experience of Muslim, and their unique experiences based on their racial/ethnic, gender, religious, and cultural identities. Aisha's experience exemplifies the social construction of race and racial identity, a process embedded within historical and contemporary political and media representation. Even for white-passing Arab Muslim, access to privileges associated with whiteness is situational and ultimately affected by their ethnic, cultural, and religious affiliation (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007). However, I found that students who may not readily appear Muslim also experienced racialization and racial microaggressions along their multiple marginalized and othered identities – race/ethnicity, gender, and religion.

The next section builds on this gendered racialization involving religious signifiers, specifically examining them as racial and gendered microaggressions. Typically, female Muslims, regardless of their veiling choices, experienced gendered microaggressions reflecting orientalist and racialized assumptions about their religious identities. I divide the following discussion into two themes describing the racialized othering of female Muslims for those who veil and those who do not veil.

Gendered Racial Microaggressions Targeting Hijab

Female Muslims encountered racialized comments and racial microaggressions targeting their religious and gender identities both in and outside of school. Hijabi (females who wear a headscarf) students and students' with hijabi family members or acquaintances shared their experiences with anti-Muslim rhetoric and sentiments reflective of the orientalist and the threat-

based stereotypes that surround Muslim communities. While the previous section argues the dominance of religious signifiers as a primary way non-Muslims perceive Muslims, this section shows how these religious signifiers fulfilled their stereotypes and racialized (mis)conceptions about Muslims. The following narratives provide insight into the reproduction of such tropes in the lives of females who veiled, reflecting racial and gender microaggressions.

Female students who wore hijab encountered overt hostility targeting their hijab. In addition, most female students recalled comments about the perceived oppression and lack of freedom of Muslim women. When asked about their experiences at school as a Muslim, hijabi students specifically shared experiences related to their religious veiling. Zaynab, who described her K-12 schooling experience as mostly positive, shared:

Text 4.15
> I wear the hijab and I went to Rise Middle School for a year. Rise Middle School was really fun. I did deal with some ignorant comments, but they were like joking. Like they didn't actually believe it. But I did make sure that, even when they were joking, I would explain to them and everything. I would say to them why what they said was wrong and why it's not funny. So yeah, I went through that and then my mom switched me to Orange Orchard. I went there for eighth grade. I'm trying to think if I went through… No, it was mostly like... It was all positive. I mean, I did deal with like bullying, but that's just because like different personalities, you know?

Some peers responded to Zaynab's religious visibility by seemingly drawing upon stereotypical assumptions about female Muslims. As Watt (2012) found, media, popular culture and rhetoric portray Muslim women as submissive and under the control of a patriarchal figure. Zaynab did not specify her peers' comments, but her and other students' experiences reflect the dominance of racialized assumptions about Muslim females. In explaining these occurrences as "jokes", the extent, impact, or dominance of stereotypes about Muslim women become minimized, or an individual issue, rather than reflective of systemic representational issues and racism. Rationalizing such occurrences as "jokes" indicates the prevalence and normalcy of racial microaggressions targeting gender and religious identities, and, thus, the internalization of racial

microaggressions. These occurrences also communicated the superiority of dominant Western traditions and feminism.

Societal, media, and academic (textbooks, curricular) representations trickle into peer-to-peer interactions and their perceptions about hijab and the female Muslim experience. Aisha, the other student who wore hijab at school, similarly focused on how her peers reacted to her appearance. During the interview, Aisha discussed the centrality of her religious identity, often positioning herself as "Muslim first" (cf. Naber, 2005). In discussing her experiences as a Muslim at school, she focused on her appearance:

Text 4.16

A lot of people see that I have a hijab and they avoid me. One, they make rude comments or even if I've talked to people, like they make rude comments to my face. And it's like, they're saying they're joking, but they're trying to be like cool with their friends and then they like pick on me more. Honestly, it's not the nicest thing. But I've kind of like gotten, like, resilient to it. I'm a really strong individual. It doesn't affect me as much as others, but I really wish people would be like less, I would say, arrogant and more open minded.

Racial microaggressions targeting her hijab contributed to a hostile school climate for Aisha. Though Aisha identified as a white female, her religious identity, particularly in the way others perceived her, superseded her racial identity. Aisha's case not only provided a clear example of the racialization of the hijab, but also religification and stereotypical assumptions forced upon Muslim youth in school settings. Ramadan (2022) refers to such experiences at the intersection of students' gender and religious identities as "religio-gendered microaggressions" that alienate women who veil in academic settings. Ghaffar-Kucher (2012) found that peers and school personnel perceived Pakistani-American youth through their religious identity over their racial/ethnic identities, resulting in others' assumptions about these students along dominant stereotypes (e.g., terrorist men, oppressed women). As this and other excerpts show, peers minimized these stereotypical perceptions about Muslim youth, particularly females who veil, and their othering as "jokes".

Some school peers overtly engaged in discourse positioning hijab and hijab wearing girls as oppressed and associated removal of hijab as symbolic of freedom. Responding to a question about negative or Islamophobic experiences, Zaynab shared an instance in which her group of friends walked over to another group of friends that she is not "close with":

Text 4.17

There was a guy who came up to me and was like, "Oh, I was like watching this documentary on Netflix." And I was like, "Okay." And he was like, "It was talking about how **oppressive Islam** is and how **they force you to wear that scarf** on your head." And I l looked at him and I was like, "Oh, I think you got it wrong. It's actually not like oppressive whatsoever." And then he was like, "Yeah." And he started talking more and then he was like, **"Yeah, you should draw some like…" He said inappropriate body parts,** but I'm not going to say them. He was like "**You should put that on it, and you should rip it to shreds. And you should draw pigs on it and need to like liberate yourself and like run a**way from that." And what was hurtful is that **my friend also took part in it and he started laughing as well, and the whole group started laughing**. And I believe that I was a freshman… All I was able to do was just say, "Oh, you have it all wrong" and I just got super emotional and ran to the bathroom. And I started crying. And later on my friend followed me and he was like, "Oh, I'm sorry for what happened. I didn't mean to laugh. I thought it was just like a funny thing". We talked about it and stuff. I actually don't think I talked to admin about it because I didn't know what they would do because it's not like you can really change someone's thoughts. [gender and racial microaggressions in bold].

This overt gendered racial microaggression reflects broader racialized, Islamophobic, and racist perspectives about Islam and Muslim. It also conveyed how institutions like the media (re)produce raced and gendered assumptions about female Muslims as oppressed and Islam as an oppressive religion). I found this occurrence, namely in the experiences of Zaynab and Aisha, to reflect racist nativism (Pérez Huber et al., 2008) as it positions western norms and identities as superior and liberating. Specifically, Zaynab's school peer felt compelled to inform her that removing her hijab and spewing obscenities on it would liberate her. Thus, these gendered experiences represent not only the discursively constructed superiority of practices and appearances associated with white cultural identity, but also suggested that conformity to Western standards and norms epitomized freedom. This interaction clearly exemplifies the supposed

incompatibility of Islam and hijab with Christianity and "western" dress, as well as the dominance and normalcy of racist religious nativism. Such rhetoric is further reinforced and justified by peers as jokes – i.e., through their laughs.

Additionally, these remarks perpetuate notions of female Muslims as sites upon which males can enact control by telling them what to do, what they should wear, how they are oppressed and how they can be freed. Though only one peer made this comment to Zaynab, the bystanders did not defend or support her; instead, they laughed at anti-Muslim and Islamophobic remarks, indicating the normalcy of brushing anti-Muslim rhetoric aside as jokes. Zaynab added:

Text 4.18
> I wasn't shy, but I was a little reserved because I wasn't like… You know, it's your first year of high school, you're trying to make friends and trying to fit in. So, I didn't really know how to defend myself. Like if it was more one on one, I can make him understand. But it was a whole group of people.

The positioning of racial microaggressions and racist comments as jokes indicates the normalcy of such perceptions and offers a glimpse into hostilities Muslim youth face in school settings, reflective of systemic and institutional depictions of Muslims.

Besides encountering gendered racial microaggressions that reflected racist religious nativism in these spaces and orientalist perceptions about Muslims, a few of the students recalled other hijabi girls' experiences with physical harassment. In discussing her experience as a Muslim at her high school, Hania compared her experience to a peer who wore hijab:

Text 4.19
> My personal experience has been really good. Like I know a girl, she wore hijab and she was harassed for that and she had to get a restraining order on this guy, but my personal experience has been really good, I've never gotten like, at Legacy High, like I've never felt like bad because of my religion, nobody has used any slurs and nobody has made any anti slogans.

Females who veiled experienced a gendered and racialized hostility targeting their religious and gender identities. Dupper et al. (2015) found that students with visible religious signifiers

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encountered harassment (e.g., a Muslim girl's hijab being pulled off). Hala briefly mentioned her schooling experience as a Muslim at her previous high school: "I've been harassed a lot of times because of my religion. A lot of times. Physically and verbally." Without elaborating on her experience, Hala described another Muslim girl's experience at her school:

Text 4.20

Yeah, a Muslim girl got beat up and when I say beat up, I mean beat up. She had a broken nose, broken ribs. Her lip was busted, her eyes were busted. All because she had a scarf on her hair. All because she had that. And I literally cried when I heard about this. Like I cried. She was just so sweet. I knew her, like she was so sweet and nobody ever did, she never did anything to hurt anyone. And all she was doing was walking, you know, we had a store across from our school, and all she was doing was walking there and they decided, hey, this is someone we don't like and we don't accept. So, we're going to go hurt her. She did not deserve that. And because of that she had to move to a completely different city because of how much she got affected by it. Yeah. That's why I'm terrified to always say something because you never know. You know, some people really will hurt you.

As other accounts from these students have shown, female Muslims who veiled encountered verbal harassment, microaggressions, overt racism, and physical harassment that communicated racist, nativist, and exclusionary attitudes. These accounts also exemplify the outsider status of Muslims. In sharing another Muslim girl's experience, Hala illustrates "racial battle fatigue" (Smith, 2004) – social and psychological stress-based responses to stressors such as racial microaggressions and hostile environments. Used to examine the racial experiences of Black and Latinx students, research (Smith, 2004; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2006; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007) has documented "racial battle fatigue" to manifest in anxiety, anger, frustration, withdrawal, avoidance, resistance, among others.

Female students encountered overt racialized hostility during "times of conflict" (Eraqi, 2015a) or due to political rhetoric, sharing their own stories, their families' stories, or those of their friends/acquaintances in and outside of school. Participants reflected on the impact of politics, the Trump administration, and 2016 election on their and their families' experiences. Some shared instances of hostility against females who veiled. Misbah, for example, recalled:

Text 4.21

>A lot of people would call us... like at school, they would call me a terrorist. And I think one time, like at a gas station, someone yelled terrorist. My mom wears the hijab. But otherwise, it's not really an issue.

Political rhetoric influenced the reproduction of racial and gender microaggressions at school. Regardless of whether a female practiced veiling or not, they received comments that associated their appearance and their religion as threats. This and other similar encounters illustrate hostility, racism, and Islamophobia that rendered these students as the Other, a foreigner, and simultaneously questioned their national identity (Zine, 2006). Aisha recalled various instances in public spaces that drew people's negative attention to her niqab, making her "uncomfortable". During "times of conflict" (Eraqi, 2015a), or when violent events or instances associated with Muslims or Islam occurred, Muslim women—especially those who veiled (hijab or niqab)—were perceived by others as outsiders. For example, Zaynab recalled a hostile encounter at a mall food court after the 2015 San Bernardino attacks in which a white female harassed Zaynab and her friends. Similarly, Leila recalled "weird stares" and "whispering" when going out with her mother wore hijab. Though these instances occurred outside of school, they show the pervasiveness of anti-Muslim sentiments.

These experiences reflect "systemic, everyday racism" (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015, p. 302), or racial microaggressions at the intersection of their faith and gender identities. In some cases, the girls internalized these racial microaggressions and rationalized them as jokes. From public spaces to school settings, students' narratives showed that females who veiled encountered stereotypical remarks reinforcing orientalist and violent tropes about Muslims, as well as, what I refer to as, "gendered freedom discourses" centered on veiling and other aspects of their clothing. I define "gendered freedom discourses" as dominant perceptions that view female Muslims' cultural identities, their clothing, and appearance as indicators of their religious suppression. These discourses emerge in the context of racist religious nativism that set taken for granted

norms. Subtle to overt racial microaggressions and racism presented in layered ways, communicating the preeminence of white, Western norms and inferiority of other groups and norms. The next section focuses on classroom and curricular manifestations of gendered racial microaggressions.

<u>Curricula and Peers Reinforce Gendered Racial Microaggressions about Hijab</u>

In addition to peer interactions, curricular materials and class discussions often reinforced stereotypical assumptions about Islamic religious veiling. Besides textbooks (see Chapter 3), supplementary curricular materials communicated narratives of female Muslim suppression and subordination, locating hijab and other Islamic religious veiling as symbolic of oppression in patriarchal societies. I asked students to consider curricular representation of Muslims, including Muslim women. Hala recalled her middle school English Language Arts:

> Text 4.22
> I got an article, and they were talking about how Muslim women are all oppressed to wear the hijab and they were victimizing the women who wear the hijab. You know what I mean? Like they didn't make Hijabi women look like strong, independent, modest women. Instead of praising the idea, they took it and made it into something bad, you know. It was just not true how they wore it. And it's true that in some countries, it's true. Some women are forced to wear the hijab. But the way that article was saying, they were saying that I think they gave some percentage that Muslim women are usually forced to wear the hijab and that Muslim men are the ones doing that to them. And they were making it seem as if the whole idea of Islam is force and violence. So, when you ask me if I'm learning about it in school, I learned about it, but I don't learn the truth. You know, everything I'm being taught is not the truth. It's all things that have been put up by society.

In this example, the article, an instructional tool and source of official knowledge for that lesson, reinforces stereotyped ideas about females that also minimizes their agency. The article furthers deficient and homogenous depictions of Muslim women, presenting students/ readers with stereotypical notions. From textbooks to classroom discussions, coverage about Muslim females remains limited to religious veiling, or, as Mir (2014) found in the experiences of female Muslim college students, "religionized" portrayals. It also positions hijab as a symbol of oppression that

limits women's agency, rights, and freedom, and furthers notions of Islam's "putative cultural captivity" – i.e., women trapped in a culture of suppression (Abu El-Haj, 2010, p. 250). These depictions reinforce orientalist understanding of Muslims, racialize Muslim women, and position them (their cultural, religious, ethnic identities) as inferior.

The topic of Islamic veiling also emerged in Misbah's AP Human Geography course. Specifically, she recalled a class debate on France's burqa and niqab ban:

> Text 4.23
>> Misbah: A few weeks ago in my AP human geography class, we were having a discussion on like burqas, and it was really interesting to see how like in France that they were banning burqas and Niqabs. So, we were having like a whole debate on that. So, it was like interesting to hear what other people had to say about it because I only really heard what my family had to say. So, people were saying that you could see it from both perspectives when in my family it's more like one perspective because we're defending our side. So, it's like, oh, it's their culture and then you're just going to change it like that. So, it's like talking about it from two different ways.
>> RQamar: What did you think about the discussion?
>> Misbah: It didn't offend me. It was more interesting. Just to like to hear everything.
>> RQamar: Okay. And what did you take away from it?
>> Misbah: I could see where the other side was coming from.

Misbah's comment that she understood "where the other side was coming from" implies that she associated the ban as reflective of French culture, like the ideas presented in the *World History* textbook that describe France as a secular society with separation of church and state. This lesson has multiple implications: (1) it may reinforce the acceptability of governmental control over female bodies, including women's choice to veil, and (2) it may reinforce the acceptableness of laws that perpetuate Islamophobia and fear of Muslims. Limited and simplistic portrayals of Muslims or lack of representation of women who do not veil further their racialization and "religification", in which coverage of religion-based identity dominates over other identities factors. However, Misbah implied that none of the debate participants had personal experience of wearing or understanding hijab, noting:

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Text 4.24

It was like I could kind of contribute to it even though no one that I know personally… Well, no one like that I see often wears [hijab]. But I could have answered questions that people had about like what's the purpose of it, why are they covering up, why do you cover up your hair? And stuff like that.

Unlike her classmates, Misbah carried her ethnic and religious based knowledge about hijab to engage in these conversations. In other words, Misbah's understanding of these issues reflect her "racial literacy" (Sealey-Ruiz, 2013), albeit about her religious identity. Sealey-Ruiz (2013) refers to racial literacy as the "skill and practice in which individuals are able to probe the existence of racism and examine the effects of race and institutionalized systems on their experiences and representation in US society" (p. 386). Perceived as a symbol of oppression (as exemplified in textbooks, supplementary course materials, or interactions with peers), students with personal experience and proximity to these issues could provide a non-dominant perspective, as implied in Misbah's response. Misbah also added:

Text 4.25

From what I heard, I felt like it was more like well that people actually do care. And so, because people were like sympathizing with the women who were wearing the burqa and niqab, so it helped.

Given Misbah's description of the debate, it seemed that both Misbah and her peers engaged with multiple perspectives on the issue of hijab. References to Muslim women, however, appeared limited given their coverage in relation to veiling. For example, none of the interviewees, nor my review of textbooks, discussed empowering representations of women who wear the hijab or niqab, e.g., showing them in leadership positions.

Only a few study participants recalled in-class conversations or discussions specifically focusing on hijab or Islamic religious veiling. Most agreed that discussions about religion occurred very rarely, identifying it as a "controversial" topic. For example, Leila claimed:

Text 4.26
> I feel like most of the teachers that I've had in the past and now don't really like to bring up the topic of culture or religion or anything that people could actually argue about or fight, and it can cause like a sensitive stance.

Curricular and classroom coverage of topics related to religion remained minimal (Loewen, 2007) and controversial. Zaynab, on the other hand, did not reference discussions related to Islamic veiling in her classes, but attended a unity forum in which her peers shared common misconceptions and stereotypes about different groups of people or places. Regarding Muslims, she heard:

Text 4.27
> Muslims are terrorists…Muslim women are oppressed. They're forced to wear the hijab. We hear the whole like Islam supports homophobia. Oh, and the camel stuff. Like, you know, we ride camels. It's very traditional, like women in the kitchen, like just against feminism. Yeah. Basically, like oppressive and all that stuff.

This forum, with intentions to debunk stereotypes, still relates to the dominant narratives about Muslims circulating in society. As this chapter shows, students encountered some of these stereotypes and anti-Muslim racial microaggressions at their schools. These stereotypes demonstrate the continuity of orientalist viewpoints about the Muslim world, as well as the dominance of threat-based discourses about Muslims.

The pervasiveness of hijab as a source and symbol of oppression, as well as being antithetical to secularism, modernity, and a Western identity, reinforce orientalist and racialized ideas about the Muslim community. It instills notions of religious dominance and oppression in the Muslim community, framing the community through a religious lens (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012). Hala assessed such representations (e.g., oppressed hijabi) to have ramifications for not only Muslim students, but also her non-Muslim peers, teachers, and overall school community. She explained:

Text 4.28

> They end up getting that idea stuck in them forever. And then they automatically judge a Muslim when they see them… You know, it's like if you see a priest walking around in his suit and you can tell he's a priest, nobody is going to comment, you know. Nobody is going to be like "oh, look at him. He's a terrorist." Nobody's gonna say that. And nobody's going to give him, nobody's going to harass him because he's a priest. No one will ever do that. I don't think that's ever going to happen. Even saying that sounds weird. Like no one will do that. But the minute you see a woman with a scarf on her head, or maybe even someone who's walking with a Muslim person, all of a sudden, the whole vibe changes. The feeling of that, that energy just completely changes. For me, I think it's because those people grew up getting the wrong ideas from the wrong people and it's because they never took the time to really get to know Muslims, to really understand Islam. Because a Muslim person is not just Islam, a Muslim person is a human being. They are a person. We are Muslims, we have names, we have feelings, we have ideas, we have everything a Christian would have. We are human beings, you know.

Hala's observation indicated her awareness of societal acceptance of certain religious beliefs and appearances over others. She demonstrates her racial literacy in breaking down and unpacking the process of racialization on a systemic level, not just within schools, through curriculum, or among peers. Her narrative indicates the dominance of orientalist perspectives about Muslims that consider Muslims untrustworthy, reflecting what I am calling *racist religious nativism,* wherein certain intersections of racial and religious identities are rendered a norm for American, even Western, society (particularly White and Christian).

Gendered Racial Microaggressions Target Non-Hijabi Female Clothing

Girls who did not veil also experienced what I am calling "gendered freedom discourses" rooted in Orientalist ideas and notions of the oppressed Muslim woman. That is, girls described experiences in which their peers, curricular materials, and, to some extent, teachers assumed their appearance and clothing (including religious veiling) reflected restrictions and suppression in relation to their religious identity. Boys, on the other hand, did not bring up any such experiences. The intersection of Muslim girls' gender and religious identities demonstrates how others positioned them as lacking freedom, a cultural threat (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Watt, 2012; Zahedi,

2011), and anti-American (Ali, 2014). Within this cultural threat, I found that some curricular materials and student peers deemed Muslim girls in need of saving (Zahedi, 2011).

Subtle microaggressions focused on female Muslims' clothing, inter/actions, and dietary choices/restrictions; the girls themselves described such occurrences as "jokes", or as inconsequential remarks. Girls who wore hijab did not discuss their clothing in and of itself; rather, they focused on some instances in which peers commented on their hijab. Students experienced racial and gender microaggressions that reinforced ideas of the Muslim threat – to American norms and security – embedded in orientalist perceptions and the terrorist trope. Girls who did not wear the hijab overwhelmingly shared instances in which peers scrutinized their clothing, appearance, inter/actions, and dietary restrictions/choices if they did not fit Western norms or expectations. Isik-Ercan (2015) similarly noted that Turkish American Muslim youth's religious identities became visible through modest clothing and dietary restrictions. Similarly, this study's participants shared instances of scrutiny that reflect gendered freedom discourses, manifest in racial and gender microaggressions, and communicate a sense of nativism (e.g., cultural and religious) rooted in racialization and orientalism.

In the introductory questionnaire, students shared whether their appearance indicated their religious identity. Only three out of ten students—Aisha, Zaynab, and Hania—answered in the affirmative. As discussed earlier, Aisha and Zaynab observed religious veiling. Hania, who attended a predominantly white high school, clarified her survey response in her interview: "At school, I think people don't know what I look like, they don't know if I'm Muslim or anything 'til I tell them or if it comes up in a discussion". In other words, she observed that the visibility of her religious identity depended on the situation, Hania explained:

Text 4.29
I don't wear tank tops or shorts and so in the summer people are like, "Oh, aren't you hot?" or something like that. And so that's when I'm like I can't wear those

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shorts or those tank tops or something like that. I think I dress a little more conservatively.

This exemplifies what I call "situational religious visibility", or religious visibility during warmer seasons or in instances in which peers found Muslim girls' actions to clash with normative expectations about clothing. Peers' remarks about her "situational religious visibility" is a manifestation of a racialized and gendered microaggression since such experiences dominated the female experience. Kumar, Seay, and Karabenick (2015) similarly found that their female participants' clothing drew attention from others. For example, like Hania, an immigrant Arab adolescent heard remarks about her clothes (i.e., "aren't you hot?") from peers outside of her ethnic, cultural, or religious group. Kumar et al. (2015) argued that female adolescents discussed their clothing because they were cognizant of how their peers set them apart from mainstream society, implying that "mainstream society rejected their community members" (p. 207). Hania's "situational religious visibility", in which her religious identity became visible or heightened during warmer seasons, reflected peer reinforcement of western gendered norms related to clothing. Such comments, perhaps unintentionally, communicated mainstream norms and highlighted the dichotomy, or opposition, between students' cultural, religious, and ethnic practices and values. Peer focus on girls' clothing ultimately sent messages about how their religious and cultural practices rendered them different from the norms.

School peers engaged in subtle racial and gender microaggressions through questions about girls' clothing when they did not fit dominant cultural norms and expectations. Sanam, for example, compared being a Muslim at home versus being a Muslim at school:

> Text 4.30
>
> Well, the only difference is like in basketball. I would wear leggings and a shirt and they would ask me like "Oh, is that like for your religious reasons?" And I'd be like, "Oh yeah". Obviously at home or around family, I don't have to explain why I have to do that. Or sometimes I complain, "oh, the dress is too short, I can't wear it" and they would be like "why?". I would be like "oh, you know it's for religious reasons" but like again at home, I don't have to explain that. It's

> kind of self-explanatory. Unless you've been my friend for a while, like you know me, it's kind of like you, they ask like, "Oh why?" And I'd have to be like, "oh, because of my religion." I'm used to it. I don't expect them to know why I do the things that I do. So, I don't mind explaining it.

The girls did not perceive these comments as slights; instead, they interpreted them as meaningless questions. Yet, female participants identified these instances on their own—without my prompting—suggesting the salience of this experience for them. While Sanam interpreted these interactions as inconsequential, I frame remarks over clothing as a form of subtle gendered racial microaggression for two reasons: (1) the girls brought up their clothing/appearance in response to several questions, indicating its repetitiveness (and possibly its effect on) in their schooling experience and (2) the way they discussed these experiences illustrated how their peers, perhaps unintentionally, verbally set them apart from the rest who followed dominant norms and expectations (cf Kumar et al., 2015). Unlike the girls, the boys did not appear to receive similar remarks about their clothing. Even in comparing her schooling experiences across K-12, Sanam again referred to her clothing:

Text 4.31

> I know for elementary school I didn't wear leggings under my shorts, because I didn't know if that was allowed per se. I didn't do that for the years I was there. But that's the only thing. I've never really had to like… I was never treated differently or like have to explain why because I'm Muslim. So, everything is kind of normal for me. Like I never had to like, I never was treated differently or stuff like that.

Clothing dominated Sanam's responses about her schooling, indicating the pervasiveness of gendered racial microaggressions that intersected with her ethnic, cultural, religious and gender identities that focused on her appearance. Repetitiveness of such comments may be internalized, rendering her different, and possibly an outsider. Muslim girls had to navigate not only their religious and cultural expectations, but also societal expectations (Hamzeh, 2011) – Mir (2009) calls this the "twin towers of surveillance" policing female Muslims (p. 250).

In discussing the role of religion in her everyday life, Leila referred to her clothing:

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Text 4.32

It's completely different than my expectation, like what people expect of me. Because you go into my school, and you'll see like a lot of people are in shorts or like really short dresses or stuff like that. And we, me and my friends, we stick with our normal jeans and maybe like a shirt or a tank top with a jacket with a flannel or whatever. So, like it affects how we dress.

Though she did not mention if anyone at school commented on her clothes, her focus on clothing suggested that understood it as something that set her apart from her peers at school. In other words, girls internalized that their clothing did not fit mainstream norms and expectations. These experiences, as well as limited curricular representation, positions Muslims and Islam in opposition to Western cultural and religious values and practices.

Similarly, Hala also referred to her clothing to discuss her religious identity and relationship with non-Muslim friends. She shared:

Text 4.33

For the most part, they don't really care what religion I am and they respect it. I think it plays a big part in my social life though. Because there's a lot of things that, you know, maybe a Muslim girl shouldn't be doing that is normal in society. For me personally, I don't wear ripped jeans because I don't feel comfortable. My parents don't make a big deal, but I just don't do it. Sometimes for my girlfriends, it's just kind of weird, you know. They're like, "how come you don't dress what is in," or something like that. And I hang out with guys, but I always have to draw the line and sometimes when I draw that line, a lot of people look at me like, why is she doing that? You know? So, I think for the most part they accept me, and they like me for who I am, but it's just like there are some things that are just weird to them and that makes them look at me in a little bit of a different way.

Lack of conformity to dominant social norms and expectations set Muslim girls apart from their peers and friends, making their culturally and religiously informed practices appear unusual, divergent, and antithetical to western norms. Dupper et al., (2015) found that religious minority youth (e.g., Catholics, Jews, Muslims) regarded their close friends' comments about their beliefs as "teasing" rather than bullying (p. 43). But they regarded similar comments from strangers or peers as negative in intent. Islamic informed practices are often rendered as strange, oppositional, and dichotomous to western norms (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2015; Joshi, 2006; Jackson, 2007). All the

girls who did not veil implied similar concerns about their clothing/appearance. This is not surprising when we frame such occurrences (i.e., questions about clothes) as common microaggressions occurring amid the backdrop of textbook narratives, classroom discussions, and peers' comments or "jokes" about Muslims. Despite their focus on clothing in interview responses, the participants also clarified the acceptance they received from friends. For example, while Hala's friends questioned her clothing preferences, she explained, "They honestly just love me for who I am, and they don't ever ask me to change. My girlfriends won't tell me like, oh, just like can you wear the ripped jeans. Like, it's fine".

Some gendered racial microaggressions about clothing reflect "gendered freedom discourses". Building on her observation of the terrorist stereotype about Muslim circulating at her school, I asked Misbah to discuss how her peers perceived or viewed Muslims. Like other girls, Misbah also referred to remarks and questions about her clothes, stating:

Text 4.34
> I have to address specific things like having to dress specifically. They think of it like, "Oh, you don't have any freedom, you can't do anything," and stuff like that. I usually say that it's not hard because once you've lived your whole life like a specific way, it feels weird not doing that. So, like thinking about like wearing like shorts or a tank top or stuff like that, it just feels really weird.

Misbah, unlike the other non-hijabi girls, noticed that others perceived her to lack freedom because of the way she dressed. Her description indicates that gendered racial microaggressions about clothing and appearance involve "gendered freedom discourses", and reproduction of racialized narratives embedded in orientalist viewpoints. In addition, I argue that these students' experiences around their clothing, from questions to comments about their lack of freedom, position them in opposition to western norms and as foreign Others. As Abu El-Haj (2010) found in a study with Palestinian high school students, schools functioned as "nation building" sites that define nationalism and what it means to be an American. Peer comments and perceptions about female Muslim clothing and its relationship to freedom communicates not only what it means to

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be American, but also the superiority of Western norms and the "cultural captivity" (Abu El-Haj, 2010, p. 250) of others.

Misbah addressed navigating societal expectations while maintaining her cultural and religious traditions, describing the tensions between both expectations in response to a question about the role of religion in her life. Specifically, she showed appreciation and love for her cultural and religious values and practices, while identifying some "setbacks", "like how we're restricted to dress a specific way or the food that we can eat and stuff like that." Misbah's identification of "setbacks" closely ties to dominant "gendered freedom discourses" she encountered at school, as well as indicates the possibility of internalization of socially constructed and mediated norms and expectations as superior.

In addition to the circulation of "gendered freedom discourses", peers engaged in a simplistic "religification" (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012) of Muslim girls. In response to a question about instances in which she shared her religious identity with others, Hala recalled questions about her faith:

Text 4.35
Whenever someone asks me, obviously, I'll say like I'm Muslim and a lot of people say like, "Oh really? How come you don't wear the scarf?" I'm just like, "well not all Muslim women wear the scarf". I usually say there's a lot of different views on it, you know. There are a lot of different opinions on whether you have to wear it or not. In the end, the scarf doesn't make me a Muslim, it's my faith that does. That's usually what I say if someone asks me. And then if the teacher brings up Islam, I definitely speak up and I say, you know.

Dominant perceptions at school, whether curricular or interactional, positioned hijab as a prime symbol of a female Muslim identity. Muslim women, unlike men, encounter inter- or intra-community comments about their religious identity and their religiosity (Hamzeh, 2011; Mir, 2009). Hala's experience similarly suggests the normalcy of Muslim females' identities being attached to hijab or other ways of veiling (Azim & Happel-Parkins, 2019), reflecting a "religionized" identity, or the process of "religification" (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012). Interestingly,

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curricular and peer interactions rendered female Muslims, regardless of the presence of religious signifiers and clothing, foreigners, and outsiders. Indeed, these comments about clothing reflect societal imposition over female bodies, in which society monitors and controls the definition of the oppressed and the liberated female.

These excerpts demonstrate the dominance of gendered racialization resulting in gendered racial microaggressions, wherein schools, through curricula, and peers regard female Muslims as visible sites in need of freedom and liberation. On the one hand, religious covering is associated with oppression, while its removal symbolizes freedom. Yet, the imposition of either notion onto women renders women as scrutinized subjects under patriarchal structures.

Both hijabi and non-hijabi female students encountered gendered racial microaggressions reflecting "gendered freedom discourses" embedded in racialization of Islam, orientalism, and nativism of western cultural and religious values. In other words, peers positioned these female Muslim students' appearance and clothing preferences as oppositional to dominant norms and possibly restrictive and antithetical to freedom. Peers scrutinized and questioned their clothing choices regardless of how the girls dressed and presented themselves, once their religious identities became visible (Azim & Happel-Parkins, 2019). These narratives, as well as the superiority of the dominant, white, and Western culture and traditions communicated through curricular, class and peer interactions, excluded and marginalized narratives of female Muslims, and severely lacked references to strong, thriving, and empowered Muslim females--veiled or not.

Discussion

This chapter focused on the racialized and gendered experiences of Muslim youth, focusing on specific manifestations of racial microaggressions in classrooms or among peers reflecting orientalism (Said, 1978), racialization of religion (Joshi, 2006), religification (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012), and what I call, *racist religious nativism.* I began this chapter by showing the

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racialization of Islam, as it manifested in participants' schooling experiences. Second, I identified the normalcy of threat-based rhetoric about Muslims. Finally, I discussed the gendered experiences of Muslim students, specifically the experiences of girls who wear or do not wear hijab. These findings indicate how racializing rhetoric positioned these youth as perpetual others, positioning their religious identities as foreign and contradictory to western norms.

Grounded in my findings, theoretical framework, and literature, I frame these occurrences as reflective of *racist religious nativism*. This form of nativism manifested in the systematic, multipronged dissemination (from political discourse, media, and school curricula) of racialized ideas about Muslims, Islam, and related racial/ethnic groups. These instances invoked ideas of Muslims, particularly veiled females, as a social, political and security threat, drawing from racialized and orientalist ways of perceiving Muslims. A few of these narratives highlighted how racialized perceptions about Muslims can be consequential, making people who appear Muslims susceptible to racialized violence and threats and positioning them as a problem at various levels, from media representation to curricular coverage. Racialized hostility and harassment are embedded in the historical and ongoing marginalization of Black, Indigenous, and people of color, their religious, spiritual, and cultural practices. These experiences highlight gender and racial microaggressions reflective of racist religious nativist attitudes, rooted in the supposed inferiority of Islam (including related people, places) and the superiority of whiteness and related practices (including religion).

Building on this chapter, Chapter 5 focuses on my study participants' school navigational processes as they encountered racialized hostility, racial microaggressions, and western religious nativism. The chapter will focus on students' resilience, resistance, and responses to anti-Muslim rhetoric through their "community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005).

Chapter Five: Religion as Capital: Muslim Students' Resilience and Resistance in School

Introduction

The previous chapters demonstrated that textbook discourses as well as Muslim student interactions with peers and teachers racialized Muslims through orientalist, threat-based, and dominant religion's nativist rhetoric. This rhetoric manifested in gender and racial microaggressions, discursively reinforcing the supposed opposition and incompatibility between western traditions and people with an Islamic religious identity. In this chapter, I examine participant responses to anti-Muslim sentiments and hostility that positioned their religious identity as violent and oppressive, rendering them foreign Others and in opposition to western norms.

Muslim students' narratives show that curricula, peers, and sometimes, teachers positioned Muslim religious affiliation in deficit terms, especially with regard to their "cultural differences" (Valencia, 2010, p. 3). Richard Valencia's "cultural differences" aspect of the deficit framework considers non-hegemonic cultural identities, particularly religious identities, in pathologic terms that negatively affect the educational trajectory and attainment of non-dominant students. For example, research on "gendered Islamophobia" (Zine, 2006) to "hijabophobia" (Hamzeh, 2011) shows that dominant perceptions in the West consider hijabi students as outsiders, oppressed, and non-academic.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Zaynab, a hijabi Syrian American, contradicted such deficit, gendered, and racialized perceptions about veiled women and their presumed oppression. Valencia (2010) argues that deficit discourses reflect "temporal changes", wherein ideological context shapes attitudes about a group of people (p. 13). In other words, political rhetoric and ideological beliefs of a particular time and place influence how dominant society perceives a group of people. For example, post-9/11, Muslim experienced a politicization of their religious

identity, but Muslim youth also adopted a pan-ethnic religious identity to build community (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012; Joshi, 2006; Maira, 2004; Naber, 2005). Above, I demonstrated how political context and orientalist assumptions affected my focal students' experiences and how others perceived them and their religious affiliation. Deficit perspectives about a Muslim religious identity may reflect what Valencia (2010) calls "cultural and accumulated environmental deficits" (p. 13) that frame one's familial and cultural environments as deficient.

Racialized and orientalist ideas about Muslims and Islam, gender and racial microaggressions, as well as *racist religious nativism* created a hostile environment at school and contributed to some of my focal students exhibiting what William Smith (2004) coined as "racial battle fatigue" (RBF). This chapter demonstrates that environmental stressors (e.g., racial and gender microaggressions discussed in the previous chapter) resulted in different responses to and interpretations of their experiences, including resilience and resistance. These students also drew from their "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) and their "community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005) to navigate school.

This chapter heavily draws from Yosso's (2005) "community cultural wealth" framework to forefront Muslim students' "array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts" (p. 77) that helped them address and navigate hostility. Grounded in Critical Race Theory's (CRT) focus on experiential knowledge and Yosso's (2005) "community cultural wealth" framework, I examine students' resilience and resistance in schools. Little research in the US American context have framed Muslim youth's experiences in educational settings through religious/spiritual capital (cf Park, Dizon, and Malcolm, 2020 for one exception), or social capital (cf Park & Bowman, 2015) approaches.

The closest guide for my theoretical approach is Pérez Huber's (2009) study on undocumented Latina/Chicana students. She shows how her participants drew on their

community cultural wealth to support their aspirations and resist racist nativism as manifested in immigration policy discourses. In addition to other forms of capital, Pérez Huber (2009) named "spiritual capital" as a form of capital that sustained Latina students in their undergraduate studies. Spiritual capital refers to "a set of resources and skills rooted in a spiritual connection to reality greater than oneself" as a part of undocumented Latinx students' community cultural wealth (p. 721). This capital encompasses ancestral histories, religious, and indigenous practices, and viewpoints (Pérez Huber, 2009). Spirituality, for example, became a source of hope for Latina college students, supporting their resilience in navigating hostile institutions.

Similarly, in this chapter I show that Muslim American youth responded to racialized hostility about their religion by centering their religious identity-based knowledges. It addresses my third research question: How do Muslim-American students perceive and re(interpret) the messages they receive about Muslims and Islam? To what extent do these messages influence their sense of identity? Participant interviews and closing questionnaires also addressed the following sub-questions: (1) How do Muslim youth navigate school and respond to anti-Muslim rhetoric? (2) To what extent do teachers, administrators, peers, or friends support Muslim youth's sense of self and identity with the school? I demonstrate that religious identity is an understudied and unique capital that informed how my participants navigated schools and responded to racialization, orientalist perceptions, and racial microaggressions.

Findings

Drawing on the "community cultural wealth" framework, I found that students used different forms of capital in relation to their religious identity to navigate school. Even though Yosso (2005) included "religious gatherings" as a form of familial capital (p. 79), I argue that religious identity and faith stand on their own as a kind of capital; my data show it played an important role in study participants' schooling experience, their resilience, and their resistance in

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the face of misconceptions about their community. From open advocacy to navigational silence to network building, students resisted racial microaggressions and racialization, and advocated for themselves and others, as well as their racial, ethnic, religious, and gender identities. Thus, religious identity acted as its own kind of capital, reflecting their community cultural wealth.

I organize this chapter in the following way. First, I show that religion is an important capital – in and of itself-- that informed students' perception of self. Second, I demonstrate how participants' families cultivate religious capital. Third, I highlight how the Muslim community provides navigational support to Muslim students as they negotiate higher education. Fourth, I show how participation in school clubs and organizations fosters Muslim students' sense of community. Fifth, I delineate how friends offer space to share resources, knowledge, and experiences. Sixth, I demonstrate how Muslim youth mobilize their religious capital to advocate for themselves and their Muslim communities. As such, Muslim youth navigated hostility at school by relying on and building their religious capital.

Using their religious identity and knowledge, study participants showed resilience and resistance to marginalization, anti-Muslim microaggressions and hostility as an act of self-preservation, or to openly advocate for better representation of Muslims and Islam in schools and curriculum. Finally, Muslim youth's responses represent their counterstories (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001) that resist hegemonic narratives and center their experiential knowledge. Their counterstories specifically focus on their religious identity and helps reframe their experiential knowledge as religious capital.

I. Faith and Religious Identity as a Dominant Capital

Student narratives indicated the prominence of faith and religious identity as capital my participants used to resist hostility, situated within systemic racialization and systematic politicization of the Muslim identity. The excerpts below show the importance of religious

identity in students' perception of themselves in relation to others. The later sections build upon religion as a form of capital, particularly its cultivation, in relation to other factors, such as family, community, friends, and school participation.

All study participants discussed the importance of their religious identity to some extent. The introductory questionnaire asked students to self-identify with regard to their race/ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender, academics, etc. (see Appendix A). Zaynab, a Syrian hijabi student, self-identified as Muslim American in the introductory questionnaire. During the interview, Zaynab explained the centrality of her religious identity in her perception of self:

Text 5.1
> Yeah, because the thing is with me, I'm a lot more involved with my faith rather than culture. Like, yeah, I'm pretty involved in the Syrian community. I work with them and everything. But the first thing that I would identify as is Muslim because that's what my whole life revolves around, being Muslim. Yeah. And I was basically, you can basically say I was raised in America because I've been here since first grade and till now. So, like, yeah, those are the two things that I identify with most. And like Syrian, like, yeah, I am very prideful of being Syrian, but that is only mentioned if… I do tell people all the time that I'm Syrian, but if you were to ask me like what are the two things that identify you? I would say Muslim American.

Zaynab described both her religious and national identities as important aspects of her sense of self. She positioned her religious identity as a capital per her involvement in her religious community, referring it to as a primary source of her identity. Naber (2005) found that post-9/11, Muslim youth began to strongly identify with their religious identity to build community across racial and ethnic lines. In other words, young Muslims began identifying as "Muslim First" (Naber, 2005) over their racial or ethnic identifications to form a pan-ethnic Muslim identity in response to politicization and racialization. Sirin, Bikmen, Mir, Fine, Zaal, and Katsiaficas (2008) posit "Muslim American" as "an emerging collective identity" around religious identity influenced by historical and political contexts (p. 262).

Some students described their connection to religion as a central aspect of their identification over racial/ethnic identifications. Like Zaynab, Pakistani student Daniyal also described himself as Muslim American in the introductory questionnaire, but prioritized his religious identity during the interview:

Text 5.2

> Well, I feel like Pakistani associates with Muslim, so I put Muslim, and I also put American because I was born here so I just combined the two, so I'm Muslim-American. Islam is like a bigger part of my life than Pakistani culture. It like dictates what I do every day, like my schedule is built around it, kind of. We have to pray 5 times a day, I have to do the Qur'an in the morning, everything else has to fit perfectly in between those times. And yea it's the most important part of my life.

Daniyal equated his ethnic identity with his religious identity, considering himself "Muslim first" (cf. Naber, 2005). His explanation reflects one aspect of "religification" (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012) that occurs at a personal level, but in the context of systemic racialization and societal imposition of a monolithic religious identity on diverse Muslim communities.

Imran, Hania, Aisha, and others similarly centered their religious identity regarding their self-perception. Hania identified herself as a Muslim American Pakistani in the questionnaire, but fore-fronted her religious identity during the interview. She explained:

Text 5.3

> The first thing that I would choose to define me as is not by my nationality or ethnicity it's actually my religion because I think that means the most to me. So as a Muslim you know it tells you what your character is supposed to be and how you're supposed to treat people, what your ambitions should be, stuff like that so that's what's most important to me. I'm [also] athletic… and I'm academic… Even though being Muslim is really important to me and that's how I'd identify myself first, I think also my nationality, American is also really important to me, those values. And then being Pakistani, where my parents are from, well my ethnicity, that's also really important… like balance those two.

Though she adopted a "Muslim first" identity, Hania associated certain values with her religious, ethnic, and national identities, which I found to be reflective of her "community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005). In other words, these identities influenced her knowledge and mindset. Her

religion functioned as a source of capital by informing how she interacted with others or navigated school. Assumptions about Islam's restrictiveness influence some educators to perceive female Muslim students as less academic, encouraging them to remain in or join lower academic tracks (Zine, 2006), discouraging their academic identities, while normalizing Eurocentric ideals (Al-Fartousi, 2016). Yet, Hania did not view her religious identity as limiting her academics and athleticism, countering stereotypical assumptions.

Aisha, a White convert, centered her religious identity throughout her participation in this study. Though she described herself only as a "school enthusiast" without reference to her religious identity in the questionnaire, she discussed the centrality of her religious affiliation in her day-to-day experiences. When asked to consider how she identified and perceived herself (e.g., racially, ethnically, nationally, religiously), she replied:

Text 5.4

> I would see myself as a Muslim first and because a lot of my values don't coincide with the traditional American values…Like people have all these stereotypes, like as American normally, like I grew up thinking that certain people are better than other people, whether it's religion or race or whatever. And a lot of Americans had that tendency. I have noticed after like I've become Muslim… because lots of people assume that I'm Arab or Irani or Pakistani or something that's like from another country, they don't see me as I'm white. And they judge me automatically and I kind of don't believe in that.

Racialized as Muslim after conversion possibly due to her religious visibility (e.g., hijab, niqab), Aisha's experience highlighted the dialogic process of "religification". Religification (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012) functions internally and externally. Though students described what appeared to be religification from within (their centering their own religious identity), their responses are situated within external forces (e.g., society and dominant culture) that perpetuate racialization of the Muslim figure. Society preserves these master narratives through marginalization of those deemed outsiders. While Aisha's religious signifiers implied her religious identity, others

imposed South Asian or West Asian/Middle Eastern racial/ethnic identities on her – aligning with

the predominant coverage of those regions as Muslim-dominant.

Similarly, a female Muslim in Merchant's (2016) study shared being labeled as Pakistani,

Iraqi, Irani, or Arab even though she told others that she is Indian. Instead, her peers conflated a

Hindu identity with being an Indian. Like other participants in my study, Aisha's prioritization of

her faith also indicated that she viewed her faith-based identity as a form of capital that possibly

influenced her understanding of the social, racial hierarchy and develop alternative perspectives.

Alternatively, Leila did not primarily identify herself through her religious identity. On

the questionnaire, she described herself as "Palestinian, author, [and] artist". Elaborating on the

questionnaire, Leila shared during her interview:

Text 5.5

> I'm Palestinian. That's like the first thing that I identify myself as because I'm
> very proud of where I come from. And I consider myself as an author…
> [working on]" a book about a girl who has a stricter cultural family… more
> specifically her father. He doesn't allow her to do things that she sees other
> people doing. And so, she kind of figures out a way to maybe disobey her father
> and she eventually realizes that what she's doing is wrong. And I decided to write
> this story because I was like, it's more realistic for me and my friends because
> like we have to go through same things, and we do a lot of stupid things
> sometimes. And so, like we always learn from our mistakes.

Unlike other participants, Leila did not give primacy to her religious identity, but to her

Palestinian heritage and cultural values. Her reference to her personal writing project exemplified

the importance of her familial values tied to being Palestinian (and perhaps by extension being

Muslim). It shows Leila's resilience in attempting to maintain and protect her cultural, ethnic, and

religious identity that may possibly be perceived oppressive for Muslim girls. Her authorship of

text relevant to her and her friends' experiences also reflect her navigational and resistant capital

in school – highlighting her community knowledges and practices as important.

Muslim youth positioned religion as capital and themselves as a source of dispelling

misconceptions that non-Muslims may have about the community – hence, a source of resistance

and resilience. From discussing their religious identity to observing non-Muslim peers knowing a

Muslim, some students discussed the possibility of mitigating others' misperceptions about their

religion and faith-based community. Responding to a question about how religion comes up in

conversations with peers or friends, if at all, Imran, a Pakistani student, replied:

> Text 5.6
>> Once I was getting dropped off by one of my friend's parents and if I was with them they would ask about my beliefs. They're just like "Oh Imran what do you believe in", in terms of religion and what I identify myself with and then I just explain…they ask more questions about Islam and how it relates to Christianity and then they input their own beliefs. It can be kind of awkward because it's something I really want to talk about but it's positive because it helps another person learn and it can spread around.

Imran's communication about his religious identity reflected his centering of his funds of

knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and utilizing them in this space as a bridge to foster understanding.

I find this act of bridge building to reflect Imran's knowledge attached to his religious identity.

Given the lack of positive and affirming representation in and outside of school, Muslim youth

take it upon themselves to foster a better understanding about their religion and debunk

stereotypes, through formal or informal activities.

Similarly, when asked how he thought his non-Muslim peers perceived Muslims, Daniyal

explained:

> Text 5.7
>> I think if they [peers] know Muslims they'll have more… They won't have a negative perspective towards Muslims. But if they don't have Muslim friends, they'll have a negative perspective.

Media and political discourse's historical misrepresentation and underrepresentation, as well as

racialized ideas found in textbooks (see Chapter 3), have long reinforced orientalist and racialized

ideas about Islam and Muslims. Even so, Daniyal asserted that getting to know a Muslim at a

personal level could reduce people's stereotypical assumptions about Muslims. Both Imran and

Daniyal appeared to center their religious capital, their funds of knowledge as an important

vehicle for improving non-Muslim perceptions of Muslims. Students appeared to take on such responsibility for better representation, which I suggest is an undue burden for these youth that involved spending extra time trying to humanize themselves to others.

Religion also served as a capital in the way students approached some of their academic and extracurricular engagement at school – again, suggesting its importance in their lives. In the introductory questionnaire, Hala identified herself Middle Eastern and an artist, particularly in writing and painting. During the interview, she elaborated upon this identification, explaining that some of her inspiration comes from her faith:

Text 5.8
> When I paint things like nature and trees and stuff like that, I often think about Islam because it's such a peaceful thing. So yeah, sometimes that does definitely influence my paintings… And if we're writing about religion or if I'm in world history and writing papers about religion. Yea, it's definitely a part of it.

This exemplifies how Hala viewed her religious identity as a form of capital and knowledge that influenced some of her artwork and writing. This also represents how Hala perceived her religious identity in ways that contradicted dominant assumptions, particularly the association of violence and dominance of threat-based narratives – associating her religious identity with peace. As Wheatley (2019) observed in a study participant's poetry, creative expressions (art, writing) are also sites that illuminate student resistance to Islamophobia.

Misbah, a Pakistani student, conveyed similar sentiments by responding to a question about situations in which she shared her religious identity in school:

Text 5.9
> I'm pretty comfortable with talking about it [religion]. It's just like, I don't want to sound like it's a lot more than it actually is because I feel like people consider Islam like a super hard religion to be in. When you're in it, it is not, it doesn't even feel like anything's wrong or weird. So, I don't want to make it sound too difficult because it's not.

Though peers at school and dominant society positioned their religious identity and beliefs negatively, Misbah discussed her religious identity to represent marginalized knowledges as her norm.

In these excerpts, religion and religious identity manifested in different ways. Religion as capital did not necessarily involve use of religious teachings; rather, it involved participants' cultural interpretations of their religious identities, their marginalized knowledges, and their self-perception as Muslims. Religion as capital, in this study, represents how students mobilize their religious identity and experiential knowledge to navigate school. The remainder of the findings focus on how family, community, on-campus organizations, social networks, and Muslim youth's self-advocacy show their religious identity as a central capital in informing student resilience and resistance, as Muslim youth continue to experience religification.

II.   Family Cultivates Religious Capital

Students' families played an important role in developing their religious identity and supporting how they negotiated their place in the schooling community. Additionally, community (in or outside of school) also sustained these youth's religious identities in school. That is, I found that student resistance took many forms, some of them "less public, less overt, and not readily observable" (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998, p. 218). Familial values and expectations weaved into religious and cultural traditions; they also informed students' reactions and responses to racial microaggressions and racialized ideas about Muslims. Students balanced their home expectations with societal and school expectations, as they navigated the different ways religion manifested in public and private settings.

Families cultivated Muslim youth's religious identities to maintain and sustain their cultural roots. When asked about the role of religion in their day to day lives, Hania described:

Text 5.10
> You know I think it means more to my… Yeah, it's really important to my family but I think more so to my mom and more so to me than my dad or my brothers. I think we just take more active interest in it. Then once we're in it so do our father and my brother does as well.

This prioritization of religious identity reflects both "religification" (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012; 2015) and "Muslim first" as a form of "strategic essentialism" (Naber 2005, p. 481). Hania's mother's emphasis on religion exemplified her attempts at preserving a cultural identity associated with their ethnic roots (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2015). Hania's "Muslim first" identity, cultivated in her family, developed her sense of self (see Text 5.3) but also reflected the types of values she carried into her school. As Hania explained:

Text 5.11
> In school, I think it's just remembering how to treat people. It's more treat people kindly because you get annoyed with so many kids so many times. It's just like be quiet. It's more like how you act or how you should act with other people… I don't know. It's like the manners you carry.

This exemplifies both her familial and religious values as valuable forms of capital. Familial capital encompasses "cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin)" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Dominant society and schools often assume Communities of Color lack "knowledge, social skills, abilities and cultural capital" needed for social mobility (Valenzuela, 1999; cited in Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Other students, specifically the Pakistani students, identified as "Muslim first" and discussed the importance of their religious identity in relation to their families.

Students largely agreed that their families inculcated them with their religious values, but students found themselves balancing their own beliefs, parental expectations, dominant societal norms, and schooling expectations. Yet, students still positioned their religious identity as important, if not central, to how they viewed themselves and how they interacted with others in school. In comparing the difference between being Muslim at home than at school, Hala stated,

"At home, there's definitely more of a pressure to be more religious…it's just a normal thing. I don't really go to the mosque. I can't really go to prayers, but I'm like really busy".

Sanam, a Pakistani student, shared similar sentiments when asked about the role of religion in her life, stating:

Text 5.12
I grew up in a pretty religious household. So, I think a lot of my thoughts are kind of centered around that, but…I have my own thoughts based around my religion. I don't really follow everything I learned, but I follow like most things, like I will fast and that kind of stuff. I feel like I look at it differently than like the rest of my family, or like the older people in my family, I should say…If you follow [religion] like for the most part, I don't think it matters how you follow it …like how you believe you should do it.

Multiple factors informed how students perceived religion and its role in their life, from society to home. As discussed in the previous chapter, Sanam encountered peers' questions about her modest clothing (e.g., leggings and shirt for basketball) which reflected her religious beliefs. In comparing being Muslim at home versus at school, she said this about her clothing choices: "At home or around family, I don't have to explain why I have to do that." Families cultivated Muslim youth's religious capital, and youth similarly found their home space to value identities often disregarded or viewed aberrant in school settings.

Even for youth who identified with their ethnic or cultural identities first, their families' expectations intersected with religion. When asked about the role of religion in her life, Leila explained:

Text 5.13
My family, growing up, they taught me like, okay, so this is wrong and this is right. And this is why it's wrong and this is why it's right. There are some things that they didn't quite necessarily explain to me. I just grew up knowing what I should be doing, what would make them proud, what would make them angry, or what would be considered sinful.

Leila's understanding of religion involved the knowledges and values shared by her family, informing how she navigated school or viewed herself in relation to others. This exemplifies the

development of her religious capital and how both influenced her in school or in interactions with others. Though she positioned her family and Palestinian roots as pertinent to her understanding of the world, she also acknowledged generational differences in how she viewed religion in comparison to her parents. She stated: "I feel as if my generation kind of sees our religion in a different view because of… how the world is just changing and it's evolving. I think my family sees everything in a different view because they don't know how it is now". Religion for these youth, then, is connected to their families. Leila's narrative implies religification from her family, but also external forces (i.e., society) to influence her religious capital.

Not surprisingly, curricula, teachers, and peers did not position Muslim students' religious identities as a valuable capital. In differentiating her experiences as a Muslim at home versus at school, Misbah explained:

Text 5.14

At school it's usually harder just because like if you say too much, people will perceive it a specific way. Like they'll call you a terrorist, or they'll make like jokes, or they'll say things that aren't really respectful. When at home, you feel more comfortable in life or when you're with your family, because they're all like doing something that you are doing. So, it's like, it doesn't really feel like you're apart from the other people who you're surrounded by.

The reproduction of vilifying and violent tropes negatively affected Muslim youth's experiences, demonstrating racialized hostility within schools. As discussed in the previous chapter, peers and sometimes teachers minimized such racial microaggressions associated with their religious identities. In such instances, Muslim students' religious identity was not considered a valuable resource or cultivated at school or supported by some peers or teachers, just at home. Misbah elaborated upon the role of religion in her life, stating:

Text 5.15

It can be challenging but like in the end I love being a Muslim because it's like you have so many different opportunities and all of these specific things that you can do as a Muslim…even though you have setbacks. In my opinion, the benefits are like the whole entire part about how you respect your elders more and like what you do with your family, and how much like your parents play a part in

your life. Then also a setback might be like how we're a restricted to dress a specific way or the food that we can eat and stuff like that. I couldn't imagine growing up any other way besides being a Muslim and raised… The way I was raised.

Misbah described the interconnectedness between her familial and religious values. Unlike males, female students' narratives as Muslims showed that they had to navigate gendered expectations at home and at school (Eidoo, 2018; Zine, 2006). This exemplifies their resilience in navigating both aspects of their lives, one with their cultural and religious expectations and other with dominant American expectations. However, this also shows an additional burden on female youth in navigating the private and public space with different – sometimes contradictory – expectations.

Families also guided Muslim youth in navigating the political climate and its effects on their schooling experience. In Chapter 1, I discussed how the Islamophobic political rhetoric reverberated into schools and affected students' schooling experience. Leila described a group of students who repeated anti-Muslim rhetoric (e.g., framing them as a threat). Ultimately, Leila's family informed how she reacted to such racialized slights; she explained:

Text 5.16
It did offend me at first and I talked to my family about it and they just told me, ignore it. You're always going to meet people like that, which I think is very unfair because I don't ever see anyone say something like that to white people.

Here, familial knowledge and guidance intersected with their faith, particularly the representation of their religion influenced their response to racial microaggressions and anti-Muslim racism that continued to position Muslims as a threat. Post-9/11, Muslim communities, particularly parents, encouraged their children to not draw attention to themselves due to misconceptions about the Muslim community, fear of harassment or retaliation, and surveillance of Muslim communities (Ali, 2016; Mir, 2009). Informed by the political climate and post-9/11 experiences of Muslim communities, Leila's family possibly advised Leila to ignore such slights. Familial advice, then,

reflected their experience with racialization of their religion, and informed youth how to navigate

hostile spaces with their marginalized knowledges and experiences.

Families also supported Muslim youth in navigating school by supporting their

mobilization of religious identity, which challenged dominant norms about their racialized

identities. Responding to a question about being a Muslim at her high school and its impact on

her schooling experience, Zaynab shared:

> Text 5.17
>
> [Religion] plays a really big role in my life. My mom really focused on us learning Quran and learning about our religion... I was all my life, I wanna say until like eighth grade or ninth grade, I was in a Saturday school. So, every Saturday I'd go, and I'd learn Arabi [Arabic], Quran, Islamic studies. My mom is an Islamic Studies teacher, so she teaches religion. I always grew up with Islam being very involved in my life. Even in high school, I went to a religious class every Saturday and I started volunteering at a Saturday school and then I became MSA [Muslim Student Association] president in my high school… and now I'm a religion teacher and I work with youth groups, like masjids [mosques] that have youth groups. And I work at Saturday school as an Islamic studies teacher.

Zaynab's familial capital, particularly through her mother, nurtured and supported her religious

identity both in and out sf school.

Both Hania's (see text 5.10) and Zaynab's religious capital had gendered influences,

specifically on their religiosity (however, the scope of this study does not include students'

religiosity). In recounting the details of her joining and adopting a leadership role in the Muslim

Student Association (MSA), Zaynab shared:

> Text 5.18
>
> I wasn't a very involved person with the MSA. I was involved with a lot of extracurriculars. So, you know, I always had the excuse of, oh, I don't have time to come to meetings and stuff until I started complaining about how... People would ask me like, why don't you go? And I'm like, there's not that many people that go, it's not fun, it's boring...I think it was my mom or something. And she was like, well, if you don't like something, then why don't you change it? Like why don't you get involved and make it better? And so that model stuck to me.

This exemplifies the way religion functions as a capital cultivated by family (mother), leading

Zaynab to run for a leadership role to enact change. Zaynab's mobilization of her familial and

religious capitals challenges textbook representations as well as peers', and some teachers'

perceptions about female Muslims, particularly those who wear hijab, as quiet, oppressed, lacking

freedom and familial support. Zaynab's family nurtured and supported her agency, advocacy, and

leadership in school, contradicting stereotypical assumptions that render Muslim women who veil

as suppressed and weak. Additionally, Zaynab's participation on and off campus and her

mentorship role with younger Muslim children demonstrated her "commitment to community

well-being" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79), and her leadership and advocacy within school. Her familial

and religious capital, then, support her navigational, social, and resistant capitals (discussed in

detail in later findings), as described in the community cultural wealth framework.

Besides supporting participation in extracurriculars and service to community, families

also supported youth's academic life by countering textbook or curricular misrepresentation of

Muslims and Islam. Responding to a question about narratives about Muslims and Islam found in

textbooks, Fahad shared:

Text 5.19

I remember it was 7th grade. I was talking to my dad. I remember in the book it had something that I know wasn't true, like in the textbook. I talked about it with my dad. I remember it said pretty violent stuff about Muslims, but I don't remember what it was…

His recollection suggested stereotypical representation fitting violent tropes about Muslims in

textbooks. Fahad drew from his "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992), specifically his father's

knowledge about his community, to disrupt the violent tropes about Muslims in textbooks and

curricula. Hence, I argue that religion as capital also refers to the knowledges and understandings

built from one's own experiences as part of the marginalized religious community. Through

familial communication, he resisted unequal and stereotypical representations, even if just for

himself. Yosso (2005) draws from critical race scholarship to define resistant capital as

"knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 80).

The act of challenging textbook representation helped Fahad resist the internalization or acceptance of racialized ideas about his religious community.

Other students also remembered curricular education about Islam from seventh grade, largely recalling it as "basic" coverage of Islam/Muslims. Responding to a question about classroom opportunities in which she shared her ethnic/racial and religious identities, Sanam described her seventh-grade class experience:

> Text 5.20
> During the 7th grade when we talked about world history, we had a section on Islam. One time after Hajj rolled around, I would say like "oh, yea my parents went on a pilgrimage" and they'll be like okay cool. That was the only time we really talked about Islam and like learned about Islam because it was part of the curriculum.

In this instance, Sanam related class discussion and curriculum content to her own experience, referring to her family's pilgrimage. Muslim youth discussed having minimal curricular or classroom opportunities to share their faith-based knowledge and experiences – community cultural wealth. Sanam's insertion exemplifies one way that students engage in "bridge building" by sharing personal examples – an "agentive strategy" to share their knowledge with non-Muslim peers (Merchant, 2016, p. 194). This also shows how Sanam positioned her family's experience (both family and religion) as valuable capitals.

These findings show that families nurtured youth's religious capital, supporting youth's resilience in schools. These students carried with them marginalized knowledges and histories often vilified or ignored in school settings. Their invaluable knowledge and experiences helped them navigate school, but also resist stereotypes and misperceptions. Rather than being seen and valued as a source of knowledge, peers, curricula, and a few teachers viewed Muslim youth's religious identities as restrictive and antithetical to Western values. Due to the intertwined nature of their familial and religious capitals, Muslim students were doubly marginalized by comments against their religion as these also were connected to their familial values and expectations –

resulting in a double marginalization. However, students showed their resilience and, at time, resistance to deficit, negative narratives (e.g., restrictions, oppressed girls) about Muslims circulating in schools.

III.   The Muslim Community Supports Youth's Religious Identities

Faith-based community networks contributed to Muslim youth's social, navigational and resistance capitals – supporting their religious capital both on- and off-campus. Yosso (2005) theorized that beyond blood kin, family also encompassed community and friends, helping marginalized groups form "a healthy connection to our community and its resources" (p. 79). I specifically focus on faith-based community and social networks that student participants relied upon or acknowledged presence of at their schools. In providing navigational support (e.g., accommodation requests), faith-based community members, I argue, supported Muslim youth's needs at schools – demonstrating how students' religious capital supported their navigational capital at school. In other words, students' religious communities on and off campus helped them maneuver the schooling institution. As such, students' religious identities and communities proved to be valuable sources of capital – in and of themselves, rather than just as part of other kinds of capital – that helped them advocate for themselves and resist hostility.

Local Muslim community members provided accommodation and advocacy support for Muslim students. The introductory questionnaire asked whether their schools acknowledged major Islamic religious holidays or observance days, four students responded "yes", three responded "sometimes", and three responded "no". During the interview, students described how their schools made such acknowledgements. Daniyal shared, "So, our masjid [mosque], it has letters that you can give to your school. If our school gets that, they just let us take the day off." Hania, who attended the same high school, elaborated:

Text 5.21

> For Eid [religious festival, celebration], our Masjid like gives a paper, quotes a certain section of the law. When we go to give that paper, they're like oh it's fine, like we know it's Eid.

The local mosque supported these youth's religious capital by providing them with the documentation required to request days off at school to celebrate religious observance days. Local community members represent a form of community cultural wealth – social and religious capital, to be specific – of a racialized group supporting their resilience. Yosso defines social capital as "networks of people and community resources" while navigational capital refers to "skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (p. 79-80). Other students, meanwhile, discussed how Muslim youth on campus advocated for themselves and their communities to navigate school.

Though their cultural or religious communities offered some navigational support in school, some students indicated having to navigate multiple worlds. This also exemplifies their resilience, as they manage multiple spaces with difference expectations, and resistance, as they intentionally decide how to present themselves in and outside of school. Students, especially as shown in the female Muslim narratives, had to navigate cultural or religious expectations in and outside of school. Hania compared her experience of being a Muslim at school versus at home, explaining that people do not know she is Muslim until she tells them, and that she had "some really cool and awesome conversations about religion". With members of her own community and family, Hania shared:

Text 5.22

> I feel like your judged alone more, you know. It could go either way. People could think you're too religious or too less religious, so I think it's easier being Muslim outside than being inside.

Gendered discourses and expectations include familial and community surveillance of female bodies (Sirin & Fine, 2008) more so than male bodies (Hamzeh, 2011; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2015).

Given the gendered microaggressions that Muslim girls encountered in school about their appearance and clothing (see Chapter 4), they had had to navigate a "double panopticon", or "twin towers of surveillance" comprised of both Muslims and non-Muslims (Mir, 2009, p. 250). Both dominant society and religious communities act as gatekeepers of what a Muslim woman represents, forcing Muslim women to balance both worlds and differing expectations. This is another social burden that female Muslims must navigate in and outside of school.

The presence of fellow Muslim youth on school campuses also strengthened students' resilience and transformative resistance to racialized discourses and marginalization; it also provided their sense of community at school. In comparing her experiences as a Muslim student across K-12, Misbah stated:

Text 5.23

In high school, I feel like it's kind of more accepting just because there are more people. At middle school there were only three Muslims in the IB [International Baccalaureate] program that I knew of, and I was the only girl, so it was harder for me. But now it's kind of easier because there are more people that can like help me with that type of stuff in my opinion…In elementary school, I didn't really think about it [being Muslim] because I was like younger. And then, in middle school I started like more identifying with it. It just became more a part of me because I was like singled out, sort of. And then in high school, I carried that with me. But it's like not as strong because I have other people [Muslim students] that I can talk to about like being a Muslim and stuff, so it helps.

Misbah's observations show that being able to connect with similarly marginalized youth helps foster Muslim students' sense of community at school, indicating the importance of such social networks. The presence of other Muslim youth on campus helped her navigate possible racialized hostility at school (e.g., she shared hearing the terrorist trope about Muslims at school). Having community in the form of other Muslim students on campus built her resilience in traversing the schooling institution and contributed to her resistant capital. With little curricular representation and continuation of misperceptions about Muslims, maneuvering school through supportive networks built student resilience and contributed to their resistance. Their resistance, as students'

narrative show, took on various forms, e.g., resisting curricular representation, advocating as student leaders, building safe spaces among friends, and more.

Muslim youth's cultural capital, specifically their knowledge about communities they identified with, helped them navigate hostility. Students noted minimal and limited curricular coverage of Islam, Muslims, and related ethnic, racial, cultural, or regional representation. Hania described topics related to Islam or Muslims as a "taboo subject", explaining that her school was "predominantly white. They're liberal so they feel they can't speak on it." Hania perceived this as a reason for minimal curricular coverage. Loewen (2007) similarly found textbook publishers to consider coverage of religion (among other topics) to be taboo. Despite minimal coverage and discussions about these issues, Hania added:

> Text 5.24
>> The Muslims at my school have strong personalities. There are not a lot of Muslims that are weak or quiet. Like even the Muslims who are, like I don't want to say less religious, but wear tank tops and do all those types of things, even they're like supportive of the Palestinian movement, advocate for Muslims… They have a pretty strong presence and support for them [on campus].

Religious capital takes multiple forms. In this study, religion as a source of students' capital does not refer to their knowledge about religious text or religiosity, rather their knowledge and understanding of various issues that intersect with their religious identity. However, as Hania indicated, the responsibility of overturning stereotypical narratives or representation of these communities fell upon Muslim youth. Hania described her peers and teachers as "super respectful" and "liberal", but also said they "feel they can't speak on [issues pertaining to Muslims] unless Desi [people of South Asian descent] or Arab [students] bring it up themselves". As Crocco (2005) points out, teacher avoidance of discussions pertaining to youth's intersectional identities could also reflect time-constraints, high-stakes testing, and maintenance of dominant narrative. The responsibility of critical discourse about issues that matter to marginalized youth fell on those specific groups of students themselves.

IV.   **Building Community Through Participation in School**

Students' on-campus participation in faith-based, ethnic-based, or other school clubs also reflected and informed students' resilience and resistance in navigating and building a sense of community at school. Students' participation cultivated their sense of community with fellow Muslim and non-Muslim peers and helped them navigate anti-Muslim hostility and the political climate. The following excerpts show the importance of community building across racial/ethnic, religious, and cultural lines for addressing or resisting negative messages students received about their multiply marginalized identities.

Muslim Student Association

Participation in faith-based organizations affirmed these multiply marginalized students' identities and fostered their religious capital. The introductory questionnaire asked students to share their extracurricular activities, involvement, and club participation at school. Half of the student participants shared being involved in or having access to a Muslim Student Association (MSA) at their high school. The presence of MSA, however, suggested a goodly number of Muslim students at that school. Misbah discussed how and why she joined MSA:

> Text 5.25
> I chose MSA because my best friend is actually president of the club. And also, because I'm Muslim I kind of wanted to like meet more people who are like Muslim. So, I joined the club for that reason. It kind of like showed me that I'm not alone, that there are people who are like me out there.

MSA offered space in school for students to build community with each other and supported their navigational and social capital at school. Post-1990s, MSAs and Islamic community centers and mosques became "site[s] of identity formation and rearticulation" (Naber, 2005, p. 482). This form of community building also reflects students' religious capital that encapsulates their experiences and strengthens their resilience in school particularly in traversing hostility. Similarly, participation in both her high school's and mosque's MSA helped Hania

maintain her sense of community as a Muslim student. Hania's high school MSA provided her

and Muslim peers the opportunity to talk about faith-based topics, but low enrollment (4-10

students) and lack of effectiveness may have contributed to MSA becoming inactive at her

campus. However, Hania said, "it was still something" for her and others like her. MSA presented

her with a network of people with multiply marginalized identities, like her, and both supported

and reflected her religious capital that built her sense of community at school.

Zaynab mobilized her religious capital, specifically knowledge about her religion,

understanding of marginalizing and othering narratives, and misperceptions about Muslims, in the

form of leadership roles, advocacy, and extracurricular participation. As mentioned before,

Zaynab became active in MSA with her mother's encouragement; she ran for president and won.

She and her board members increased student participation in MSA, recalling a jump from 15

students to 48 students in her junior year, and then 60 students in her senior year. I asked her to

discuss her experience as president of MSA at her high school; she recalled:

Text 5.26

> The school was so supportive. My school, Green Valley High school, the
> administration showed us so much love. We actually had an interfaith and we
> tagged along with Christian club and the admin actually showed up and they
> supported us. And afterwards, while I was waiting for a ride home [from school],
> my mom or my dad was coming to pick me up, the principal saw me, and he
> stopped his car. He got out and he was like, "Thank you so much for today. You
> guys are absolutely amazing. And the work you do is amazing and I learned so
> much and so did the rest of the administration that came with me." It was
> honestly so uplifting and so beautiful. And I actually worked hand in hand with a
> lot of the faculty at our school because like if I were to notice something
> that…like an incident happened with a student or something, I would go talk to
> them about it and they try their best to help me out.

This clearly exemplifies Zaynab's religious capital. She and the MSA board members used their

faith-based and identity-based knowledge to build community across campus. I understand this as

an act of their resistance to marginalization, and their efforts to build relationships with non-

Muslim peers, as well as advocate for their marginalized religious community. This maintained

and built her social capital through connections and relations with others, as well as her navigational capital in traversing possible hostility through community building. Thus, MSA represents a site for students to build their networks and connections, be seen, gain recognition, and build relationships across campus.

MSA also functioned as a site for students to exhibit and develop their agency, sense of community with others at school, and garner teachers' and administration's attention. Zaynab and fellow MSA board members assumed responsibility to support all Muslim youth's academic and social identities at school, serving as a navigational resource. In discussing her role and MSA's role in supporting Muslim youth at school, Zaynab shared:

> Text 5.27
>> For Eid [religious celebration, holiday] and Ramadan [holy month of worship and fasting], what I would do is we would make a little card or like a little note and we would put it in all of the teachers' boxes and let them know when Eid is, so they can know their students are missing for a reason they can know that their students are missing school for a reason, and show them that we would love their empathy and for them to understand and to be a lot more understanding of the students' situations and stuff. And we would leave like a platter of cookies outside and put a little packet next to it saying what Eid is and all of that. Yeah. I loved the way teachers treated us and everything.

Zaynab's agency, activism, and advocacy symbolizes her resilience in creating an inclusive space for Muslim youth– especially in helping them maintain their faith-based needs. Students created these spaces for acknowledgement and to request accommodation for religious observance days. Alternatively, Islamic centers or local mosques engaged in providing letters with legal language for religious accommodations (see text 5.24). Most participants agreed that their schools did not announce religious holidays, but also remembered activities, events, movies, and music associated with Christmas before the winter school break. This shows the hidden ways in which religious nativism appears in schools, wherein Muslim youth, and possibly others at school, did not recognize such manifestations of the dominant religion as school recognition or acknowledgement of religious observance days. School celebrations and activities related to

Christianity make sense given it is a dominant religion in the US. Yet, I found it surprising that Muslim youth did not recognize celebration of Christian religious holidays as an example of religious acknowledgement (or, a manifestation of religion) at their schools. Rather, almost all the participants identified their schools as secular spaces without religious holiday acknowledgement or celebration.

For both Muslim and non-Muslim youth, MSA offered a space for students to build community. When asked to discuss conversations about Islam/Muslims outside of classrooms; Zaynab replied:

Text 5.45

That's all we talk about in MSA. Once you become like a youth group leader or something you don't really have a lot of like stuff that you hide… I don't know. Not like hide. Like you share so much that you're basically an open book. So, I don't mind sharing my views, my thoughts, my life. I don't mind talking to people about that. I actually think it's a lot better to talk to people about that because it kind of just like makes people understand you on a deeper level.

Zaynab's religious visibility and agency appeared in her role as a leader and an advocate. Ramadan (2022) similarly found her hijabed Muslim academics in British academia to resist misconceptions through "da'wa" (providing a positive impression about Muslims through own behavior/actions), "reactive da'wa" (responding to others' queries), or "proactive da'wa" (spending time on perfecting their work) (p. 40). Their hypervisibility as Muslims compelled them to validate themselves, indicating the ways Islamophobia or lack of understanding about Muslims persists in educational spaces (Ramadan, 2022). Similarly, Zaynab took it upon herself to address misconceptions about her religious community to promote better understanding of her marginalized identities and communities (ethnic and religious). In this study and others, MSA provided students a site for "building communities of resistance" (Eidoo, 2018, p. 513), such as discussing representational issues.

Participation in MSA contributed to students' sense of community but it was not the only source of community at school. For two out of five of the participants that had MSA at school, participation in this space became difficult due to shifting priorities. Hania explained how her participation in MSA changed: "It was just consistency. Because after junior year, it was so hard, you don't have time to focus on anything except for your academics." While others may perceive Pakistani youth through a religified lens (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012) and may perceive Muslim youth through a deficit lens, these students both viewed their religious, cultural identities and academics as assets. Students' religious identification or beliefs did not deter them from focusing on their education or from participating in extracurricular activities building their leadership, service, and collaborative skills. Rather, students opted to engage in activities that they deemed most supportive of their navigational capital in school. For example, Fahad decided not to participate in MSA or any other club on campus because they lacked appeal for him and his friends, demonstrating that students formed community and carved out spaces at their respective school campuses in diverse ways.

Mobilizing Religious Capital in Non-Religious Extracurriculars

Student participation in other clubs and organizations on- and off-campus supported their sense of community within school and maintained their academic identities. Most of the Muslim students associated their extracurricular participation with a better schooling experience, source for building relationships, and expressing themselves. Eight out of ten participants did not have access to clubs or organizations reflecting their racial/ethnic, cultural, or religious identities at school, but formed community with peers through on- and off-campus participation in other organizations.

Extracurricular activities provided students with the opportunity to connect with other students, fostering their sense of community at school. Daniyal described his school environment as "inclusive," explaining:

Text 5.28

Everybody is a part of something. Everybody is a part of a group, either academically focused, sports or outside activities too. There's like a Black Student Union, a Latino Club… there was an MSA but it's not there anymore.

Participation in school fostered some sense of community and inclusivity for youth. Though extracurricular participation contributed to students' social and navigational capital, their group of friends consisted of peers with similar racial/ethnic or religious identities. Daniyal's group of friends, for example, reflected his racial/ethnic and religious identities; he described his group of friends as academic focused. His friends, then, supported his navigational capital at school (explored further in the next finding). Similarly, Hania shared that she felt like a part of the school community, explaining:

Text 5.29

There are a lot of programs to get involved in, a lot of clubs. So, I'm part of leadership. We talk about issues on campus, we hold forums and like kids of all classes come and we do activities with them. And I was also in Link Crew, which is a Freshmen… you help Freshmen basically adjust properly to High School and do boot camp with them for like a day.

Hania both maintained and shared her social and navigational knowledge and skills with first-year students as a leader. Similarly, Imran referred to his extracurricular engagement when telling me about himself. He shared, "I have my own club at the school and I'm very interactive with the other students." Being involved in high school not only helps him connect with other students but also reflects his social and navigational capital. Participation in school clubs also provided students the opportunity to serve their surrounding communities. In addition to MSA, Misbah also participated in the community service club at her school due to curricular requirements and

because "it would also benefit the community". As such, networking and participating helped contribute to her sense of community with the school.

Like other students, Zaynab also emphasized the importance of extracurricular activities as a source of her navigating school and building relationships. Zaynab discussed her schooling trajectory from elementary school to high school, describing high school as a diverse space with "people from different walks of life", making that aspect of schooling "value[able]". Though Zaynab experienced some gendered racial microaggressions and nativist rhetoric at school, she still described her schooling atmosphere as "diverse and accepting". She explained:

Text 5.30

> Don't get me wrong though. There are some people that went to Green Valley and hated it. I think. It just depends on the person because like I involved myself a lot, so I got the pop side of it. There might be someone that maybe isn't as social as me or like isn't as exposed. So, like, yeah, they might have like a different completely different experience than I did.

Zaynab attributes her positive school experience to her involvement in high school extracurriculars but understands that not everyone has the same experiences. Zaynab's involvement in in MSA, choir, tennis, UNICEF, and off-campus service activities contributed to her sense of community with her peers, strengthened her relationship with teachers, peers and administrators, and provided her with leadership skills that supported her resilience in school. As such, her participation and active presence at school resists deficit narratives about female Muslims that position them as subordinate, quiet, or not academic enough. She specifically mobilized her religious identity and defended it to shatter misunderstanding about Muslims, related immigration narratives (e.g., untrustworthy foreign threats), and actively worked towards building a strong sense of community for her Muslim peers in school (e.g., getting administrative help to address possible anti-Muslim bullying, Ramadan/Eid notifications for teachers and staff).

Muslim community youth used their diverse form of community cultural wealth to demonstrate their resilience in navigating school and resisting stereotypes. Their extracurricular

participation in school and off-campus clubs/organizations supported their identities and

community with the school. The availability of MSA at half of the students' campuses helped

them connect to other Muslim youth and form relationships around their shared experiences.

They used their shared experiences to advocate for themselves, resist deficit and anti-Muslim

narratives, and forge communities with their peers in settings where they encountered curricular

exclusion, minimization of their experiences, racialization of their religion, orientalist perceptions

about their communities that implied their lack of Americanness or deviation from dominant

norms. The next section explores students' friendships and peer-based networks of support that

supported their resilience in school.

V.   Friends as a Network of Resilience and Support

Both Muslim and non-Muslim circles of close friends served as a network of support and

resilience for Muslim students at school, as evidenced by students' responses to questions about

their network of friends inside and outside of school, as well as their identity-based similarities or

differences with these friends. Muslim students positioned these friends as resourceful networks

that helped maintain their academic identity. They also shared their thoughts, feelings, and

frustrations about their day-to-day experiences with friends at school. Muslim youth's friends

consisted of both similar racial/ethnic or religious groups, as well as other Students of Color.

These friends represented Muslim youth's community cultural wealth as they traversed racialized

hostility, reflecting their social, navigational, and resistant capitals.

For some study participants, identity-based similarities in friends contributed to and

supported their academic identities. However, as discussed in the previous findings section, half

of the Muslim students viewed club participation as a source of community building with others,

their close group of friends still reflected their own racial/ethnic or religious identities. In other

words, their friendships comprised of other youth who possibly experienced racialization and

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marginalization at school. When asked to tell me about his friends, Daniyal described them as "really academically focused" consisting of "two Indian friends that are in [his] main group" and some Pakistani friends that are older than him. I asked if his ethnic and religious identity impacted his relationship with friends, and Daniyal explained:

Text 5.31

I think I'm closer to them [Pakistani friends] since they have more of the same identity as me. I mean it's like we have more things in common I guess, than I did with my other friends.

Daniyal's friends reflect his social capital, consisting of students with similar racial, ethnic, religious, and academic identities. His closer relationships also reflect his religious capital, an identity marred by common misconceptions both in political, media, and curricular narratives. Hania attended the same high school and described it as a predominantly white school with some Students of Color. Daniyal used "positive" and "inclusive" as descriptors for his schools, but his circle of friends reflected his racial/ethnic and religious communities rather than the predominant school population. Sanam's friend circle similarly reflected her racial/ethnic identities (South Asian). I posit that racial/ethnic similarities in friendships (or, students' social capital) serve as a navigational strategy in hostile environments, wherein these youth gravitated towards peers from similar racial/ethnic or religious backgrounds. Rather than understanding this as a preference or self-segregation, I argue their network of friends reflects self-preservation (Villalpando, 2003) given encounters with racialization and racial microaggressions.

Students' circle of friends, both Muslim and non-Muslim, supported their resilience and served as a supportive network in not very welcoming spaces. Most of the students agreed that their religious identity did not matter in forming friendships at school, and religion hardly came up among their friends – especially youth with non-Muslim friends. However, their descriptions of friends suggest that importance of supportive friends that honor each other's diverse identities. Hania, for example, stated the following about her group of friends in school:

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Text 5.32

> Well, it's actually pretty cool because like you know I just said [the school is]
> predominantly white. So, like People of Color, ethnic people, they're super…
> there's not that many. So, most of my friends… I don't think I have a white
> friend… I think I have one white friend, so the rest are either Black, or Asian or
> Desi. So, they're the same like that.

Hania's social capital consisted of primarily Students of Color rather than the predominant white student population at her high school. She attributed these friendships to knowing "the same kids since like seventh grade". Her friends presumably supported her ethnic, religious, and gender identities in a school environment that she "[did] not think [is] very warm and inviting yet" but "is getting more and more People of Color" and "becoming more inclusive". As such, she implies that an increase in racial diversity may help her school become more inviting and inclusive for students like her.

Students' network consisted of friends they could have meaningful conversations with and share issues relevant to them. Imran observed that he and his friends shared "a common belief in [terms of their] political alignment". His friends cultivated his sense of community at school, even though they lacked ethnic or religious similarities. In describing his groups of friends and if conversations about religion emerged with them, Imran shared:

Text 5.33

> Some are immigrants like me, but in terms of religion? Not really, because I
> don't have that many or at least don't come into contact with that many Muslims
> at our school… but religion doesn't tend to be a topic that we talk about. I mean
> with my friends it's easy because I know how they act and how they'll react. If
> something big comes up I bring it up and they put in their own views and they're
> not always the same, you know. But we're having the conversation. Whereas
> with peers it can be difficult, certain people are more aggressive, certain are more
> not accepting of other people's views.

Students formed and maintained relationships with those who acknowledged, affirmed, or were receptive to engaging in discussions relevant to their identities. This exemplifies how Imran used his religious capital to further knowledge about issues relevant to his communities among friends. Thus, Muslim youth's religious capital informed how they navigated school and the types of

relationship they built on campus. Similarly, Aisha, while new to her high school, found ways to connect with some peers during Physical Education over their racialized experiences, describing her relationship as follows:

> Text 5.34
>> We agree on a lot of things, the peers that I have now. All my friends are either Mexican or Black. We were talking about this and my friend goes, yeah, I would be considered ghetto if I did something like that. And my friend, she said that she would be considered as the terrorist because of her skin color. We have like these conversations.

Aisha and her network of friends and peers connected over talking about dominant racialized assumptions about their communities. Though she had just one Muslim friend at school, she built relationships with her peers about issues that mattered to her and them. For example, Aisha recounted multiple instances in which she brought up her religious identity, positioning it as a way of her seeing the world. These conversations reflect their recognition of stereotypes and racialization, as well as their resilience through building community with each other over issues of representation and systemic racism.

Supportive networks of friends contributed to Muslim youth's sense of community at school, particularly in situations involving racial microaggressions, racialized comments, or stereotypes. Like some participants, Leila described her group of friends as racially and ethnically diverse. To explain how her religious identity affected her relationship with her friends, Leila shared:

> Text 5.35
>> Personally, my best, best friends are Arab. One Palestinian, like I am and one Lebanese. We all share the same religion. Some of us more religious than others. Some of us like not religious at all. But we have the same ideas and what we believe in is the same… I also have a lot of different types of friends [non-Muslim, non-Arab, or non-Palestinian]. There are some things that I'll go through, but they wouldn't understand because they either don't have the same cultural rules as I do, or they just don't believe in the same things that I do. So, like I won't talk to them about it, but I'll talk to my Muslim or Arab friends about it.

Leila's description exemplifies that her religiously, ethnically, and culturally similar friends understand and support her community cultural wealth. The misrepresentation and vilification of multiple aspects of her identity makes it easier for her to relate to those who share her identities. This fostered a better sense of community due to relatability and understanding in sociopolitical contexts marred with racialized and orientalist images about Muslims.

Students overwhelmingly shared closer relationships with friends who supported their religious capital. There are two ways that occurred: (1) friendships with other Muslim youth, and (2) friendships with supportive non-Muslim friends. Zaynab referred to the importance of "acceptance and respect" in friendships. Zaynab's close friends seemingly valued and supported her religious identity, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Additionally, she described her close friends to be "strong with their faith", explaining:

> Text 5.36
>> Because if you're going to be my close friend, there are some things like my parents have rules and stuff and you have to be very understanding of that... Like for example, if I was doing something wrong and my Christian friend knows that my religion is against it, my Christian friend would tell me, "Zaynab, don't do that. It's not you, it's not part of your religion. You're not supposed to do that in your religion." For my very close friends, I choose people that are going to look out for me when I, like if I do something or that I'm starting to change or something, they'll call me out and like be like Zaynab, get back on track.

While Zaynab positions her religious identity as a form of capital, she also maintained it through her circle of friends. Her friends served as a source of her navigational strength and support system whether in acknowledging her identities as valuable, fostering her sense of community within school.

Longevity of knowing peers and friends also helped Muslim youth navigate school in the face of racial microaggressions and anti-Muslim racism. Being with the same group of peers since elementary school contributed to Leila's sense of community at school because she "felt close to most of them" and they knew "a lot about each other". She further explained:

Text 5.37

> When there's someone who comes into our life, like they'll come up to us and if they hear like that we're Muslim or that I'm Muslim or that I'm Arabian or that I'm Middle Eastern, they'll say something rude. It's not just me who gets offended. I feel like it's all my friends, and all my classmates get offended too because they know that I'm not like that…Like they know that I'm not what people think I am and they'll like back me up too because you're not just offending me, you're offending the people who hang out with me. You are basically saying that that you're friends with a terrorist or that you're friends with someone who will do horrible things.

Leila positions her peers and friends as a source of her community at school and contributors to her resilience. Her observations imply that her longtime peers did not perceive her as an outsider, rather viewed her as part of their community and any newcomer with stereotypical attitudes as a "bully". Though her peers may view racial microaggressions and stereotypes against Leila as problematic, Leila did not discuss it to extend across the Muslim community, nor its implications for her religious capital or other forms of community cultural wealth.

Muslim youth positioned their friends as a source of their resilience in school. Hala similarly highlighted how her diverse group of friends, not of her racial/ethnic or religious background, supported her navigational and resistant roles at school. She described her close friends as "very diverse". When asked if she felt comfortable talking to her friends about identity-related issues, Hala replied:

Text 5.38

> I'm an Arab and most of my friends are Black, Hispanics, Puerto Ricans. I have maybe a couple of Indian friends. So, we're all different, you know. And so, because of that, we all feel like we can share. None of us are white. So, we feel like we definitely all relate. Sometimes we'll just sit at lunch and just talk about how things are, what's happening to us, and how we're just not accepted.

Multiply marginalized youth shared their experiences with other marginalized youth, but also gaining knowledge about each other's experiences and navigating hostility. This exemplifies how such youth cultivated each other's resilience and carved out their own communities on campus by supporting each other. For example, Hala's friends presumably recognized her religious identity

and related experiences as a form of capital because she could provide insight into her experiences as an Arab and a Muslim. I understand this act of sharing and venting to each other about their experiences as a form of their resistance to being marginalized or othered.

Friendships also influenced Muslim youth's engagement and participation in extracurriculars at school. Fahad described his friend circle to consist of both non-Muslim and Muslim friends at school, describing, "There are only a few Muslims like myself at Rise." Despite the small number of Muslim students, Rise High School had an active MSA club. When asked about his extracurricular engagement in clubs at school (e.g., MSA), Fahad replied:

Text 5.39

At our school, there's not like a lot of people that are in clubs. I don't know if there are any [of my friends in MSA]. Usually, I just ignore clubs. We just think lots of clubs are not really that cool or interest us. And I don't think I've got time for that.

Lack of participation in social or academic clubs reflected his navigational choices at the school. Fahad and his friends supported each other's social and navigational capital through their likeminded perceptions about school clubs, not positioning them as sites to build relationships. Misbah's network of friends also influenced how she navigated school, but in a contrasting manner. She joined social clubs on campus to maintain her friendships; Misbah explained: "One of my close friends is in ASB. I'm usually like talking to her a lot, so I end up getting involved with those specific things that she's in". She also joined MSA to build relationships but also support her best friend who re-started the club as President. Thus, friends influenced Muslim youth's sense of community and participation within school.

Alternatively, extracurricular participation in school also built students' social capital by increasing their connections at school. Muslim students' religious capital and other forms of their community cultural wealth naturally emerged in such spaces. Zaynab also described having a

diverse group of friends at school because she "included [herself] in a lot of extracurricular activities", sharing:

Text 5.40
> It was a mix of Muslims and non-Muslims because I was in charge of the MSA, so like I knew a lot of Muslims. And then I was also involved in tennis and choir and UNICEF. I worked for the school as the TA in the office. So, like I had a lot of non-Muslim friends. I didn't really have a lot of… I'm trying to think.

Zaynab's participation in school supported her social capital and shows that she took an active role in school despite racialized sentiments and encounters with gendered racial micro-aggressions. Her involvement at school resulted in relationships and community building that reflects her resilience.

Muslim youth's social capital at school included friends with similar racial/ethnic and religious identities, as well as racially diverse groups of non-Muslim friends who valued or supported them. These friendships cultivated students' sense of community and belonging at school through sharing their beliefs, connecting around political and representational issues, sharing their frustrations, and forming academic support networks. This seemingly aided Muslim youth's navigation of school, resilience to and resistance against racialization of their religious identities, racial microaggressions, and religious nativist rhetoric. Friends offered space for youth to share their feelings about issues that mattered to them, cope with racist and racialized experiences, strengthen their racial literacy, and acknowledge their role as knowledge bearers – especially when it came to their race/ethnic- and religion-based experiences. The next section presents the diverse ways Muslim youth, formally and informally, advocated for themselves and/or their religious communities.

VI.   Formal and Informal Student Advocacy in School

Students drew on their community cultural wealth, particularly resistant capital, to speak up in school, advocate for self and others to educate/inform about issues pertinent to them, to

resist stereotypical assumptions about their community, and to establish community with peers at school. Their formal and informal advocacy manifested through speaking up in class or among peers, presenting in class, and participating in clubs -- reflective of students' resistive agency. Resistant capital refers to "knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" and "resistance to subordination" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). The interview excerpts above show Muslim students' "agentive strategy" (Merchant, 2016) to shift hegemonic narratives, build community with non-Muslims, and share their experiential (including religious) knowledge. Interviews with Muslim youth show the centrality of their community cultural wealth, especially religious capital, in resisting racism, stereotypes, and gendered racialization.

Students resisted racialized narratives and racial microaggressions (discussed in Chapter 4) by engaging in conversations with their peers and friends. Imran recalled having to "defend [himself] because of being a Muslim" at school against negative stereotypes and media coverage that render Muslims as "radical" or "inhuman". He explained:

Text 5.41

> I try to like defend Islam in that sense. I just say something like we can all get along together but at the same time I will defend my religion if somebody comes attacking it and something. And that has happened, although lately as people have gotten older, they've been more accepting and they've learned more about the religion, even if it's the little things. It helps them become more accepting of it.

Imran shared experiences with racialized hostility and racial microaggressions that positioned Muslims as religious fundamentalists and violent threats. Using his knowledge and understanding of issues tied to his religious identities, he fore fronted his resistant capital to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions. He attributed the prominence of misperceptions about Muslims to media representation, stating, "Whenever there's a conversation about a Muslim country it's always generally negative. It's never anything really positive." His community cultural wealth influences his resistance to anti-Muslim rhetoric and his racial literacy on systemic racism's

impact on the Muslim experience. However, this also shows the burden on Muslim youth of having to humanize their marginalized and vilified religious identity.

Students referred to the role of media and political rhetoric in shaping dominant misconceptions about the Muslim community. Misbah similarly referred to media coverage's impact on people's understanding of Muslims. When asked if her friends or peers talk about Muslims, she acknowledged the rarity of such conversations but recalled:

Text 5.42

> Misbah: Well, it came up once, but it was more like they could see my side of it because they didn't have the personal like experience of it. They were seeing it more from a global standpoint than a personal view.
> RQamar: What's the global standpoint?
> Misbah: What was in the news and what was being shown on the news and like social media and stuff.
> RQamar: What was in the news?
> Misbah: It was supporting the travel ban. How like it's banning people who come from terrorist country in America.
> RQamar: And your view was different from your friends?
> Misbah: Yeah. Just because knowing that we have family there, so… and it like affected it.

Misbah used her community knowledge and experience to discuss the problematic nature of the Muslim travel ban for her, as a Pakistani and a Muslim. Her knowledge and experience offered her friends a counternarrative to what they may have heard at home or on the news. Misbah and other Muslim students' experiences exemplify the global reality of racialization and anti-Muslim rhetoric, or a "global racist system" (Rana, 2011). Not surprisingly, Muslim youth found it easier to confront stereotypical representation or misrepresentation among their friends.

Some Muslim youth confronted blatant anti-Muslim slurs by highlighting them as problematic. The previous chapter discussed the circulation of the terrorist trope about Muslims through friends, peers, curricular materials, and teachers. Leila recalled peers' "offensive" comments to describe her schooling experiences as a Muslim, sharing:

Text 5.43

> Sometimes there are some people who won't know that I'm Muslim and will say something that's like offensive. And I'll automatically stop them and make sure they don't say anything. One time someone called my friend a terrorist and I automatically put it to a stop because that's completely inaccurate and wrong. And nobody should assume something about a culture or religion because of one event or one thing that happened.

Leila similarly stopped a friend from engaging in the terrorist slur. This exemplifies her informal advocacy that addressed one-on-one experiences or observations of racial microaggressions. Her resistance reflected her community cultural wealth, particularly her experiences as a Muslim and Palestinian. In such situations, Leila shared, "I'll just straight up tell them and there would be like an awkward silence, but I'll be proud of myself for doing it because I stopped them from saying something that's completely incorrect." Her resistance to Islamophobic and anti-Muslim rhetoric reflect her navigational capital in hostile environment, but certainly not the only way she or other youth reacted to dangerous stereotypes. In this way, she shared her knowledge about the harmfulness of the derogatory usage of religious phrases for reinforcing violent stereotypes about the Muslim community.

Muslim girls who veil encountered anti-Muslim hostility and racial microaggressions, which others minimized as "jokes" and, to some extent, the girls internalized as "jokes". The previous chapter presented Zaynab's experience with "ignorant comments" after she began wearing hijab in middle school. She perceived these racial microaggressions as "jokes" and a matter of "different personalities" rather than anti-Muslim racism or Islamophobia. Peers also positioned such remarks as "jokes". However, Zaynab openly resisted and challenged her peers' stereotypical remarks by mobilizing her community cultural wealth. From middle school to high school, Zaynab's agency and resistance manifested in her speaking about issues that mattered to her, advocating for the Muslim community, and addressing racial microaggressions, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim rhetoric rooted in nativist perceptions. When describing her experience as a Muslim at her school, she shared:

Text 5.44

> I was able to be myself and be openly Muslim at my school… Of course, there were those days where like ignorant people would speak and I'm like, "why are you speaking?" But for the most part, the people at my school are very like, 'you do you' kind of people. I did experience some moments that were, can be considered like Islamophobic, but it didn't stop me.

Zaynab presents herself as unapologetically Muslim when faced with hostility. Her community cultural wealth, from familial support to her religious identity, supports her resilience in hostile contexts that oversimplified or stereotyped her. As mentioned earlier, Zaynab mobilized her religious capital to resist and transform peers' perceptions about Muslims and Islam, in or outside of MSA.

Resistance also manifested in Muslim youth speaking up to their teachers about anti-Muslim curricular content or racialized discourses in the classroom. Hala recounted a classroom experience in which her World History teacher reinforced narratives vilifying Muslims. When asked about curricular coverage of Islam or Muslims, she described her teacher's comparison of Christianity and Judaism to Islam:

Text 5.45

> Once he got to Islam, he was like most Muslims are extremists. They take their Quran or whatever and they use it to kill people. He was also saying that Muslim people often support violence and all that stuff. So, I got really mad. I raised my hand and I said, "I am a Muslim and what you just said, it's completely wrong and you have no," I told him very respectfully. I told him, "You have no experience with this stuff and you are not a Muslim and you have not studied Islam, so you can't say things like that without knowing it." And then I just kind of explain how in the Bible it mentions the word sword or whatever sword. It says it may be like 300 times and it talks about violence, but the sword is not mentioned once in the Quran, not once.

Hala mobilizes her community cultural wealth, specifically her religious capital – from her identity-based experiences and faith-based knowledge – to counter her teacher's racializing, negative coverage of Islam. She discussed the importance of advocating for her religious community in front of her peers to prevent them from internalizing "the wrong idea of a religion" because her religion affects her "everyday life". Hala utilizes her cultural, familial, and religious

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values, demonstrating her transformative resistance, as she pointed out the hypocritical and harmful coverage in front of the whole class.

Some classroom activities offered students the opportunity to share aspects of their identity. Responding to a question about such classroom opportunities, Hania shared:

Text 5.46

It's a… I'm not gonna lie it's a little awkward sometimes, you know. Because it's predominantly white, so they can't relate to some things and then a lot of the desi people are like really whitewashed so they try not to understand. But I get used to it. You get used to it at the end, so now I'm pretty comfortable of talking about it.

Though teachers offered opportunities for students to share their cultural and ethnic identities, the lack of relatability from peers, or diverging from the norms, indicated the foreignness or outsiderness of those identities. This is further exacerbated by her South Asian, or desi, peers that positioning her cultural and ethnic traditions as foreign, reinforcing white American practices and traditions as the norm. Yet, these opportunities also show Hania's resilience and resistance to centering the importance of her community cultural wealth even as they deviate from the dominant norms at school.

Students advocated for themselves or others through communication with teachers, school staff and administration about racial microaggressions and harassment. Zaynab, Aisha and Hala, for example, shared multiple instances in which they sought support of institutional actors with power to implement or enforce change and school policies. Responding to a question about instances in which her cultural or religious identities emerged in classrooms, Hala recalled an experience from a previous high school in Southern California:

Text 5.47

I have this one time where my teacher knew that I was a Muslim and there was something in Arabic or something. She asked me to read it for the class and then I did. And then this one kid, he was like "she's an Arab, she's a terrorist, she has a bomb and she's gonna blow us up" and all that stuff. He did that to me for the rest of the year. Every single day. All because my teacher put it out there that I

was a Muslim… I told my parents and they told her and she's like, "oh, they're just kids. there's nothing wrong." I was like, "no, that's not a joke to me though."

Hala's experience with blatant anti-Muslim racism drew from racialized discourses and assumptions of Muslims as a foreign threat. Hala's self-advocacy highlighted her resistance to the normalizing of such racial microaggressions, rooted in anti-Muslim sentiments, racism, and orientalism. Challenging narratives that position Muslims as a "threat to national security" exemplifies resistance (Ali & Sonn, 2017, p. 1173). Yet, the teacher's minimization of such occurrences as jokes or an adolescent phase minimized such racial microaggressions. A student in Sirin and Fine's (2008) ethnographic study similarly experienced such remarks and did not receive support from her teacher or the school administration. These experiences exemplify the normalcy and minimization of anti-Muslim racism which remains ignored and undetected by teachers or administrators (understanding why that happens is beyond the scope of this study).

Finally, students also encountered resistance from their teachers or school administration when attempting to address anti-Muslim bias and harassment at school. I asked students to also consider their experiences based on their racial and ethnic identities at school. Leila centered her Palestinian roots when describing herself, but nearly always encountered ignorance ("99% of the time") about Palestine and its geographical location. She referred to this as a the "most annoying thing" possible as it undermines her heritage and identity. In this sense, Leila experienced racial battle fatigue. Yet, her resilience shows in her mobilization of her community cultural wealth, knowledge about her heritage and ethnic roots to inform others about Palestine. When asked if her racial/ethnic identities emerged in conversations or curricula at school, she recalled an experience with her 8th grade history teacher:

Text 5.48

She kind of went into an argument with me and it caused like a huge gap in my education because from that moment on she like didn't give me a chance to retake tests [or] to retake assignments. Like everybody else got a chance to do it. And then when it was my turn she would say no, and she'd make up any excuse to not

> allow me to do it. And the argument was like more about… She like went into a whole history lesson of how Israel is Israel and Palestine doesn't exist. And it kind of caused like, not just in me but a lot of other classmates who are a part of my… Like they're not from Palestine to like get offended but because of the fact that she is actually arguing. She's basically trying to convince someone not to be who they are. Like to consider themselves Israeli or something.

This exemplifies a hostile situation in which the teacher engaged in erasure of a student's ethnic identity, roots, and history. Additionally, this hostility resulted in marginalization and exclusion of Leila from having equal access in the classroom. Drawing from her community cultural wealth, Leila resisted this racialized and exclusionary treatment. Responding to my question about how, if at all, she addressed this situation with her teacher, Leila described a multipronged process to advocate for herself:

Text 5.49

> At first, I went up to the teacher and I told her how she bothered me. She seemed unbothered by me being bothered and so she kind of like brushed it off and she continued to treat me unfairly amongst the others. That was like the first class I ever failed. Like I'm a straight A student and she kept giving me like Ds and Fs on things that I should have passed. There was a time where I traveled back home...taking a leave from school, but I took all my studies with me and when [I asked her] to give me my work, she refused. When I got back, she didn't give me enough time to do it. That's against the district policy. So that's when I went to the office and I started to complain and it took me like a whole, like three months to get out of her class. The principal wouldn't allow me to leave, and he like completely ignored my request. He tried to show that it's completely fine and that there was nothing wrong. So basically [taking] her side until I brought in my parents. We had to have several meetings and I had to show him proof, and I had to email her, and she had to email me. And then she messed up in one of her emails. I was being super respectful. She messed up and said something that was inappropriate and rude. And I immediately sent that to the principal, and I got out of her class and this year she's apparently retired. So, she's out of this… not torturing any other students.

Leila's multistep process to advocate for herself met with resistance, from both the teacher and school principal. Teacher and administrative resistance to acknowledging Muslim youth's experiences with hostility due to their ethnic, cultural, or religious identities impacts Muslim youth's academic access (Sirin & Fine, 2008). Leila's formal example of self-advocacy demonstrated Leila's resilience and resistance to anti-Palestinian hostility from her teacher and

administration's disbelief about her experience, with the burden of proof being forced down upon a student and her family.

Similarly, Zaynab recalled an instance in which her favorite teacher ignored her request to address anti-Muslim harassment. She overheard a couple of boys laughing about harassing a Muslim girl through text messages, but her teacher ignored the request because she did not hear it herself, and then minimized it as a joke. Zaynab, then, attempted to resolve this situation through the administration but could not confirm if they took any action. Dupper, Forrest-Bank, and Lowry-Carusillo (2015) similarly found that lack of intervention from teachers and adults in instances of religious-based harassment reinforced religious discrimination.

All students' schools adopted generic anti-bullying policies with little specification of what bullying may look like for minoritized youth. To address concerns with educators, Aisha also involved the school administration. Responding to a question about her high school's responsiveness and their actions to address issues of harassment or bullying, Aisha recalled her classroom experience with a teacher:

Text 5.50
> The teacher mispronounced my name wrong on purpose. I took that to the principal, and he eventually stopped. But we had a new CSI teacher anyway because that guy was only a substitute. I take everything to the principal if it's like prejudice or something like that because like, I don't want other students to go through it.

Aisha used her Islamic name after conversion; her name symbolized her religious identity and its significance to her but did not align with dominant cultural norms. Despite her apparent insistence, the continuation of mispronouncing her name reflects a racial microaggression (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). In this same context with the same substitute teacher (discussed in the previous chapter), Aisha also recalled various instances involving curricular materials, particularly videos, showing violence in association with Islam and Muslims (e.g., Arabic language or text in videos depicting bombs and explosions). Aisha resisted the reinforcement of

racialization, particularly threatening tropes, and the mispronunciation of her name by communicating with the principal, showing her navigational and resistant capital to maneuver school and advocate for herself.

Alternatively, some youth opted for silence or kept quiet to protect themselves and navigate school in certain situations. Though Leila often confronted anti-Muslim comments in one-on-one situations, she recalled some instances in which she remained silent. For example (as discussed in the previous chapter), Muslim students heard some peers blurt out Arabic phrases (e.g., *Allahu Akbar*) in derogatory ways during middle school, implying Muslims as violent. In such instances, Leila shared, "I would stay quiet, and I would just like keep going, like move on with my life and it would annoy me." As discussed in the previous chapter, such instances occurred in classrooms. Often, teachers did not penalize the circulation of these slurs that appeared difficult for Muslim youth to address on their own in classrooms full of their peers. Hala, who advocated for her ethnic and religious representation with teachers, responded the following to a question about addressing anti-Muslim slurs:

> Text 5.51
>> No, I can't. I wouldn't do that. Yeah. I'm not, I'm not gonna do that. Because of my safety. I definitely know, especially at the school that I am at, I know I would not be safe. You know, something will definitely go down.

Hala adopted silence as a navigational strategy for self-preservation and protection from violence and harassment. For example, both Hania and Hala recalled violence against female Muslims, and Zaynab also recalled overhearing a conversation about a couple of male students harassing a female Muslim student. Muslim youth's critical awareness about the impact of their negatively politicized identities reflects a navigational form of capital that builds their resilience in school, but also contributes to "racial battle fatigue" (Smith, 2004). Fear of harassment is also a deterrent for openly voicing concerns. Students' parents shared similar fears, as Zaynab explained:

> Text 5.52

> My parents weren't very like encouraging to talk about my political views, or my religion when I was younger because I still didn't understand, you know, because I was still young. But I think even though they felt uncomfortable, as I grew up, they realized that that's just the way I am.

In response to surveillance of Muslim communities, Muslim families and parents encouraged their children to not draw attention to themselves (Mir, 2009; Ali, 2016). Her parents' reaction may reflect those fears and the experiences of the American Muslim community after 9/11. Islamophobia and a culture of surveillance (e.g., New York City's surveillance programs to spy on Muslims included academic spaces) encourages youth to find community in religious or ethnic organizations (Ali, 2016; Mir, 2009).

These excerpts offer a glimpse into Muslim youth's resistance to anti-Muslim rhetoric that often circulates undetected in school. Not only did they experience hostility and racialization of their identities from peers, but they also recalled its reinforcement in classrooms by some teachers and administrators. Depending on the situation, Muslim youth employed various means to advocate for themselves, from correcting peer misconceptions to speaking up in class to staying silent as a self-preservation and protection. I argue that their responses to the messages they received about their identities show their resilience and resistance in navigating a racialized hostility that carried nativist tones.

Discussion

In this chapter, I discussed how Muslim youth used their community cultural wealth, particularly religious capital, to navigate school. I found religion to play a role in how their families and on-/off-campus faith-based communities supported their navigation of schools. Participation in student organizations and friendships built their resilience. Finally, students engaged in both formal and informal advocacy through speaking up for themselves, their Muslim peers, and their larger faith-based and racial/ethnic communities. Seven of the ten study participants self-identified as females; as a result, this study largely focuses on the gendered

experiences, resilience, and resistance of females. In addition to focusing on students' religious

identification, this chapter's goal has been to show the centrality of their religious identity in

challenging anti-Muslim rhetoric. This chapter argues the importance of recognizing religion as

capital, not necessarily a knowledge of faith but lived experiences tied to religion, to encompass

Muslim youth's community cultural wealth.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Implications

This dissertation began by reviewing research that highlights the prevalence and impact of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate on Muslim communities. Over the past couple of decades, the Muslim population in the US has steadily increased, currently projected by the Pew Research Center to be at 3.85 million, or 1.1% of the total US population (Mohamed, 2021). Representation of Muslims in federal, state, and local politics has also recently increased (e.g., Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, Representative Ilhan Omar, Representative Rashida Tlaib). Yet misrepresentation, racism, and prejudice mar Muslims' experiences and acceptance in the US. My study contributes to this research literature by centering the experiential knowledge and understanding of high school Muslim American students. The lack of inclusion of Muslims in the curriculum, the misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims in popular culture and the media – as well as my own background as a Muslim woman – influenced the research questions and study design.

Given the normalization of racialized and orientalist rhetoric in the representation of Muslims nationally and internationally, my research examines first- and second-generation South Asian and West Asian/Middle Eastern students' schooling experiences, curricular portrayals of Muslims and Islam, and my focal students' interpretation of these experiences and portrayals. Specifically, this research sought to document students' recollections and memories of their interactions with their schools' structure (e.g., textbooks, curricula) and culture in relation to their religious, ethnic/racial, cultural, and gender identities. I take an intersectional approach supported by Critical Race Theory to examine how Muslim Americans' multiple identities (racial, ethnic, gender, class, linguistic, and national) impact their daily experiences, particularly in high school. Students' narratives revealed how Islamophobic, and racialized ideas about Muslims, position them as untrustworthy, violent (if male), and oppressed and passive (if female). Unfortunately,

but not surprisingly, students internalized religious-based gendered and racial microaggressions as harmless, jokes, or par for the course. This is concerning as research shows that repeated slights can profoundly impact individuals in the way they see themselves, their cultures, communities, and the world (Steele, 1997). Microaggressions have been shown to result in negative physical and psychological impacts for People of Color, who may internalize the slights that are normalized and minimized by society (Dumas, 2014).

Overview of the Chapters

Drawing on reports and survey data, Chapter 1 shows the prevalence of anti-Muslim sentiments in the US generally as well as in schools. It also shows there is a gap in research examining the curricular representations and schooling experiences of Muslim youth themselves—a gap this dissertation addresses. In addition, I show that gross misrepresentation and overrepresentation of Middle Eastern (West Asian) and South Asian people and places dominate media coverage about Islam and Muslims (Suleiman, 1999; Jackson, 2010; Watt, 2012), thus my decision to study the racialized experiences of Muslim high schoolers identifying with these racial/ethnic groups in particular.

My literature review shows the centrality of the concepts "racialization" (Omi & Winant, 2014), "religification" (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012) and "orientalism" (Said, 1978) across scholarship on Muslims, and I apply these concepts to this study. First, I show that the racialization of Islam reinforces orientalist, essentialized, and gendered ways of perceiving Muslims. I show how the term "Muslim" becomes racialized and carries politicized meanings. Second, I review the research which demonstrates how textbooks offer limited and passive representations of Muslims often framing them as oppositional to Western customs and democracy and associating Islam with violence, instability, and oppression. Finally, I present research studies conducted in schools or on Muslim students' K-12 experiences. These show the suspicion surrounding Muslim's

religious identities and appearance, the dominance of racialized and gendered discourses about Muslims and Islam, and how Muslims' experiences are religified. This dissertation adds to this research by examining such issues using a critical race theory framework, which previous research has not utilized. I address the following gaps in Muslim studies in the US: (1) the racialization of Muslims and Islam manifested as gender and racial microaggressions for my study participants; (2) racialized hostility affected students' self-perceptions and their identities; (3) schools (including teachers) barely responded to anti-Muslim rhetoric and racist occurrences; and, (4) Muslim youth used their "community cultural wealth" to navigate school.

Chapter 2 outlines my theoretical framework and research design. I extend Critical Race Theory (CRT) to understanding the religion-based experiences of Muslim youth by intertwining it with "orientalism" (Said, 1978), "racialization of religion" (Joshi, 2006), and "religification" (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012). These concepts help identify critical issues in the experiences of Muslim youth, and I use CRT to reframe their experiences with religious discrimination as anti-Muslim racism. I draw on CRT's concepts of racial microaggressions (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015) and racist nativism (Pérez Huber et al., 2008) to show how racialized hostility is normalized, and reframe these occurrences as symbolic of racism at the intersection of youth's religious identities. I conclude this chapter by detailing my research design

In Chapter 3, I focus on the representation of Islam, Muslims, and related groups of people and places in high school History and Social Studies textbooks. More specifically, I analyzed 2006 versions of world history, US history, and US government textbooks. I argue that these textbooks reinforce orientalist perspectives of Muslims and Islam and contribute to their racialization. First, textbooks position Islam as ideologically incompatible with the West and its traditions. Second, textbooks overrepresent Muslims in threat-based narratives presenting them as anti-American and anti-Western. Third, textbooks' limited representations of Muslims construct

them as incompetent and invisibilize their contributions—and well as Islam's—to US and world history and contemporary culture. Fourth, textbooks contribute to the gendered racialization of Muslims that present them in opposition to the US and the West, representing females as oppressed and males as violent. Finally, textbooks offer little discussion about how imperialism and colonialism have impacted – and continue to affect –Muslims and Muslim-Americans.

Focusing on interviews with ten Muslim-American high school students, Chapter 4 demonstrates that Muslim youth experienced anti-Muslim slights, orientalism, racialization of religion, religification, and what I call "racist religious nativism". More specifically, I found that Muslim American students suffered two types of racial microaggression at school: (1) racial microaggressions that framed them as violent security threats, and (2) gendered racial microaggressions that positioned Muslim girls as oppressed, and sometimes, in need of liberation whether they wore hijab or not. These racialized occurrences and racial microaggressions resulted in: (1) the reinforcement of stereotypical assumptions and conflation of these students' religious and ethnic/racial identities; (2) the minimization of gendered and racial microaggressions as "jokes"; and (3) the othering of these youth as oppositional to western norms. Taken together, these findings demonstrate the underlying and often ignored dominance of what I am calling racist religious nativism that considers Muslims as violent, untrustworthy foreign outsiders, incompatible with the West.

Chapter 5 focuses on student responses to the rhetoric presented in Chapters 3 and 4, highlighting their resilience and resistance in navigating school, through the "community cultural wealth" framework (Yosso, 2005). I show that racialized hostility contributed to participants' "racial battle fatigue" (Smith et al., 2007). Using Yosso's framework, I found that students' familial and social capitals helped them navigate schools and fostered their resilience in the face of hostility. I also posit religion as a primary kind of capital that contributed to their resilience

and resistance in school. Yosso conceptualizes religion, especially religious gathering, as a kind of familial capital. But I argue that religion itself becomes a critical source of community building, extracurricular participation on- and off-campus, and resistance to hostile environments – hence, a capital on its own.

In the next section I highlight key implications of this research for education research, policy, and practice.

Implications of Study

Public schools exclude discussions about religion or claim a neutral stance based on the separation of church and state, resulting in students' religious identities being excluded from schools (de Ruyter & Merry, 2008). Such exclusion ignores the identities students bring into schools, as well as the dominant religious identity that already exists within school. de Ruyter & Merry argue that schools should educate young people about ideals tied to religion as reflective of an important aim of education in liberal democracies – an informed, reasonable citizenry. Learning about ideals (excluding religious principles and doctrines) may foster a better understanding and knowledge about others. In the context of marginalization and racialization based on religion, it is important that curriculum acknowledges religious diversity in the curriculum.

With the continuation of orientalist perspectives, racialization of Islam and Muslims, and discourses of religification manifesting in racial microaggressions and religious nativism rhetoric, this study has implications for theory, K-12 schools and teachers, curricula and textbooks, and Muslim and non-Muslim youth. I elaborate on these below. In some cases, I build upon suggestions made by my participants themselves, who shared their recommendations based on their experiences and observations.

<u>Implications for K-12 Schools and Curriculum</u>

Most study participants described their schooling experience as positive despite the multiple racial, religious and gender microaggressions they reported. To enhance the educational experiences of Muslim, Muslim-American and Muslim-appearing students in the future, K-12 schools and school districts must recognize the cumulative harm racialized hostilities, anti-Muslim prejudice, and racism have caused these youth's self-perceptions and identities.

Participants shared several ideas about how schools could be more responsive to their Muslim students' needs at schools. First, Imran and Hania suggested that school administrators could recognize or acknowledge Muslim religious observance days and holidays (e.g., Ramadan, Eid, Friday prayers or *Jumma*). Schools are in the position to build their own knowledge and normalize Muslim youth and the ways they are present in school. A few students, like Hala, felt that their schools and teachers expressed little care about their religious holidays and observance days. Abo-Zena (2011) recommends that teachers add all religious holidays to calendars, and encourages engagement in instruction that captures those holidays. School administrations can similarly engage in this process to normalize such a calendar to inform both their students and teachers about the main religious observance days. Hania made a related recommendation, that "[schools] can facilitate conversations about religion" and "be aware of dietary restrictions and other restrictions Muslims have". In this sense, school could normalize the daily experiences of their Muslim students rather than exoticize them.

Second, schools should focus on the realities of Muslim communities' global and US experiences. That is, rather than perpetuating simplistic ideas about Muslims and Muslim-dominant countries, schools could recognize the complexities of their Muslim students' intersectional identities. As Leila states, schools could "spread awareness about real issues happening in our countries instead of demonizing us." For example, Leila recalled an instance

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where an Egyptian peer was harassed by another student, resulting in a physical fight, yet school administrators failed to recognize the racialized hostility and racial microaggression in this situation. Misbah similarly expressed:

Text 6.1
I feel like they could like talk more about like the stuff that's happening in the real world and the stuff that's going on in our lives and things like that. Like bring more of like how we feel and stuff into class.

Culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) pedagogies allow for students and their communities to be recognized and included in meaningful ways. Schools can strive for holistic representations of Islamic societies and Muslim communities. Sanam referred to this as "positive Islamic involvement in past and present society". In other words, schools could incorporate curricula that recognizes marginalized and underrepresented aspects of students' identities, highlighting their value. For Sanam, this means including representations that uplifts her religious community's contributions and presence in history.

Finally, schools can develop partnerships and relationships with the Muslim communities they serve. Aisha, for example, suggested inviting Muslim community members into the classroom, who could help facilitate a better understanding about Muslims for the school community.

Implications for Teachers and Curriculum

The participants observed that their teachers rarely discussed or referred to issues that that reflect Muslims' racial/ethnic or religious identities. Yet, students shared instances of peer engagement in racialized gender and racial microaggressions that their teachers either minimized or ignored. For example, Hala's experience with racial microaggressions carried anti-Muslim sentiments, but her teacher minimized the terrorist stereotype as a joke. Though some participants actively resisted stereotypes and anti-Muslim racism, some also internalized them as jokes or as

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inconsequential. Hania recalled that Muslims, Islam, or Muslim-dominant countries came up on the anniversary of September 11 attacks; her government teacher added a "disclaimer that this is not what Muslims are like" and identifying it as "an extreme version". Even so, both examples exemplify the harm to Muslim youth's sense of self, as teachers ignored such occurrences without naming consequences for anti-Muslim remarks in their classrooms.

Students shared some of their ideas for how teachers can better support Muslim students when such incidents occur. Some students, like Hania, said that teachers considered Muslims, Islam, and related topics as taboo. Teachers' avoidance of such topics may also be due to their lack of familiarity with students' cultural identities and histories (Basford, 2010). But other students shared examples of teachers' pedagogical practices that helped them share their cultural and religious identities in ways where others got to learn from them. Imran, for example, shared that his AP Government teacher incorporated current events to spark discussion among students. In one such discussion, the teacher presented students with an article that Imran thought furthered generalizable ideas about political parties and participation of Muslim Americans. Imran challenged some of the article's assumptions on the conservative political leanings of Muslims, which he felt furthered stereotypes. Building on this experience, Imran suggests:

> Text 6.2
>> When it comes to Muslims specifically, I guess it'd be like when you're explaining something, try to fact check it first, or learn more about it and if you want to teach a student about it don't go straight to the news or stereotypes because those are buffed up by the media.

Imran's teacher offered space for students to tap into their knowledges and critically approach articles. Given Imran's suggestion, educators may examine instructional materials for the messages they communicate about different communities, as well as provide space for students to share how they are understanding the content. Teaching practices that help students understand,

contextualize, and disrupt stereotypes about Muslims can challenge the simplistic narratives students hear about their communities through curricula, in the media, and in the wider society.

Teacher intervention in situations involving stereotypes or anti-Muslim sentiments helped students feel included. For example, Leila shared her elation as a teacher stopped stereotypical remarks about Muslims as violent in his classroom by telling students to not judge a whole group of people for the actions of a few. Research demonstrates the need for educator preparedness to address issues concerning Muslim youth (Taggar, 2006), Islamophobia and anti-Muslim rhetoric (Jackson, 2010; Zaal, 2012). As Zaal (2012) notes, some educators may not be aware or understand the implications of Islamophobia for their Muslim students, nor comprehend the ways their lessons or the curriculum perpetuate Islamophobia. Muslim youth's stories, then, highlight the importance of educator resistance to problematic, discriminatory, bigoted, and racist remarks circulating in their classrooms.

Second, teachers should include curricular materials that honor the contributions from Muslim communities and include them in history. Hala shared that her religious history was not included in the curriculum, suggesting teachers include teaching about religions: "Telling our story just like they tell the Christian story". Sanam specifically shared, "Teachers could probably talk about the advances in society made by Muslims in math, science, or other fields". As my textbook analysis and interviews showed, curricular references to Muslims remained minimal, but when they did emerge, they carried racialized or stereotypical gendered connotations.

Third, teachers should approach topics relating to Muslims and communicate with Muslim youth with an open mind and position them as holders of knowledge. Leila suggested that teachers should "be more open minded" and help cultivate awareness about issues that matter to their students. Providing students with an opportunity to select, research and present on topics

that they are passionate about supports students' agency. Zaynab shared about a symposium project:

Text 6.3

> When I was a sophomore in high school, we got to choose our topic. I chose Islamophobia and I got to like say it in front of a big crowd of students. Teachers would sign up their classes to come attend these symposium speeches. So, a lot of people attended mine. It was very powerful and I still take pride in it.

Teaching practices that support students as knowledge bearers allow students to share their community cultural wealth. Zaynab also shared other teaching practices that allowed her to share about her community as well as learn from others. For example, one activity focused on students' names, what their names mean, and the importance/value of their names for them. She also recalled an "I believe in…" activity in which students shared their essays with their peers with the lights off. She fondly remembered this activity because it allowed her to center her identities and it helped disrupt some of her assumptions about peers and learn about what they valued.

Given the normalcy of anti-Muslim sentiments and racism, as it manifested in racial and gender microaggressions, teachers can support Muslim youth as well as other marginalized and racialized students, through open and inclusive classroom spaces that foster critical thinking about global issues, whether through curriculum or interaction (Taggar, 2006). Teachers' openness and transparency about their understanding of certain issues or what they may have understood incorrectly may facilitate dialogue with students about learning as a process for both teachers and students (Sensoy & Ali-Khan, 2016). By guiding students to challenge what they have learned, their memories, or perceptions, teachers may support students' analytical skills (Ibid). A few of the focal Muslim students observed that their teachers viewed teaching about Muslims/Islam or related topics as a "taboo" subject as discussed in Chapter 5. Teachers may attempt to disrupt this by attempting to become comfortable with discomfort and conflict themselves and guiding students to do the same (Ibid).

Additionally, teachers may disrupt stereotypes and misconceptions by differentiating between Islam and the Middle East (Sensoy & Ali-Khan, 2016). As Chapter 3 showed, textbooks largely focus on South Asian, West Asian/Middle Eastern, or Arab groups when discussing Muslims, as well as tie their coverage to religion. Relatedly, teachers may highlight the heterogeneity in predominantly Muslim areas or countries (e.g., an Arab is not synonymous to Muslim) (Ibid). To disrupt stereotypes, teachers may engage in pedagogical practices, such as media literacy activities, that help students examine dominant messages about Muslims. Teachers can engage in disrupting Islamophobia without teaching their students about Islam (e.g., the impact of Islamophobia on people, both Muslims and non-Muslims) (Ibid). Educators may engage in self-reflection to challenge their own predispositions to not wanting to teach about these issues, or their fears about teaching on these issues (e.g., consequences of not teaching about Islamophobia) (Ibid).

Finally, I affirm students' suggestion that teachers take part in developing partnerships with the community to enhance their curricula when addressing topics involving Muslims or Islam. Zaynab, like some of her peers, shared some hesitance about curricular representation of her ethnic and religious identities:

> Text 6.4
>
> I wouldn't recommend them learning [about Islam] themselves. Sometimes teachers can be a little biased or they just don't understand it, so they teach it wrong and that would go downhill... [Instead] I would have the teacher get like a speaker or something that was Muslim. So I know that everything they were saying was correct.

Aisha similarly expressed interest in involving her faith community in helping her peers and teachers further their knowledge about Islam and Muslims. Teachers can develop pathways in supporting Muslim youth and other religiously minoritized youth, to create culturally relevant pedagogies that connect their home and schooling experience (Abo-Zena, 2011). One such strategy may involve requesting students' families or communities' feedback on related issues

(Abo-Zena, 2011). This may potentially lead educators and schools to enhance learning opportunities for youth around honoring and sustaining their cultural identities.

Surprisingly, some students preferred that their teachers engage only in superficial discussions about Muslim and Islam because of their lack of understanding of these topics would likely only reinforce negative stereotypes. For example, Imran shared, "I don't want to be made fun of for some of our cultural practices". Similarly, Sanam stated, "I want to stay away from any sort of ignorance from my peers". Lack of teacher training about Islam and Muslims may further misconceptions about them (Sensoy & Ali-Khan, 2016). *Teaching Against Islamophobia*, edited by Kincheloe, Steinberg, and Stonebanks (2010) is one such resource that can foster educators understanding about Muslims and Islamophobia. This text shares a collection of essays that teachers and teacher educators will find helpful in understanding the ways politics and media shape common knowledge about Muslims, Islam, and Muslim dominant countries.

Stonebanks' (2010) attempts at suggesting that teachers engage young students critical reading skills and "teach against Islamophobia" resulted in silence, a lack of response and inaction from teachers. She suggests the use of critical literacy to build students reading skills and actively engage with the textual messages they receive about Muslims. Critical literacy involves active and reflective reading to understand power, injustice, and unfairness in human interactions (Coffey, 2008; cited in Stonebanks, 2010), as well as the exclusion of marginalized groups from dominant cultures (Luke, 1997; cited in Stonebanks, 2010). In other words, employing critical literacy to facilitate "reading between the lines" (Stonebanks, 2010, p. 323).

Teachers can engage in critical literacy by using novels and stories from non-dominant cultures and countries, guiding students to reflect on their own cultures and traditions, or considering another point of view (Stonebanks, 2010). Rather than reliance on textbook narratives about Muslims, educators can use nonfiction to help readers develop an understanding of US

American and global Muslim communities beyond the good/bad Muslim trope (Phelps, 2010). Deroo (2021) observed a teacher's use of critical media to guide students' analysis of media texts about Muslims. The teacher also invited a guest speaker to supplement students' learning through clarifying misconceptions.

Supplementary curricular materials, e.g., diverse literary materials (Abo-Zena, 2011), can be used to disrupt racializing and anti-Muslim viewpoints. Panjwani's (2020) argues for the development of "Muslim Children's Literature" curriculum that provides insights into Muslim civilizations, cultures, identities to address the issue of limited knowledge for teachers and future teachers in teaching development programs, as well as combat racism, stereotyping, and monolithic views about Muslims. She identifies three types of curricular materials that can help foster better knowledge about Muslims and dispel misconceptions about them: (1) stories from religious texts, or stories written based on the lives of Prophets; (2) historical stories and folklore; and (3) fictional literature.

Teachers can additionally guide students in research projects that examine the history of Muslims and Islamophobia in the US. Rana (2013) described the ways anti-racist pedagogy in undergraduate classrooms, involving ethnographic research by students, led to deeper learning about the multiracial history of Islam in the US. His students' research projects involved examining campus policies (e.g., on hate crimes, harassment) and campus life (e.g., racism, stereotypes). Teachers in primary and secondary schools could employ research projects that help students learn about Islam in the US, multiracial Muslim communities, the impact of policies and media discourse on perceptions about those communities, and school policies' impact on Muslim youth.

Finally, teachers can build students' critical thinking skills by guiding them to examine their own perceptions in relation to ideas presented in a text. Teachers can lead students to

consider: the voices guiding a narrative versus those excluded from it; the intended audience for the text; the context in which the text was written; the feelings or thoughts evoked by texts; the knowledge and the importance of ideas as presented by author; gendered ideas in the text; and, the physical descriptions of the main character(s) (Harwood, 2008; cited in Stonebanks, 2010). Due to rising anti-Muslim racism, there are now many resources teachers can draw on to better support Muslim youth and their communities (e.g., *Teaching for Change*, *Learning for Justice, Educators 4 Social Change*). For example, *Teaching for Change*'s project "Challenge Islamophobia Project" provides resources and lessons that focus on addressing root causes of Islamophobia and framing Islamophobia as racism (Teaching for Change, n.d.). The goal of these lesson plans and resources is to foster student knowledge on Islamophobia, not specificities about the religion or its principles.

Implications for Future Research

This study offers some insight into structural policies and practices (e.g., textbooks, class lessons, interactions within classrooms) but only from participants' observations, recollections, and interpretations of their experiences. Future research could explore school policies and practices, as well as provide a fuller understanding of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of their Muslim youth and concerns relevant to them. For example, future research might interrogate the extent to which a school's anti-bullying policies address Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism. Secondly, future research could explore more fully the gendered experiences of male Muslim students. My research attempts to examine such experiences, but limited data resulted in my analysis and findings to focus largely on the Muslim girls' experiences with gender and racial microaggressions, as well as their resilience and resistance within schools.

Though this field of research has grown over the last two decades, similar issues of racialization of religion, anti-Muslim racism, and misrepresentation in the curricula continue to persist. Moving forward, I hope to conduct research on these important issues.

Appendix A – Introductory Background Questionnaire

I am using this background survey to learn more about you. I will use pseudonyms and remove all identifying information (your name, school name, teachers' names, etc.) when I share your responses and experiences in my dissertation and with my dissertation committee. Please feel free to skip any category you do not feel comfortable with and let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for taking this survey!

1. Name:

2. Gender:

3. Ethnic-Racial identification (please specify):

4. Religious identification (include sect, if possible):

5. Spoken languages:

6. Immigrant or US-born:

7. How do you self-identify? List any that come to your mind (e.g., Muslim, American, artist, school enthusiast, etc.)

8. School Name and City:

9. Grade Level (Freshman to Senior):

10. Classes you are enrolled in right now:

11. Is there a class where Muslims/Islam have already come up?

12. Have there been instances in schools where you share your Muslim identity with others?

13. Does your school (administration or teachers) acknowledge Muslim religious holidays/observances days?

14. Does anything about your appearance show that you are a Muslim (e.g., hijab, clothing)?

15. Are you involved in on-campus (school) extra-curricular activities? Which ones?

16. What about off-campus extra-curricular?

17. Do you feel like you are part of your school community?

18. Have you been bullied in school because of your Muslim identity?

19. Who have you been bullied by in school?

20. What are your favorite past-times?

21. Is there anything you would like to add about yourself?

22. For this study, I will use pseudonyms (fake names). Please tell me if there is a

    pseudonym you want me to use for you!

Appendix B – Interview Protocol

I.   The Interviewer, Researcher

    a.   Introduction

    b.   Research Project

    c.   Do you have any questions or concerns regarding this interview or my research project before we begin?

II.   Identifying Information on Participants

    a.   Please tell me about yourself.

        i.   Such as, your age, grade, your ethnic/racial identification

        ii.   On the background survey, you mentioned that you are --- Will you please tell me a little bit about your family?

        iii.   On the survey you wrote that you identify as -----, will you please tell me more about that.

III.   Classes and Content

    a.   Tell me about the courses you are enrolled in.

        i.   Are you taking any courses that pull in current events? Political, Social, Economic issues, etc.

    b.   Now, tell me about one or more instances when you got to learn or got an opportunity to share something relevant to your identities (in the survey) in class.

        i.   How was that experience? What did you learn? What do you think the others learned? What type of teaching materials did the teacher use? Did you all get to discuss what you learned, read, or watched? How did it make you feel? Please share details.

c. Share any classroom experience or experiences where your teacher or classmates talked about Islam or Muslims, or anything tied to Islam and Muslims.

    i. What do you think about these experiences? How was the experience for you? Have you learned about Muslims, Islam in the textbooks? Or, through reading lists? In any of your classes or grades, has anyone talked about Islam, Muslim? How do your peers and teachers talk about such topics?

IV. Friends and Peers

a. Tell me about your friends at school.

b. Tell me about your classmates, peers.

    i. How comfortable do you feel sharing your personal views or sharing your identities with your friends? Classmates?

    ii. Are there instances where you get to tell them about your family, ancestors, religion, or anything else? Please say more about them.

V. School, in general

a. Are you involved in extracurricular activities or clubs at school? Please tell me about that. Why did you choose that? Are your friends in it?

b. How do you like this school? How is it compared to your previous schools (junior high, or elementary, or international schooling)? How would you describe the atmosphere of this school? Why do you describe it as ---? Share anything or multiple things that are positive about this school, or negative about this school.

VI. Religious identity

a. Please tell me about being a Muslim at this school. That is, what does it mean to be you? Is there an instance that you would like to share?

b. Thinking about the current political climate, what is it like to be a Muslim student now?

VII.   Personal Researcher Reflections – Reflecting on member's meanings

a. Did I get this…right? Is this what you meant…?

VIII.   Is there anything else you want to share? Do you have any concerns about what you shared? Is there anything that was not brought up that you think is relevant for this study on Muslim students' experiences?

IX.   Alright, I think we have covered everything. I want to thank you for your time.

Appendix C – Post-Interview Questionnaire

Please fill this short follow-up questionnaire related to the interview you gave. Your responses will help me greatly with my research. Your responses are private and will not be shared with your name or other identifying information attached. Thank you so much for taking your time to fill this out.

1. Name:

2. Have you heard anything about Muslims in your high school?

3. If you answered 'yes' to the question above, please tell me about it.

4. Have you heard anything positive about Muslims or your ethnic identity in school? Please explain.

5. What kind of Muslim portrayals do you see the most in movies, television, news, etc. (e.g., negative, positive, neutral). Give examples if possible.

6. Do you want to see your ethnic identity, or your religious identity represented in school?

7. Please explain your response from above. If yes: What type of ethnic identity or religious identity representation do you want to see in your high school? If no: Why do you not want to see your ethnic or religious identities represented in school?

8. What can teachers do to help their Muslim students? Please give any suggestions that you can think of.

9. What can school administrators (principals, vice principals) do to help Muslim students, if anything? Please give any suggestions that you can think of.

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