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This qualitative research study centers on the Gendered Islamophobic experiences of Second-Generation Millennial Muslim American Women (2GMMAW). The study leans on a phenomenological approach informed by a modified *Doing Difference* framework and U.S. Third World Feminism and Differential Consciousness to call attention to omni-relevant identities for 2GMMAW in daily life and navigating Islamophobic experiences. Nine semi-structured interview guides were completed that inquired about the domains of Gendered Islamophobia (Disciplinary, Structural, Hegemonic, and Interpersonal) and called attention to their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes during these experiences. In addition, this study aims to address gaps in the literature mental health process for 2GMMAW and their Islamophobic experiences. The main outcomes from this study include the Invisible Load of Gendered Islamophobia, the Merry Muslimah, and Implications for Religion in Social Work education, research, and practice.

COGNITIVE, EMOTIONAL, AND BEHAVIORAL EXPERIENCES OF SECOND-
GENERATION MILLENNIAL MUSLIM AMERICAN WOMEN
WITH GENDERED ISLAMOPHOBIA

by

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DEDICATION

I am grateful to Allah (swt) for His guidance in accomplishing whatever I set my heart to, alhamdulillah. I dedicate my dissertation to my grandfather, who encouraged me to further my education. From his wisdom, I learned that knowledge and humility walk hand in hand. Also, to my husband, Dzhonibek, who has supported me immensely through my pursuits in higher education. Lastly, to my son, Sulaymon—may you pave your own path to success and happiness in this life and the next.

APPROVAL PAGE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES x

LIST OF FIGURES xi

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION..... 1

 Problem Statement 1

 Positionality..... 2

 Purpose Statement 4

 Research Question..... 5

 Theoretical Framework: Doing Difference 5

 Strengths and Weaknesses of Doing Difference 7

 U.S. Third World Feminism and Differential Consciousness 8

 Modified Doing Difference Frameworks 9

 Intersectionality 11

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW 14

 Defining Muslim Americans 14

 Islamophobia in America 14

 Gendered Islamophobia..... 19

 Influence of White Hegemonic Feminism on Gendered Islamophobia 20

 The Impact of Counterterrorism on Gendered Islamophobia 25

 Second-Generation Millennial Muslim American Women 27

 Mental Health and Islam 28

 Impediments to Seeking Mental Health Services 29

 Mental Health and Muslim American Women 31

 Religion in Social Work Practice 31

 Gaps in the Literature 32

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY 34

 Design and Rationale 35

 Researcher Role..... 35

 Participants and Recruitment 36

Instrumentation.....	36
Procedures	37
Sampling.....	38
Data Collection.....	38
Validity and Reliability	39
Prolonged Engagement in the Field	39
Peer Review.....	40
Explanation of Researcher Bias and Reflexivity.....	40
Member Checking	40
Limitations	41
Ethics.....	42
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	43
Introduction	43
Participant Profiles	43
Setting.....	43
Demographics.....	43
Jennifer.....	44
Julia	44
Linda	45
Makayla	45
Nicole.....	46
Ronnie.....	46
Sandra	46
Stacey.....	47
Susan	47
Themes	49
General Islamophobia.....	49
Experiences with 9/11.....	49
Experiences After 9/11	51
Experiences with Islamophobia.....	53
Doing Difference with Considerations for 2GMMAW.....	55
Femineity	55

Millennial and Second-Generation Americans	59
Skin Tone	66
Revert Experience	72
Motherhood.....	76
Gendered Islamophobia.....	79
Institutionalized Islamophobia.....	79
Disciplinary Islamophobia.....	92
Hegemonic Islamophobia	97
Interpersonal Islamophobia.....	111
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK	124
Growth Factors	124
Motherhood	124
Unlearn Culture and Learn Islam	125
Revert Journey.....	127
Islamic Protective Factors	127
Practices and Beliefs.....	127
Adaption Skills	129
Being a Representative	129
Assessment	130
Humor.....	130
Mental and Emotional Exhaustive Factors.....	131
Implications for Social Work	131
Invisible Load of Gendered Islamophobia	132
The Merry Muslimah.....	133
Religion in Social Work	134
Implications for Future Research	134
Conclusion.....	135
REFERENCES	136
APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER.....	153
APPENDIX B: SCREENING SURVEY.....	154

APPENDIX C: DRAFT OF INFORMED CONSENT	155
APPENDIX D: DRAFT OF DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS	157
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	158

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Demographics	48
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Reconceptualization of the Doing Difference Framework.....	13
Figure 2. Matrix of Gendered Islamophobia.....	20
Figure 3. Colorism in the Muslim Community.....	71
Figure 4. Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavior Process During an Islamophobic Encounter.....	123
Figure 5. Invisible Load of Gendered Islamophobia	133

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

September 11, 2001, was a day not forgotten for many Americans; it was also a day that radically shifted attention to Muslims in America, specifically Muslim women. The lack of representation in the media of Muslim Women painted a stereotypical idea of victims in need of liberation (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Haque, 2010; Mishra, 2007; Navarro, 2010) and simultaneously deemed them as a threat (Sheth, 2019) to the American way of life. This misrepresentation overlooks their diverse, intersectional identities and the influence of 9/11 on their lived experiences and mental health. More than one third of Muslim American adults were born in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2017); however, given the political climate and media coverage, Muslim Americans are often targeted for their perceived foreignness. This qualitative study utilizes phenomenology informed by U.S. Third World feminism and Differential Consciousness to create a space for lived experiences of second-generation Millennial Muslim American women (2GMMAW) to exist. Through an interview process, this study will share their experiences of Islamophobia and aims to address a dearth in knowledge around 2GMMAW in the following areas: (a) their unique identities and lived experiences in a post 9/11 America, and (b) the explore their cognitive, emotional and behavioral experiences when encountering Gendered Islamophobia on their mental health. Addressing this gap in knowledge will inform social work education, practice, and policy to work toward culturally responsive interventions.

Problem Statement

Representation of Muslims in the media is grounded in the notions of racism and discrimination prominent after 9/11, and the increased attention on Muslim women in political agendas has made Muslim American women vulnerable targets for discrimination, harassment,

and violence, which is more commonly known as Islamophobia (Council on American-Islamic Relations [CAIR], 2011). Islamophobic experiences are one aspect of the brutality Muslim American Women encounter due to their religious identity. There is developing research on discrimination and health (Padela & Heisler, 2010; Todorova et al., 2010) and Islamophobia (Alizadeh et al., 2016; Amer & Bagasra, 2013; Nadal et al., 2012; Samari, 2016). In addition to encountering discrimination for Islamophobic remarks, Muslim American women are subject to discrimination based on their country of origin—a common occurrence for any immigrant in America. This serves as a stress point for Muslim American women as it is common for immigrants to experience discrimination at places of employment, seeking residential accommodations and access to health care (Wilkes & Wu, 2019). Unfortunately, there is a lack of knowledge about Muslim American women’s lived experiences in post-9/11 America and their mental health.

Positionality

Given that a researcher’s identity, beliefs, biases, and values cannot be truly separate from the research process, it is inherent that I provide context to the origins of this study as personal experiences inspired it as a second-generation millennial Muslim American woman. My parents immigrated to America from Guyana in the late 1980s; we are of Indian descent as our ancestors were brought as indentured laborers to Guyana on the East Indian Slave Trade. This history is an important aspect of my identity as I carry it with great pride and make the continued effort to learn about the impact of colonization; I have been able to learn and unlearn ways of thinking and being that have allowed for a deeper understanding of life. There are various aspects of one’s identity—such as religion, nationality, skin tone, gender, class, and age. I identify as a cis-gender, Indo-Guyanese Muslim, second-generation American, brown-skinned

hijabi with a Master's level education. Being the child of immigrants and an "other" in America added to the complexity of navigating my identity. The colonization of Guyana influenced specific ways of thinking accepted as truth; therefore, growing up, there were subtle and not-so-subtle messages infused in parenting skills, communication, and daily interactions from which I learned things like fair skin is more attractive, wearing hijab means you are religious, the standard of speaking English, going to private school is the best education, and so on. These values appear in daily life, and then I was often confused because many Americans perceived me as an oppressed Muslim woman. I embodied very privileged identities that seemed to contradict how I presented/was perceived by others. Well-meaning comments from people captured this, such as "You speak such good English," "You look beautiful in your headscarf, are you hot though?," or "You don't seem to be an extreme Muslim, are you more moderate?" While these comments are common, it becomes confusing when family members say things more along the lines of "speak properly, that's not professional," "But you're darker than your sister, so you should wear this color," "You can't dress in an abaya when you get the job, it's not proper." These comments taught me to exercise Whiteness to excel in my career and school; however, I realized that no matter what I knew about myself, my presentation said more than my words could in some circumstances. These microaggressions are normal for Muslim women in America, and I think this is an important thing to highlight. Because these comments are normal, realizing their impact on mental health may be hard. At times, it feels like I am a walking paradox and that sometimes these comments have little to no impact, while other times they impact anxiety and being hypervigilant.

Living in a post-9/11 America has monumentally shaped my identity and positionality. I remember waking up in Queens, New York, on the morning of 9/11—it was just mom and me

while my father was at work in the city. I was only 8 years old, and I remember the shock on my mother's face watching the news. In those moments, my young mind did not comprehend the magnitude of the planes crashing into the Twin Towers, and I certainly did not know how it would continuously influence who I am today. On the anniversaries of 9/11, I remember being in school and feeling a sense of guilt as if I was somehow responsible for this terrible act of violence, even though I had just learned about the Taliban, as many Americans did that day. As a young adult, people would tell me, "Go back to your country," and blow smoke in my face while walking to work. These microaggressions made me feel awkward and unwanted, and I realized the rippling impact of violence disrupting everything around it. Caught in hatred and ignorance, many Americans did not realize I was also an American. *I am an American*. Sometimes, in always feeling like an "other," I remind myself that "being American" is a huge part of my identity. The most empowering aspect is choosing what "American" means to me, independent of society's expectations. These few instances of trying to navigate a post-9/11 era while unlearning colonized ways demonstrates the complexity of the navigating Gendered Islamophobia for Second Generation Millennial Muslim American Women.

Purpose Statement

The study set out to create space for Second-Generation Millennial Muslim American Women (2GMMAW) to share their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral process experiences when facing Islamophobia. This will be accomplished by inquiring about four domains of gendered Islamophobia outlined by Alimahomed-Wilson to demonstrate the multifaceted power dynamics that 2GMMAW navigate daily. In addition, since the post-9/11 climate of America has resulted in massive media campaigns that paint Muslims as oppressed and terrorists—among

other things—this study aims to disrupt the stereotypical ideas portrayed by the western media by calling attention to the personhood of 2GMMAW.

Research Question

What are the experiences of Second-Generation Millennial Muslim American Women with Islamophobia and their mental health?

Theoretical Framework: Doing Difference

Intersectionality is central to the discussion around the mental health of minority women as it accounts for complex outcomes regarding mental health (Rosenfield, 2012). Complex mental health outcomes include examining aspects of gender, race, and class; Rosenfield refers to the “double disadvantage” of Black women as a racial and gender minority who—despite the many injustices they face—generally have the best overall rates of mental health (2012). These findings seem paradoxical; however, Rosenfield recognizes the need to understand such complex mental health in other racial and ethnic groups; therefore, the researcher will explore the impact of Islamophobia on the mental health of 2GMMAW. Collins (1995) highlights that the complexity of such conversations requires a thorough examination of (a) the interlocking oppression on a macro level and (b) the role of intersectionality in describing the micro level, individual experiences that exist within the macro level system of oppression. Sixty percent of Muslim Americans report religious discrimination associated with anxiety, depression, subclinical paranoia, and alcohol use (American Psychiatric Association, 2018). In addition, Muslim American women experience more fear for their safety and suffer more emotional trauma than Muslim American men, especially Muslim women who express their faith through a visible symbol of their Muslimness (American Psychiatric Association, 2018). Therefore, an expanded version of the *Doing Difference* framework is appropriate to create space for the

omnirelevant identities of Muslim understanding of the experiences of Islamophobia and their mental health.

West and Zimmerman's revolutionary 1987 publication *Doing Gender* established the foundation for the modern understanding of gender and led to the development of the *Doing Difference* framework (West & Fenstermaker, 1995). To understand the concept of gender, West and Zimmerman (1987) identify three distinctive categories: (a) sex, (b) sex categories, and (c) gender. In explaining the difference between these categories, the reader can recognize the concept of doing gender that ultimately describes the performative nature of gender bound by societal expectations. West and Zimmerman (1987) explain that *sex* is the biological assignment of male or female determined by genitalia at birth, whereas an individual's *sex category* is the perceived assumption of their gender identity by society. This sets up the gender binary in which an individual's physical attributes must subscribe to the accepted performance of being male or female. Finally, *gender* is the social construction of roles, behaviors, and expressions associated with being masculine or feminine (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This is the crux of the groundbreaking work as West and Zimmerman challenge that biological assignment at birth (sex) differs from the portrayal of masculinity or femininity (gender); operating beyond the socially accepted ideas of masculinity and femininity dismantles the gender binary and contests the hegemonic ideals of a White, male, heteronormative society.

The 1995 publication *Doing Difference* reexamines *Doing Gender* as West and Fenstermaker reconceptualize the theory to include a developed idea of gender. Central to this work is challenging the idea of "women," as Elizabeth Spelman (1988) argues there is a long-standing history that *women* is synonymous with White women and the White feminist narrative, which intentionally excludes minoritized women from the concept. Furthermore, Spelman leans

on the other forms of oppression beyond sex to demonstrate the compounded oppression experienced by minority women, which expands gender to consider race, gender, and class (West & Fenstermaker, 1995) to further challenge the dominant White, male, heteronormative narrative as well as the long-standing White middle-class feminist narrative that excluded the voices of minoritized feminists (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1984; West & Fenstermaker, 1995). As noted in *Doing Gender* (1987), gender is omnirelevant to how an individual organizes their life, actions, and behaviors; this concept is expanded in *Doing Difference* to recognize that gender, race, and class are also omnirelevant. West and Fenstermaker recognize the expansion of gender to include race and class “is only the beginning,” as there are various aspects of being a woman that results in being minoritized.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Doing Difference

Several renowned authors critiqued West and Fenstermaker’s theory of *Doing Difference*. Patricia Hill Collins (1995) noted that even though they established the interconnectedness between race, gender, and class, there was no mention of the systems of oppression that keep these social constructs in place. She argues that acknowledging racism, patriarchy, and capitalism as systems that utilize *difference* as a method to maintain control over non-dominant bodies and, therefore, challenges West and Fenstermaker to think about the system that leverages difference to gain power and control. Lynn Weber (1995) credits West and Fenstermaker’s analysis of the simultaneity of race, gender, and class that are socially constructed through interaction; however, she critiques the mathematical metaphors as rigid and lack context. Lionel Maldonado (1995) calls attention to social constructions of race, gender, and class and the dynamics of power that are foundational to these constructs. Similarly to Collins, Maldonado critiques the complete disregard for systems of oppression and asserts that social constructs

center Whiteness as an objective reality. Dana Takagi (1995) echoed the same sentiments and noted mathematical models might demonstrate the interconnectedness of intersectionality; however, it fails to recognize that the idea of difference is socially produced and reproduced by systems of oppression.

U.S. Third World Feminism and Differential Consciousness

U.S. Third world feminism followed the lead of Black feminists to retaliate against White, hegemonic feminism. In 1970, Black feminist Frances Beale recognized the feminist movement as the “*White women’s* movement” (Morgan, 1970). The emphasis on the male/female binary by the White feminist movement made it clear that intersections of race, culture, sex, and class denied legitimacy and established a social hierarchy (Sandoval, 2008). Black feminists aimed to disrupt the hegemonic structure of the White feminist movement; Toni Morrison (1971) explained the fundamental perceived differences between White women—soft, helpless, modest, and worthy of respect—whereas Black women were seen as tough, capable, independent, immodest and unworthy of respect. Morrison (1971) encourages recognizing women for their individual qualities and avoiding a “lump thinking” approach, which directly informs the attributes of U.S. Third World feminism and differential consciousness to demand space for multiple narratives for women—not one single hegemonic narrative. The exchange of Black feminist and White feminist narratives led to a third category found *in-between* to promote the narrative of other women and different kinds of humans who live and are gendered, sexed, raced, and classed “between and among” the lines (Sandoval, 2008; San Juan, 1997; Ahmad, 1992; Jan Mohamed & Llyod, 1990). This study leans on the approach of U.S. Third World Feminism and differential consciousness to explore how the narratives of 2GMMAW regarding gendered Islamophobic experiences and their mental health address the weakness of the *Doing*

Difference framework and serve as a reminder to continuously identify the hegemonic structures prevalent in their lives.

Modified Doing Difference Frameworks

Previous works reckon with the concepts of longstanding conceptualizations of gender—particularly disrupting the precedent that White feminism is the monolithic standard and truth for women. Pyke and Johnson (2003) recognize the notoriety of *Doing Gender* and implement the concept in a cultural context by examining how second-generation Asian American young women perceive doing gender in both Western and non-Western settings. This work leans on the fundamentals of *Doing Gender* with the expanded definition of gender to include race and class. This work contributed to the gap in the literature around ethnic and cultural considerations around femininity and how that is performed in various settings while emphasizing the multiplicity of women’s experiences (Pyke & Johnson, 2003). Similar to the work of Black Feminists, cultural considerations in doing gender create a space for voices that continue to challenge the White, male, heteronormative narrative. For second-generation Asian American young women, Pyke and Johnson (2003) analyze their assumptions about gender dynamics from Western and Asian ethnic social settings. Central to the discussion is the hegemonic nature of controlling the idea of femininity; for Asian American women, the ideas of femininity are driven by White-dominated societal stereotypes that maintain supremacy over their identity. Findings from interviewing 100 participants indicated the dichotomy of being “American (code for White)” or Asian, which was equated with “submissive, quiet, and different” as ways of *being* feminine (Pyke & Johnson, 2003, p. 47). Based on the responses, there is an assumption that gender equality and being perceived as a successful, confident woman necessitates assimilation to Whiteness. These findings demonstrate the expansion of *Doing Gender* to consider ethnic and

cultural aspects of femininity that is pertinent to my research for 2GMMAW as well as understanding how White feminism contributes to internalized oppression in *doing* ethnic femininity.

Orit Avishai's (2008) concept of *Doing Religion* relies on the narratives of Orthodox Jewish Israeli Women confronting the idea that equates religious women with complicity. Avishai considers religion as a semiconscious effort that emphasizes the construction of religion through Saba Mahmood's (2004) assertion that agency can be portrayed as docile. In her effort to challenge the paradox between the submissive and resistant religious woman, expression of agency in *doing* religion necessitates "the strategic use and navigation of religious traditions and practices to meet the demands of contemporary life" (Avishai, 2008, p. 411). Embracing the idea that agency is docile challenges the stereotypical narratives of religious women upheld by Western feminist ideas. In following this discussion of agency among religious women, Sirma Bilge (2010) relies on Avishai's discourse to explore agency beyond the dichotomy concerning Muslim women. She argues that Muslim women who adhere to religious clothing are perceived as a "victim (passive) of her oppressive patriarchal culture/religion and male kin and/or as a *threat* (active) to Western modernity and culture of freedoms" (p. 10). Breaking this binary serves as another expansion of *Doing Difference* that considers religion in challenging the hegemonic Judeo-Christian nature in American society.

Mary Romero (2008) employs Critical Race Theory to challenge the notions of assimilation embedded in American immigration laws by calling attention to the intersectionality of immigration—race, ethnicity, and immigrant status—as essential to exploring the process of "becoming American" that relies on identifying "alien" residents distinguished by visible ethnic, non-White characteristics upheld by immigration laws and regulations. In 2017, President

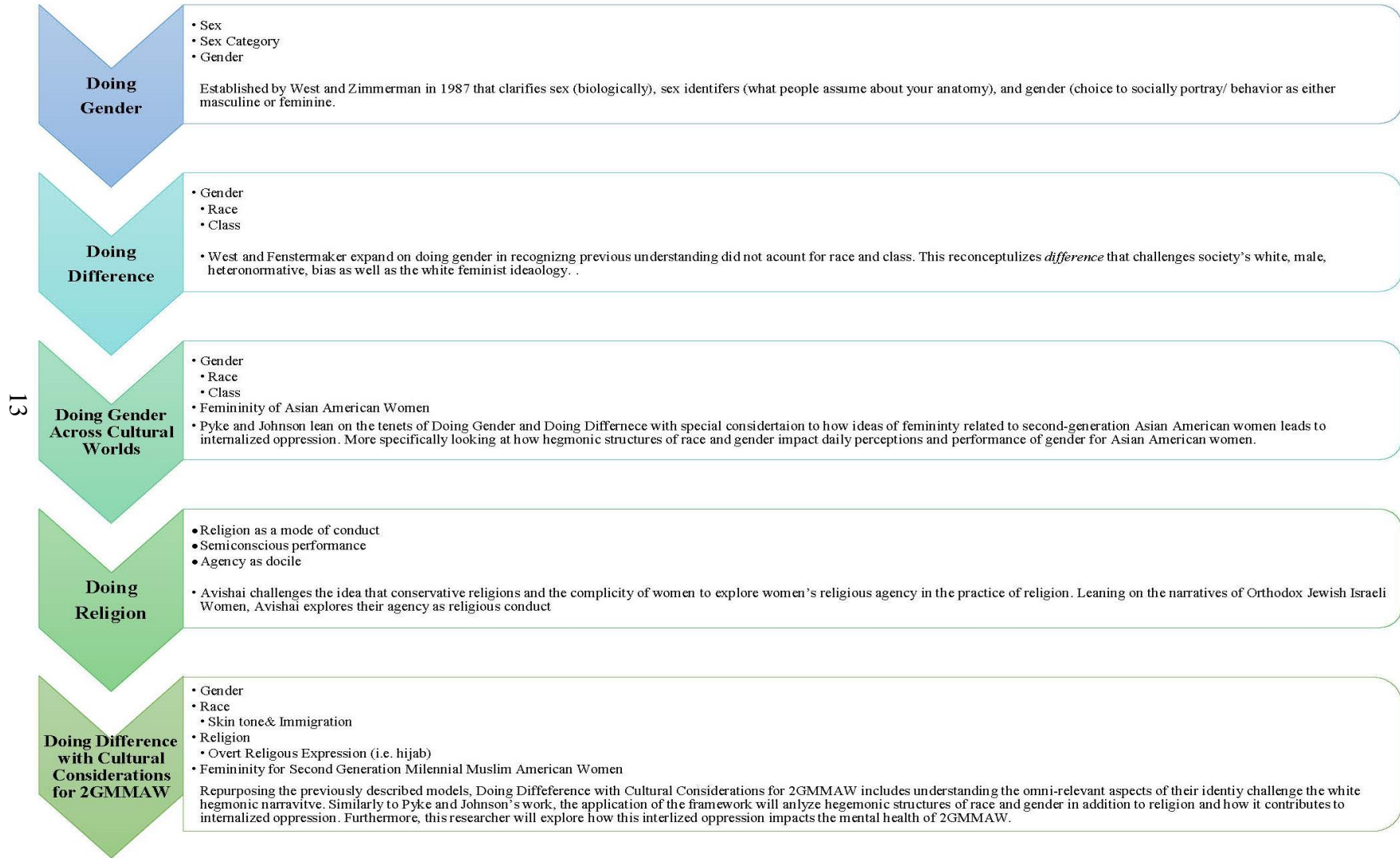
Donald Trump signed an Executive Order: *Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry in the United States* to strengthen border security, which became known as the “Muslim ban” as it targeted Muslim countries and “appropriates violence against Muslim women by Muslim men to justify targeting *all* Muslims” (Gökarıksel, 2017, p. 470). While the rhetoric focused on terrorists internationally, there was clear messaging equating terrorists to Muslims, which impacted Muslims in America and demonstrated the impact of racialized immigration laws. The immigrant experience is deeply connected to the experiences of second-generation Muslims in America (Pew Research Center, 2017), which requires navigating obligation to the country from which their family emigrated to America and their religious identity. Overlaying one’s hyphenated identity while considering gender further demonstrates the complexity of 2GMMAW. Bringing attention to this aspect enhances the idea of race, gender, and class to also include immigration status as enforcement of immigration laws and citizenship rely on physical attributes in efforts to control racial and ethnic minorities (Romero, 2008) as another consideration in exploring the impact of Islamophobia on the mental health of 2GMMAW. To explore the experiences of Islamophobia and mental health of 2GMMAW, the researcher modifies the *Doing Difference* framework (see Figure 1) that leans on (a) the cultural considerations of *Doing Gender* defined by Pyke and Johnson (2003), (b) the tenets of Avishai’s *Doing Religion*, (c) Bilge’s (2010) call to feminists to rethink religion for contemporary women, and (d) Romero’s (2008) considerations for the intersectionality of immigration to explore the intersectional omnirelevant identities of 2GMMAW.

Intersectionality

In 1989, Kimberle Crenshaw coined intersectionality to challenge traditional White feminist and anti-racist policies that excluded Black women. Intersection referred to overlapping

aspects of one's identity, such as race, gender, and class—this echoed the sentiments of the Black feminist movement to expand the idea of being a woman. Crenshaw developed the idea of intersection in considering the experiences of women of color and their existence in and among hegemonic structures. A phenomenological approach allows for intersectionality as a central focus in my research study; much like intersectionality, phenomenology relies on the perception from the participant's point of view. Both are fluid concepts guided by the participant, and—while the researcher may be prepared with a semi-structured interview guide—it is also important to allow the participant to organically provide their perception of the phenomenon. Crenshaw elaborates that intersectionality in methodology may call for challenging contextual ideas of intersectionality by developing or discarding aspects as it is not a standardized way of informing methodology (Cho et al., 2013). In this study, it is important to note that categories like race, gender, and class are not simple concrete ideas (Velez & Spencer, 2018); rather, they are nuanced to include religious expression, skin tone, and second-generation Americans. Echoing the sentiments of U.S. third-world feminism, Crenshaw (1990) notes this complexity of identity underlines the differences between groups and within them, which calls attention to the multiple marginalized identities 2GMMAW occupy that have a direct impact on their lived experiences. Phenomenology informed by intersectionality encourages sharing their lived experiences of power, discrimination, resistance, and resilience to emphasize the differences and similarities within and beyond groups (Hunting, 2014). Therefore, this study leaned on the complex identities of 2GMMAW to guide research questions to gain insight into their experiences with Islamophobia on their mental health.

Figure 1. Reconceptualization of the Doing Difference Framework



CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Muslim Americans

Arabs/Middle Eastern and Muslims are often conflated (Sirin et al., 2008) in common language and literature; this introduces the concern of categorizing “Muslims” as a racial/ethnic identity is problematic (Elver, 2012). Muslim Americans do not consist of a single major racial and ethnic group (Pew Research Center, 2017). Using the label “Muslim American” throughout this paper refers to Sirin et al.’s (2008) definition as “a coherent but fragile collective identity [that] emerged based on shared beliefs in Islam and shared experiences in the US” (p. 260). This definition speaks to the collective religious identity while allowing distinction in other aspects of identity, such as race, gender, class, etc., that will be explored throughout this study.

Islamophobia in America

Islamophobia is a commonly used term in academia, media, and foreign policy, which is generally defined as an “intense dislike or fear of Islam, especially as a political force; hostility or prejudice against Muslims” (Green, 2021). The origin of Islamophobia is credited on an international level by a French painter, Étienne Nasreddine Diné, who first used the term *Islamophobia* in 1930 as the “persistence of Europe’s more or less disguised hostility against Islam” (Karaoglu, 2018, p. 1; see also Allen, 2010; Elman, 2019). Muslims’ presence in the conceptual West has a long history in Europe, dating back to the primary influence of the Ottoman Empire and Spanish Moors. As a result, the West has historically viewed Muslims as a threat to Christian Europe (Elman, 2019; Sanjeev Kumar, 2015). The sentiments of Islam endangering the Western world led to contemporary issues of Islamophobia in America that have increased since September 11, 2001.

It is important to note the recent development of the term Islamophobia to articulate a comprehensive understanding coined the term Anti-Muslim Racism (Richardson, 2009). Islamophobic interactions can feel like racism; however, being Muslim is not a race. Many scholars have challenged this thinking by noting that race is socially constructed, and cultural markers associated with Muslimness (i.e., hijab, language, religious practices) are perceived in the same manner as racial indicators; therefore, it must be treated as such (Hafez, 2018; Kundhani, 2014; Müller-Uri, 2014). Furthermore, there is a specific emphasis that anti-Muslim racism captures the structural violence against Muslims in a White supremacist, Judeo-Christian society (Yousuf & Calafell, 2018). Like other critical race concepts, anti-Muslim racism is rooted in disrupting the hegemonic structures of colonization. For this paper, I explore the phenomenon of Islamophobia; however, it is important to highlight terminology development.

The groundbreaking publication *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* (Runnymede Trust, 1997) drove the contemporary discourse around Islamophobia, which conceptualized implicit and explicit Islamophobia into four categories: Discrimination, Prejudice, Violence, and Exclusion. Publications like this aimed to dispel the assumptions and stereotypes of Muslims; however, the Western mainstream media heavily perpetuated negative societal stereotypes. Biased perceptions in the news and movies negatively cast Muslims, mostly capturing Muslims as deviants and security threats, perpetuating the narrative created by the 'war on terror' (Nacos & Torres-Reyna, 2003; Poorebrahim & Zarei, 2013; Trevino et al., 2010). The distorted representation of Muslims in the media is grounded in the notions of racism that lead to discrimination. Reports about anti-Muslim hate crimes vary; in 2018, the FBI noted 270 crimes against Muslims and Arabs, whereas the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

reported 1,664 in the same year (Hassan, 2019). Islamophobia is a toxic stressor common in the social environment of Muslim Americans that is a social determinant of mental health.

Conceptualization of Islamophobia Before and After 9/11

During the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, it is estimated that 20% of the enslaved men and women from their homes in Africa to the Americas were Muslim (Austin, 1984; Denny, 2015). Historical evidence shows that Thomas Jefferson owned a Quran and acknowledged other religions in his preliminary writings (Hussain, 2016); however, his curiosity for other religions did not hinder the founding fathers from enslaving African Muslims. Although the discussion of Muslims in early U.S. history is seldom discussed, it is important to recognize that African Muslims had a crucial role in making America.

Before 9/11, much of the discussion around Muslims was associated with Arabs/ Middle Easterners due to the wave of immigration in the 1980s (Elver, 2012). During this time, the terms *Arabs/Middle Eastern* and *Muslim* are interchanged throughout literature. Many Arabs/Middle Easterners were legally considered “White” by American racial categories and practiced religious freedom granted to them by the Bill of Rights. This made identifying discrimination difficult as being legally “White” in America is an exclusive, Eurocentric Judeo-Christian group that did not include Arabs/Middle Easterners and Muslims, who then were socially *othered* (Elver, 2012). Being perceived as non-Christian and non-White, Muslims occupy a compounded foreign identity (Joshi, 2006; Twine, 2000). Direct and indirect denial of social, political, and economic rights were based on actual or perceived religious identity as Muslims (Ibrahim, 2008). The conflation of Arabs/Middle Easterners and Muslims resulted in the mistreatment of Muslims in America, known as Islamophobia, as they received “legal” racial and religious recognition but were considered “others” as they did not afford the privileges of Euro-centric White identities.

After 9/11, Muslims and Islam were depicted as religiously extreme and incompatible with society (El-Aswad, 2013; Kumar, 2010). Media has played an integral role in creating the destructive narrative around Muslim Americans. The long history of portraying Muslims has evolved from othering them to cultivating the idea that they are America's terrorist enemy (Cesari, 2013). Moreover, media and political rhetoric have established the precedent that defeating the enemy will be accomplished through the "War on Terror" and liberating Muslim women (Trevino, Kanso, & Nelson, 2010; Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Abu-Lughod, 2002). President George W. Bush proclaimed the *War on Terrorism* by saying, "Every nation in every region now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (as cited in Abu-Lughod, 2002, p. 788). This ultimatum, coupled with the intense media coverage about the 9/11 attackers, clearly articulated that the United States and the entire world accepted the idea that Muslims *are* terrorists. Central to the discussion was the lack of representation of Muslim women in the media; if represented, they were often portrayed as victims needing liberation (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Haque, 2010; Mishra, 2007; Navarro, 2010). First Lady Laura Bush echoed the President's sentiments when she stated, "the fight against terrorism is also a fight for rights and the dignity of women," which especially isolated women who wear hijab not just in the Middle East, but around the world, including Muslim women in the U.S. (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Bhattacharya, 2017). This narrative echoes the sentiments of White feminism that considered Muslim women who wear hijab as somehow lacking dignity, and the United States would be able to provide it by 'saving' them. The increased attention on Muslim women in politics has made Muslim American women vulnerable targets for discrimination, harassment, and violence (CAIR, 2011), which is known as gendered Islamophobia.

Wrongful Imprisonment: Post 9/11

National security became a top priority after 9/11, so much so that it was thwarted through the media and closed doors to take action against to protect America from “terrorists.” The swift passing of the USA Patriot Act weeks after 9/11 led to increased, legally sanctioned airport profiling, verbal harassment, and physical assaults of Muslims in America (Ahmed & Senzai, 2004). Since 2002, 779 Muslim men and boys have been detained at Guantanamo Bay (Shamsi, 2022)—the Black site established by the U.S. Center for Intelligence Agency (CIA). Only eight detainees have been proven to have ties to terrorism (Hussain, 2016). The ripple effect of President Bush’s exclamation on the War on Terror led to the profiling of Muslims domestically and internationally, resulting in the mass imprisonment of Muslims worldwide. The interrogation techniques used by the CIA are seldom disclosed; however, Jonathan Fredman, a CIA counterterrorism lawyer, explains, “The CIA is not held to the same rules as the military ... [Torture] is basically subject to perception. If the detainee dies, you’re doing it wrong” (Stover & Fletcher, 2009, p. 9). The ambiguity of being detained at this Black site—coupled with increased profiling and surveilling of masjids, communities, and homes—instilled fear across all Muslim communities in America. The efforts made by the FBI were set in place to identify “homegrown terrorists,” which meant scrutinizing the normal behavior of Muslim Americans. A qualitative content analysis of 113 cases of FBI contact with the Muslim community in greater Los Angeles found that the FBI (a) often visited Muslim families under false pretenses, (b) criminalized community involvement of Muslims, and (c) disproportionately targeted Muslims that had citizenship, permanent residency, and males (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2019). While the heightened surveillance targeting Muslim men ultimately impacted the family unit for many Muslim

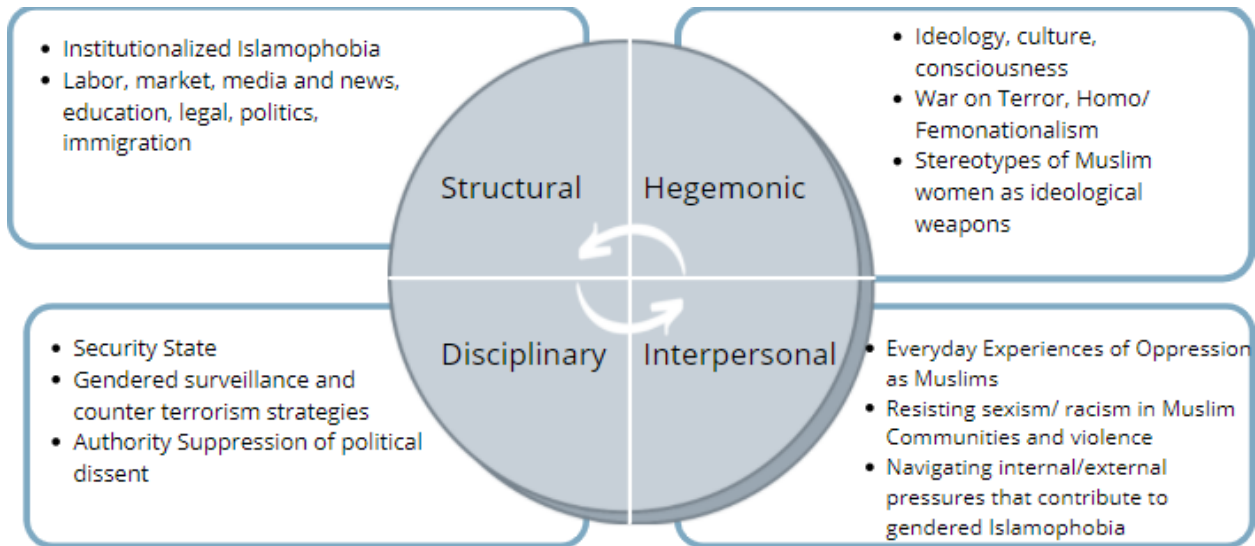
households, there was an increased fear for all Muslims in America, especially Muslim women, who were treated as targets.

Gendered Islamophobia

In addition to encountering discrimination for Islamophobic remarks, Muslim American women are subject to discrimination based on their country of origin—a common occurrence for any immigrant in America. Discrimination “is the difference between the treatment that a target group actually receives and the treatment they would receive if they were not members of the target group but were otherwise the same” (Quillian, 2006, p. 302). This serves as a point of stress for Muslim American women as it is common for minorities to experience discrimination at places of employment, seeking residential accommodations and access to health care (Wilkes & Wu, 2019). Studies that aim to understand Islamophobia do not necessarily consider gender (Meer & Tariq, 2009; Sayyid, 2014). Gendered Islamophobia is a form of “ethno-religious and racialized discrimination leveled at Muslim women that proceed from historically contextualized negative stereotypes that inform individual and systemic forms of oppression” (Zine, 2006, p. 240). Muslim women’s experiences with Islamophobia are fundamentally different from that of Muslim men as “women have become the often unwilling standard bearers of otherization” (Afshar, 2013, p. 17). Inspired by Black feminism, Alimahomed-Wilson (2020) adapts the Matrix of Domination (Collins, 1990) that embraces race, class, and gender as interconnected systems of oppression. Identifying the complexity of oppression allows for a more profound understanding of how Islamophobia shows up for Muslim women in America. Establishing intersectionality challenges the reductionist, monolithic approach to oppression (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020; Collins, 2002), which allows for a deeper analysis of how Islamophobia is produced and reproduced through hegemonic narratives and institutions in America. The Matrix

of Gendered Islamophobia (*Figure 2*) nuances how gendered Islamophobia in Western societies include the following domains: (a) Disciplinary, (b) Structural, (c) Hegemonic, and (d) Interpersonal (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020). To combat gendered discrimination, Collins (2002) highlights an individual’s ability to shift in between and occupy all domains within the matrix. In considering the interconnectedness of domains, this demonstrates the complexity of oppressive experiences for Muslim women in America.

Figure 2. Matrix of Gendered Islamophobia



Influence of White Hegemonic Feminism on Gendered Islamophobia

With its origins in colonization, hegemonic White narratives have reduced the identities of minority women to generalized ideas, such as being oppressed, in need of saving, etc. This section will (a) lean on the work of Gayatri Spivak to discuss the roots of colonization in “saving” minority/other women around the world, (b) call attention to examples in Chandra Mohanty’s work to discuss the reduction of Muslim women by White feminist narrative, and (c) highlight Lila Abu-Lughod’s analysis of the relationship between the conceptual Western world and Muslim women to recognize the violence of colonization embedded in the notions of White

feminism that continues to marginalize Muslim American Women. More specifically, White feminism functions as a mechanism of colonization that perpetuates the oppressive narrative that is central to understanding the impact of Islamophobia on the mental health of 2GMMAW.

In her work, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Gayatri Spivak (2003) discusses how the eradication of the Hindu practice of *Sati* (widow burning) by the British illustrates the *need* for “White men [to save] brown women from brown men.” *Sati* has religious significance for Hindus, and when the British abolished the practice by labeling it as a crime, they reduced the idea of brown women to victims that needed to be saved from their oppressive beliefs. Spivak directly credits this narrative to colonialism since “representing *Sati* as barbaric, the British were able to justify imperialism as a civilizing mission” (Morton, 2003, p. 3). Spivak also challenges the hegemonic structure to “allow” the subaltern (in this case—the women of the world) to speak for themselves. In posing the question: *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Spivak calls attention to how women’s voices are present, but it is still necessary to be granted permission and visibility in society because it is overpowered. She calls attention to the fact that even though the subaltern is speaking, their voices and messages are not heard because of colonialism’s dominant hegemonic structure. This notion is essential in understanding how White feminist narratives possess the same characteristics; colonization and White feminism are unified in their approach to “understanding” minority women to save them.

In decolonizing the ideas around women, Chandra Mohanty (1988) challenges the universalist and reductionist “production of the Third World Woman” by western feminism. While Mohanty outlines several ways in which western feminism depicts third-world women as *implicit victims* of a culture or economic system, it is important to call attention to the specifics around her analysis of how Muslim women are reduced by western feminism. She notes that

mathematical leaps are made to craft the idea of universality for third-world women; to demonstrate her point, she gives an example from Deardon's (1975) *Minority Rights Group Report on Arab Women*, which argues *the more women who wear the veil (hijab), the more universal is the sexual segregation and control of women*. To demonstrate this point, Deardon provides Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, India, and Egypt as examples to demonstrate that Muslim women wearing some type of veil is indicative of sexual control of women as a fact. Mohanty challenges this mathematical approach by noting the absence of context; she argues, "the specific meaning attached to practice varies according to cultural and ideological context" (Mohanty, 1988, p. 75). She notes that the practice of the veil in some countries may be a symbol of revolution and opposition, while in others, it may be an institutional mandate. To challenge the reductionist ideas of Muslim women held by Western feminists, Mohanty considers context-specific differentiated analysis essential. To further her analysis, she articulates the *categories of women* defined by western feminists to further the agenda of reductionism and universality of third-world women. Mohanty highlights the western feminist approach to universalizing third-world women as a category in familial systems by providing Elizabeth Cowie's (1978) work as an example due to her emphasis on the political nature of kinship. Cowie coined the term *Woman as Sign* to demonstrate familial systems that treat women as property; therefore, her status in society is subject to patriarchal standards (Byerly, 2008). Mohanty notes that White feminist work, such as Juliette Mince's (1982) *The House of Obedience: Women in Arab Society*, identifies the patriarchal family as the basis for "an almost identical vision of women of Muslim women" (p. 23). Mohanty highlights that generalizing Muslim women's "shared experience" is intellectually irresponsible and perpetuates the reduction of the third-world woman. Additionally, she argues the importance of context, challenging that Mince's analysis only considered third-

world women in the context of familial relationships by automatically discounting their existence independent of their familial role (i.e., spouse, daughter, sister). In highlighting Mohanty's analysis of White feminist work, it is evident that the White feminist narrative is an extension of how colonization has depicted minority women as needing "being saved."

Lila Abu-Lughod (2002) calls specific attention to how the Bush Administration crafted the narrative around the "need" to save Afghan women from the Taliban to justify war. Abu-Lughod describes how the veil (the burqa in this case) stereotypically symbolizes the oppression of Afghan women by the Taliban. She relies on context and explains that the burqa predated the Taliban regime and is a cultural practice of modesty and respect. Moreover, she highlights that westerners were surprised that women did not "free" themselves from the burqa after liberation from the Taliban. This challenged the White feminist narrative and begged the question, why would liberation automatically mean removing the burqa? Abu-Lughod poses the rhetorical question: *Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?* as the title of her work to call attention to the fabricated White narrative of saving Muslim women. Abu-Lughod's discussion marries the sentiments of Spivak and Mohanty as she challenges the hegemonic narrative rooted in colonization that perpetuates the idea that Muslim women need saving from Muslim men, the Taliban, their government, etc., and the feminists of the west would be the ones rescuing them through western values of liberation and freedom.

This literature provides the foundational work to explore the complex mental health concerns of 2GMMAW. What is most important to recognize is the impact of colonization on the identity of 2GMMAW; as Spivak discusses, the calculated efforts to degrade brown bodies have a lasting impact. On a more micro level, marginalized peoples taught—by colonization/colonizers—that their practices, beliefs, or existence are somehow barbaric

challenge the crux of an individual's identity. For 2GMMAW, the present-day impact of colonization can show up in simple ways, such as navigating the professional world. With a focus on instructors in the classroom, Matthew Vince (2020) explains *neutrality* as of mechanism that upholds the standards of professionalism to the Whiteness. Therefore, a professional with overt *Muslimness*—such as wearing hijab—directly disrupts the neutral, White professional environment (Vince, 2020). For 2GMMAW, the expectations of “professionalism” to the White standard directly challenge aspects of their religious identity and can result in mental strain around navigating the workplace, the decision to wear or not wear hijab in the workplace, etc. This is one example that indicates the longstanding impact of colonization as the standard of success and civility that continues to marginalize 2GMMAW because their presence challenges the status quo. Mohanty highlights the importance of context in understanding a particular population as she notes that western/White feminism is not the standard of being a woman and further perpetuates the notions of colonization. Falguni Sheth (2019) explores how the Western world has deliberately positioned Muslim women to be both “in need of saving” as perceived as imminent threats to the Western world—particularly Muslim women who wear hijab. This is directly related to the literature noted review above; several compounding factors impact the context for 2GMMAW and their mental health, such as growing up in a post-9/11 America, navigating aspects of intersectional identity, etc. This creates a paradox of thinking for 2GMMAW as they are constantly (whether they intend to or not) fighting against the preconceived narratives of either being a “victim” or a threat” due to the contextual undertones established in America. Abu-Lughod emphasizes both the idea of decolonization and context to disrupt the stereotypical notions of Muslim women. She challenges the idea of the White feminist narrative to “save” Muslim women as she recognizes the lack of understanding of the

complex identity of the Muslim woman in the Western world. 2GMMAW are uniquely positioned in society to combat the paradox of victim vs. threat in challenging the ideas of colonization and the White feminist narrative in daily encounters of microaggressions, overt discrimination, or long-established standards of Whiteness that protect the standards of success in America.

The Impact of Counterterrorism on Gendered Islamophobia

While examining the phenomenon of Gendered Islamophobia, it is essential to articulate the political climate of the state-sanctioned targeting of Muslim Women in the War on Terrorism. Ironically, the Bush Administration propagated the notion of Muslim women needing to be saved in the Middle East, which ultimately led to an increase in state-sanctioned and interpersonal violence against Muslim women in the conceptual West. The media played an integral role in the depiction of Muslim women, displaying them as victims of violence to men or hypersexual mysteries to fulfill men's needs (Haddad et al., 2006) that need saving. The carefully crafted notion of Muslim women always seemed to be defined in relation to hegemonic structures—such as their identity in relation to Muslim men as well as the non-Muslim, White folks who would be saving them—there seldom seems to be space for their own ideas of identity to be established. These same structures were integral in perpetuating the violence and cultivated the notion that Muslim women seemed to be incapable of cultivating their own identity (Solanke, 2009). Cultivating a non-identity, compounded with the discussion of hijab as a symbol of terror, dismissed hijab as a religious practice to an identifier that perpetuates the state-sanctioned violence inflicted upon Muslim women in the fight against terrorism as opposed to recognizing it as religious discrimination (Aziz, 2012).

This section will call attention to the U.S. government's actions that produce and reproduce violence against 2GMMAW, who grew up in a post-9/11 America. In November 2002, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was established in direct response to 9/11 to “[coordinate] a comprehensive national strategy to safeguard the country against terrorism and respond to any future attacks” (Bush 2001; Blimes, 2013). This directly changed how institutions provide security to mean *protection against terrorists*, publicly recognized as Muslims, and made them excessively targeted using racial profiling, detainment, and deportation (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2017). Furthermore, this precedent led to privatizing violence sanctions while allowing the American public to reinforce violence against Muslim women's mobility, dress, employment, education, and immigration statuses (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2017).

Policy efforts, such as the National Security Entry-Exit System (NSEERS) established in 2001, mandated registering nonimmigrant males based on their religion, ethnicity, and national origin in 25 Muslim-majority countries (Aziz, 2017). This database was curated in case there was another terrorist attack on American soil; there was a method to track Muslims in America, as one third of Americans at that time believed it was appropriate to detain Americans of Arab descent until proven innocent (Schildkraut, 2009). Here it is evident that Muslims were being conflated with Arabs and terrorists and a threat to America. While this was policy and efforts to enforce it were discontinued in 2011 by the Obama administration, in 2017, the Trump administration signed legislation that became known as the Muslim Ban forbidding entry for all nationals from seven Muslim majority countries and reestablished the precedent that dignity of Muslims in American are secondary to the counterterrorist measures and practices of the United States (Aziz, 2017).

Second-Generation Millennial Muslim American Women

The U.S. Census Bureau categorizes generational status based on the place of birth of the individual and their parents; second generation refers to individuals born in America with at least one parent born internationally (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Muslim American adults make up 18% of all second-generation Americans (Pew Research Center, 2018), and U.S.-born Muslims are also more likely than foreign-born Muslims to experience discrimination based on gender, racial and religious discrimination (Mogahed et al., 2018). In addition to religion and gender, cultural identity is another facet of intersectionality for Muslim American women that influences navigating tenets of the Western world. This is known as transnationalism, which considers the connection to the U.S. identity as well as a connection to their parents' country of origin (Byng, 2017). Occupying dual cultural identities requires negotiating aspects of American culture and international heritage while also considering religion and gender simultaneously. American culture's essentialization of Muslim women to Islam requires Muslim women to constantly think about their internal and external presence in America.

For Second-Generation Muslim American Women, it is common that they—from a young age—are creating and recreating culture through conversations and disagreements within their private and public life (Ayala, 1998; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Wiley et al., 2006). Second-Generation Muslim American women are put in the unique position to decide how their personal development will impact their life and shape how Islam is perceived in America (Okin & Okin, 1999; Wang et al., 2020; Zaal et al., 2007). Learning and unlearning various aspects of their identity impacts their mental health directly as they navigate varying cultural and social expectations, such as communication, lifestyle, and ideas of success while navigating their personal identity.

According to PEW Research (Diamant & Gecewicz, 2017), 32% of the adult U.S. population are millennials (individuals born between 1989 and 1996), and 52% of adult Muslims are Millennials. Most Muslim Millennials were children or adolescents during 9/11 and grew up in a society where high levels of Islamophobia were normal (Diamant, 2017; Murtaza, 2020). Muslim Millennials are uniquely positioned to inherit aspects of the cultural heritage, learn, and uphold Islam's values while engaging in western mainstream culture. Generally speaking, compared to previous generations, millennials have an increased value for mental health and an increased awareness and willingness to discuss mental health issues (Rhodes, 2019). Murtaza's recent quantitative research addresses the gap in the literature around mental health for young adult Muslim Americans who grew up in a post-9/11 world and experienced discrimination. With 283 participants, findings indicate high levels of depressive symptoms and anxiety due to encounters with perceived religious and racial discrimination. Murtaza (2020) notes qualitative research is needed to comprehensively understand intersectionality regarding racial and religious discrimination. There is a dearth of knowledge in understanding the experience of young women who grew up in the post-9/11 United States (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2017), and this study leans on the lived experiences of diverse Second-Generation Millennial Muslim American women (2GMMAW) to learn about the impact of Islamophobia on their mental health.

Mental Health and Islam

Islamic principles value the connection between the mind and body; therefore, there is a strong understanding that mental health is integral to taking care of oneself (Awaad et al., 2019). Basit and Hamid (2010) highlight the lack of information about Muslim Americans and mental health, as there has only been an attempt to provide culturally responsive mental health services in recent decades. Their quantitative study included 875 Muslim Americans (primarily South

Asian Americans but also included Middle Eastern and Bosnian Americans) that aimed to discuss what emotional and psychiatric concerns are prevalent for Muslim Americans. Findings demonstrated that 43% were diagnosed with adjustment disorder, and mental health concerns presented as physical concerns (Basit & Hamid, 2010). Upholding distinguishing aspects of their ethnic and religious identity presents challenges in assimilating to mainstream Western society (Amer & Hovey, 2007).

Islam promotes mental health with protective practices, such as emphasizing personal hygiene, prohibiting alcohol and substances, connecting to the community, and engaging in daily reflective practices (American Psychiatric Association, 2018). Principles of Islam predict better family functioning (Amer & Hovey, 2007), and observing daily prayers is associated with less depression (Hodge et al., 2016). A recent quantitative study proposed reading Surah Al-Rahman, a chapter in the Quran that is believed to provide peace to heart, mind, and soul to those who recite it and reduces depression in Muslim women. Rafique et al. (2019) argue the efficacy of Surah Al-Rahman as a remedy for depression, as the treatment group had a significantly greater decrease in depression than the control group. These findings indicate that integrating Islamic values/practices in providing mental health services to Muslims is an underused and undervalued resource by mental health workers. It is evident that integrating religious values and secular interventions, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), provides inclusive social work practice and has proven that patients recover more rapidly (Anderson et al., 2015; Azhar & Varma, 1995; Hook et al., 2010).

Impediments to Seeking Mental Health Services

Several compounding factors may result in gaps in mental health services. It is important to highlight the various understandings of mental health in the Muslim American community are

influenced by culture from the familial homeland. Generally, Muslim Americans follow the Western biomedical approach to mental illness (Bagasra & Mackinem, 2014; Ciftci et al., 2013). While this is a primarily accepted approach, Muslim Americans also rely on Islamic concepts around supernatural connections and mental illness; there are Prophetic narratives that involve jinn, evil eye, and Black magic (Bagasra & Mackinem, 2014; El-Zein, 2009). In some instances, cultural understanding results in behaviors associated with *jinn* may prevent individuals and families from recognizing and seeking mental health services (El-Islam, 2008). Seeking proper medical services may result from the lack of awareness and understanding about religious and cultural considerations by non-Muslim practitioners, unfamiliarity with the concept of psychotherapy, and a general lack of understanding about mental health as a larger society (Bassit & Hamid, 2010).

Another important element that can hinder seeking mental health services is the multifaceted impact of stigma. Some communities assert that mental illness, especially severe illness, is Allah's will (Vanaleesin et al., 2010). Muslim Americans seeking mental health services may experience stigma in a compounded manner as there is a stigma within the greater American society as well as within personal Islamic communities, cultural communities, and immediate family (Bagasra & Mackinem, 2014; Bassit & Hamid, 2010; Ciftci et al., 2013). Shying away from Western psychotherapy often results in seeking help from the Imam, even though he is not trained in providing mental health services, rather than formal mental health services (Ciftci et al., 2013). Imams are essential in promoting the narrative around mental health within the community (Abu-Ras et al., 2008).

Mental Health and Muslim American Women

Muslim American women experience more fear for their safety and are more likely to report discrimination, which results in higher rates of anxiety and emotional trauma when compared to Muslim American Men (Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017). The significance of *hijab* is another important intersection of identity for some Muslim American women as it is a visible indication of “Muslimness” (Jasperse et al., 2012, p. 252) that distinguishes Muslim women; therefore, it makes Muslim women targets for social discrimination (Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017; Ghumman & Ryan, 2013). Literature around perceived discrimination and mental health of Arab Americans often includes a significant amount of Muslim women (Abuelezam et al., 2018; Amer & Hovey, 2012; Assari & Lankarani, 2017; Eldeeb, 2017). Although the literature is limited, a few studies explore the impact of perceived discrimination among Muslim Americans. Rippy and Newman (2006) surveyed 152 immigrants, converts, and second-generation Muslim Americans between 18 and 71 years old; their overall findings demonstrated a significant relationship between perceived religious discrimination and subclinical paranoia. There were substantial differences between the groups, as second-generation Muslims showed significantly greater incidents of exposure to a racist environment and societal discrimination. This study demonstrates the need to further explore the mental health needs of second-generation Muslim Americans.

Religion in Social Work Practice

Mental health professionals are conditioned to remain unbiased during social work practice. The divide between mental health and religion originated from Sigmund Freud’s belief that God is an illusion, describing the human tendency to believe in God as irrational and an indication of human helplessness when faced with difficulty (Kovel, 1990). Discussions around

religion in social work education and practice regard religion as an “unnecessary and illogical” concept to assess the needs of an individual (Spencer, 1961). Even though the origins of social work were grounded in religious values and teachings, the professionalization of social work toward a scientific approach led to the immense disregard of religion in “holistic” social work practice, with means few social workers are trained to assess and address client’s religious and spiritual needs (Canda et al., 2019; Oxhandler et al., 2015). In 1995, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) revived the discussion around religion and spirituality in practice as it falls under the umbrella and diversity, equity, and inclusion (Russel, 1998). The National Association of Social Workers code of ethics refers to understanding religion as an aspect of culturally competent practice; however, there is a lack of instruction around teaching the application and integration of knowledge (Oxhandler et al., 2015). The lack of regard for social work education contributes to the gap in mental services for Muslim Americans in social work practice. This, coupled with the details outlined in the next section, demonstrates the compounded barriers to accessing mental health services for Muslim Americans.

Gaps in the Literature

There is developing research on the impact of discrimination on health (Padela & Heisler, 2010; Todorova et al., 2010) and developing research in public health on Islamophobia (Abu-Ras et al., 2008; Alizadeh et al., 2016; Amer & Bagasra, 2013; Nadal et al., 2012; Samari, 2016; Samari et al., 2018); however, there remains a gap in the literature that focuses on mental health. Public health literature links the impact of everyday discrimination experiences led to myriad negative health outcomes, such as coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, cognitive impairment, visceral fat, depression, psychological distress, anxiety, and mortality (Paradies et al., 2015). There is still a dearth of knowledge linking the impact of Islamophobia on the mental

health of Muslim American women. More specifically, my study focuses on the impact of Islamophobia on the mental health of 2GMMAW while navigating their identities when considering culture, religion, and gender will directly contribute to this body of knowledge.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was most appropriate for this research as it sets out to gain an understanding of perception as a way to call attention to various points of view. A phenomenological approach informed the complex lived experiences of 2GMMAW because it is specifically designed to develop an understanding of phenomena that often are unnoticed or overlooked. In this case, the phenomena included understanding the experiences of Islamophobia and the mental health of 2GMMAW. Contemporary phenomenology was primarily developed by German Scholars—Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Husserl stated that the researcher needs to set aside their “natural attitude” about the world to reveal the true meaning by accounting for personal assumptions, values, attitudes, biases, and beliefs throughout the research process (Durdella, 2017; Husserl, 1990). Heidegger’s work around phenomenological diverted from Husserl’s and focused on hermeneutics and existential principles that relied on interpretation, textual meaning, dialogue, preunderstanding, and tradition (Bhattacharya, 2017; Heidegger, 1970). His concept of phenomenology focused on the meaning of an experience based on the individual’s life history (Durdella, 2017) as “consciousness is not separate from the world” as it informs how experiences are interpreted (Lavery, 2003, p. 8). For Heidegger, it was essential to understand the phenomenon in relation to the researcher (Converse, 2012). This line of inquiry aligns with the tenets of the interpretivist approach, and the individual creates and alters the ontological perspective of multiple realities (Lavery, 2003). This research study relies on the lived experiences of 2GMMAW—an identity occupied by the researcher—therefore, ontological assumptions are informed by a hermeneutic approach to phenomenological research. The researcher explored the multiple truths of 2GMMAW as informed by their exposure to Islamophobia and mental health experiences.

Design and Rationale

Phenomenology was most appropriate for this study because it allowed for an enriched pursuit of understanding personal meanings and lived experiences, emphasizing the context and unique aspects of lived experiences. Moreover, heritage and culture are aspects of intersectionality that may vary with this population as the Muslim American diaspora consists of people from various nations, such as Pakistan, Egypt, Sudan, Indonesia, etc. While there is a commonality in being the child of immigrants, being a woman, and being a Muslim, the primary focus of this study is to understand the impact of Islamophobia (a phenomenon) on their mental health. A case study provides an in-depth analysis as well, but it did not seem appropriate, given the diversity of the population. While it would capture an understanding of one person's lived experience, this study aimed to demonstrate the diversity of 2GMMAW voices. Similarly, a narrative approach did not seem appropriate, as the primary focus was on individual stories. While there is merit in each of these methodologies, phenomenology is most appropriate as it highlights the intersectional elements of 2GMMAW identities and their lived experiences while exploring the impact of Islamophobia on their mental health.

Researcher Role

The role of the research is organized around Heidegger's hermeneutic circle—a revisionary process that consists of the *Dasein* and foresight/conception (Peoples, 2020). *Dasein* refers to the self, and Heidegger believed that the researcher could not be separate from the research process—therefore, their biases cannot be separate—and this necessitates a process of reflection. The hermeneutic circle encourages the researcher to think about the process of understanding in which data was broken down to be understood individually, synthesized to be understood as a whole, and broken down again to find a new meaning (Peoples, 2020). This was

an active process, as understanding is fluid and ever-changing. Throughout this process, it was essential that the research explicitly state biases before authentically analyzing the data.

Participants and Recruitment

Participants for this study needed to meet the following eligibility requirements: (a) a Millennial (born between 1980 and 1996), (b) second generation American, (c) self-Identify as a Muslim, (d) self-identify as female, (e) someone who has experienced Islamophobia, and (f) speaks English comfortably. Collection of demographic data, such as age, educational level, job title, ethnicity, and geographical location (Peoples, 2020), are a few examples of how data collection enhanced the discussion around intersectionality for the 2GMMAW. The researcher invited participants by sharing a recruitment flyer that listed the eligibility criteria, contact information, as well as information about the purpose of the study. This research study employed networking, snowball, and opportunistic sampling strategies. The researcher utilized virtual spaces to recruit participants for the study, such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and emails. Once the participant was screened, they were provided additional information about the study, and if the participant agreed to participate, they consented and were interviewed.

Instrumentation

As mentioned previously, Alimahomed-Wilson's (2020) *Matrix of Gendered Islamophobia* informed the interview guide as it demonstrates how Gendered Islamophobia operates in society. The matrix calls attention to the fluidity of oppression constructed around the constructs of gender, race, class, sexuality, and citizenship of Muslim women. The four main categories of the matrix include (a) Hegemonic, (b) Interpersonal, (c), Structural, and (d) Disciplinary; it is important to highlight that Muslim women are navigating these systems of oppression simultaneously as their identity is omni-relevant. The structural domain calls

attention to the institutionalization of Islamophobia that restricts and excludes Muslim women from accessing opportunities in labor, education, family, media, politics, and the legal system. The disciplinary domain refers to the surveillance and gendered counter-terrorist strategies utilized to discipline Muslim women and discourage agency (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020). The hegemonic domain highlights the ideology that upholds the process of demonizing Muslims, and the interpersonal domain focuses on the daily oppression that Muslim women experience within their communities (Muslim and non-Muslim). The researcher utilized each domain to inform the semi-structured interview to better understand the impact of gendered Islamophobia on the mental health of 2GMMAW.

Procedures

This research highlighted important aspects of 2GMMAW's lived experiences; to accomplish this, the researcher first identified the population (outlined in the Participants section above) and developed the semi-structured interview guide and the required documents for IRB approval. Once IRB approval was acquired, the researcher began the recruitment process and data collection. As the researcher collected data, she engaged in the hermeneutic circle and reflected on the data analysis process. The research maintained a journal of reflexivity to address any biases that were prevalent during the data collection and analysis process.

The interview process took about 60-90 minutes, and at the end of the interview, demographic information was captured through a survey created in Qualtrics. Recorded interviews were uploaded to the UNCG Box and were shared with the dissertation chair. All documents created for recruitment and the interview process were uploaded to Box, which included the recruitment flyer, consent form, audio recordings, transcriptions, and reflections. Once an interview was completed, the audio recording was transcribed by a professional

company (Rev.com) and uploaded to Box after they were verified and de-identified. The data were labeled with initials, date, and identification number (AH_100_5.9.2020).

Sampling

The sample size was crucially informed by the research approach; therefore, this study aimed for 10 research participants (Durdella, 2017), as a phenomenological study typically has fewer participants compared to other forms of qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Durdella, 2017). While the sample size is smaller, phenomenological sampling is predicated on individuals sharing a common experience (Durdella, 2017). A combination of sampling strategies was utilized for this research study, which included criterion, network, snowball, and opportunistic sampling strategies (Peoples, 2020). The researcher used virtual spaces to recruit participants for the research study, such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and emails.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview guide was developed and utilized to interview participants. This helped maintain focus on the purpose of the research study while allowing flexibility for the participant to respond. Working with marginalized populations requires qualitative researchers to consider culturally and ethically appropriate data collection methods that create places where sensitive information can be disclosed (Pyer & Campbell, 2012). Building trust with research participants occurred in small interactions that made a lasting impact. An Islamic home upholds specific values that include (a) maintaining the privacy of the family, (b) modesty to complete religious worship, and (c) hospitality to preserve relationships with family and friends (Othman et al., 2014). Therefore, choosing to do phone interviews rather than using a video calling platform was intentional to respect the sanctity of the home. Digital data collection has advantages for both the research and the participants. Several benefits for the researcher include

(a) improved Internet access and increased use of electronic devices internationally, (b) convenience and cost-effectiveness of online platforms compared to in-person interviews or focus groups, and (c) the awareness that virtual-based methods can replicate, complement, and has the potential to improve traditional methods (Braun et al., 2017; Cater, 2011; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Digital data collection methods may appeal more to the research participants because of convenience, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and flexibility (Hewson, 2008; Horrell et al., 2015). Therefore, the researcher conducted audio-recorded interviews over the phone lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. Phenomenological studies rely on individual-based interviews to elicit data about individual experiences (Salmons, 2016); therefore, it was important for the researcher to journal to explicitly name biases, interpret the data, and help with the analytical process (Peoples, 2020).

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are elements of logical empiricism imposed upon phenomenological research (Beck et al., 1994; Giorgi, 1988, 1989) and call attention to different methods that address threats to the validity and reliability of the study. Common procedures for phenomenological research include prolonged engagement and observations in the field, triangulation, peer review, negative case analysis, explanation of researcher bias, member checking, rich descriptions, and external audits (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The following sections are utilized in this research study to confirm validity, reliability, and credibility.

Prolonged Engagement in the Field

Given that the researcher identifies with the population, being immersed in the natural environment is part of life as she frequents the local mosque and participates in gatherings and

events frequented by other 2GMMAW. Furthermore, this method allows the researcher to build rapport with the participants and to check information (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Glesne, 2016).

Peer Review

Peer review was implemented as it allowed a neutral colleague to ask questions about the research process and conclusions (Peoples, 2020). This role is described as the “devil’s advocate” as it allows a peer to ask difficult questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations during the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process will be completed with a peer from the doctoral cohort, in which the researcher and peer will routinely debrief about the data collected.

Explanation of Researcher Bias and Reflexivity

Revealing personal bias included journaling and field notes throughout the data collection process. This process involves the researcher acknowledging bias, values, and experiences that are brought to the table (Peoples, 2020). Planning for opportunities in which the researcher writes about connections from the emerging data to her lived experiences is essential to call attention to this (Creswell & Poth, 2017). I engaged in this process by journaling after interviews and debriefing about the data with my fellow doctoral cohort member. This process allowed for identifying themes that may have been normalized to me and/or the participants. In addition, this process helped me engage and reevaluate my *Daesin*; many of the topics discussed helped identify terminology for the implications of this study.

Member Checking

This process involved the researcher requesting the participants to review the data for credibility and accuracy (Peoples, 2020). Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted this intervention as “the most critical technique for establishing credibility”; therefore, in this research study,

participants were asked to review the summary of the data when completing consent for the study. Once the interview was completed, the summary of the transcript was sent via email to the participant for review.

Limitations

Critical qualitative research challenges the traditional idea of limitations in a study and encourages the researcher and reader to responsibly critique the systems of inequalities (Denzin, 2017). Literature often describes qualitative study limitations around validity, reliability, and sample size (Peoples, 2020). Colonization heavily influenced qualitative research, resulting in researchers being conscious of power dynamics and intentionally disrupting them (Esposito & Evan Winters, 2021). As noted by Collins (2000), it is essential to redefine the standards of intellect; these efforts of shifting the standard demonstrate efforts toward a research study that are informed by the principles of intersectionality, U.S. third-world feminism, and differential consciousness.

After a conversation with one of the participants about the term Gendered Islamophobia, it was evident that not knowing what the term meant could have been a hindrance in recruitment. The participant noted that she did not understand the term; therefore, she was unsure if she were eligible for the study. Therefore, this terminology used on the flyer could have led to potential participants screening themselves out of the study. Another unforeseen limitation was the difficulty in recruiting Black American Muslims; through the recruitment process, the eligibility requirement to being second generation was not applicable as Black American Muslims have been in America for generations. Additionally, for the member checking, all nine participants were invited to review summaries of their interview; seven reviewed and provided feedback that the summaries were accurate to their experience, while two did not respond. It was also

important to note that participants were invited to this study based on their lived experiences with Islamophobia; it is entirely possible that these experiences were normalized by some 2GMMAW; therefore, they may not have considered participating.

Ethics

Identifying information for this study was only used to schedule the semi-structured qualitative interview. Contact information was kept in Qualtrics, which was only accessible by the researcher. Additionally, during the research process, participants chose a pseudonym to protect their real identity. There was neither anticipation that disclosure of participant responses would be needed beyond this research study nor that this study would place participants at risk of criminal or civil liability. Additionally, this study did not impact the participants' financial security, employability, or social standing. There was a minimal chance of a breach of confidentiality as interviews were completed in a private space over the phone.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter focuses on profiles of each participant that provide context to their lived experiences with Islamophobia that are not captured in Table 1. The section that follows reviews the themes organized by (a) General Islamophobia, (b) Doing Difference framework *with Considerations for 2GMMAW* organized by the following categories: Gender, Omni-relevant identities, Religion, Femininity, and (c) Gendered Islamophobia.

Participant Profiles

Setting

The recruitment method for this study involved posting the flyer on social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) and allowing others to share it. On Facebook, it was shared on my personal story and page, as well as in group pages geared toward Muslim communities, with permission. There was also a snowball sampling effect as others shared on their social media pages and with other people they knew.

Demographics

Table 1 displays demographic information for each participant, such as age, education level, cultural identity, etc. Participants ranged from ages 27–40 years old and resided in New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Educational levels for participants varied as one participant completed high school and some college, another participant had a technical degree, five participants had a Bachelor's degree, and two participants had a Master's degree. The cultural identities of participants included Pakistani American, Pakistani-Arab American, Hyderabad Muslim American, and Guyanese American. Two participants reverted to Islam, and all other participants were born into Islam. Six participants were married in a monogamous

relationship, one participant was married in a polygamous relationship, and two participants were single. Seven participants identified as Sunni Muslim, one participant identified as Shia Muslim, and 1 participant identified as just Muslim. Employment status also varied for participants, as five participants worked full-time, one participant was a student, and three participants were homemakers.

Jennifer

Jennifer is a 29-year-old Pakistani American, and both of her parents were born in Pakistan; she was born in New York and currently resides in North Carolina. She is the oldest sibling, is married, and is a mother and a homemaker. Being the oldest sibling meant that many parental responsibilities fell to her at a young age, such as paying bills, making doctor appointments, completing school forms, etc. Jennifer noted that she currently wears a hijab, but in the past, she did not wear a hijab. Jennifer describes her skin tone as a marker of her “foreignness,” so even without her hijab, she is perceived as not American.

Julia

Julia is a 40-year-old Guyanese American, as both of her parents are from Guyana, and she was born in New York. She currently resides in Pennsylvania, where she is working full-time in the medical field, is married (co-wife), is a mother, and noted that she wears hijab all the time. She also noted that how she wears hijab might vary based on her setting, but she always tries to cover to the best of her ability. Julia shared that even though she is Guyanese, the general public often perceives her as African American. She also talks about how her darker skin tone was often a point of commentary among family growing up; she understood that her skin tone was not considered “as beautiful” as her fairer-skinned siblings. Julia was raised in a Hindu household because her mother was Hindu, but her father was Christian. At one point, she became Christian

and converted to Seventh-Day Adventist before becoming Muslim. Julia was very honest about her experience with Islam before reverting, which was that she had no prior knowledge. She noted that she used to hold Islamophobic ideas and was fearful of Muslims until she learned what Islam was for herself and became Muslim around 26 years old.

Linda

Linda is a 37-year-old American Muslim; her father was born in Palestine, and her mother was born in America (White). Linda is a full-time educator, a wife, and a mother and currently lives in Pennsylvania. Linda shared that growing up, her mother was influential in their understanding of Islam, even though she did not embrace Islam until her later years. She shared that when they were younger, it was common to celebrate non-Muslim holidays, like Christmas, Halloween, etc., in addition to Eid and Ramadan because of her parents' interreligious marriage. However, as they got older, her parents decided only to recognize Islamic holidays. Linda started wearing hijab in high school, and she recognized that living a more Islamic life meant that she could not always hang out with her non-Muslim cousins because she did not go to parties or on dates. However, there was no judgment, just an understanding that her life was different.

Makayla

Makayla is a 34-year-old Guyanese American, as both of her parents were born in Guyana, and she was born in New York and currently resides there. Makayla shared that her mother was born Muslim but converted to Catholicism when marrying her father; her mother converted back to Islam later in life. Makayla was baptized Roman Catholic but converted to Islam when she was 19 years old; she noted no pressure from her family to choose a religion. Makayla survived both of her parents as her father passed away when she was a teenager, and her mom passed away in 2021. She is currently the caretaker for her grandmother. Makayla

wears a hijab and noted that she has a darker skin tone, which is often perceived as different things by different groups of people, although most people assume she was born a Muslim.

Nicole

Nicole is a 29-year-old Pakistani American, as both parents were born in Pakistan. She lives in Pennsylvania, has a bachelor's degree in public health, is currently a nursing student, and is the younger of two children. She shared that she has thought about wearing a hijab but has not really worn it unless she is going to the masjid or religious functions. Nicole noted that her skin tone is brown, and she is often perceived as Indian.

Ronnie

Ronnie is a 27-year-old Pakistani American who was born in New Jersey, and her parents were born in Pakistan. She has a Bachelor's degree in public health and is a homemaker, wife, and mom who currently resides in North Carolina. Ronnie started wearing a hijab about 10 years ago and was the first in her family to do so. Ronnie shares that she learned English in school as her parents spoke Urdu at home and that her parents relied a lot on her oldest sibling to help her navigate daily life in America.

Sandra

Sandra is a 32-year-old Pakistani-Arab American Muslim, as her father was born in Yemen, and her mother was born in Pakistan. During her childhood, Sandra explains that she attended various schools because her parents were learning to navigate raising children in America; she also shared that she lived abroad for some time in Saudi Arabia and frequently visited family in Dubai. She also describes times when she wore hijab and did not wear hijab at different times in her life; today, she does wear hijab.

Stacey

Stacey is a 32-year-old Pakistani American who works in the Information Technology field; she is also the oldest sibling to her brother, is a wife, and is a mother. She shared that navigating growing up in America was a bit different compared to her classmates whose parents were born here; one example she shared involved applying for college. She noted that her parents did not understand the process in America because it was different than Pakistan; for this reason, they did not set up a college fund for her. She noted that applying to college was a learning process for her as much as it was for them. Stacey wears a hijab to attend the masjid or religious events.

Susan

Susan is 40 years old and identifies as a Hyderabad-Muslim American, as both of her parents were born in Hyderabad, India. She is heavily involved in her local Muslim and non-Muslim communities and is a wife and a mother. Susan describes that she started wearing hijab in middle school, and she lived some of her childhood in India; this is where she first experienced Islamophobia, given the political tension between Muslims and Hindus in India. Susan noted growing up in New York City also afforded her unique experiences of learning.

Table 1. Demographics

Demographic	Jennifer	Julia	Linda	Makayla	Nicole	Ronnie	Sandra	Stacey	Susan
Age	29	40	37	34	29	27	32	32	40
Mom's Country	Pakistan	Guyana	America	Guyana	Pakistan	Pakistan	Yemen	Pakistan	India
Dad's Country	Pakistan	Guyana	Palestine	Guyana	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	India
Cultural Identity	Pakistani American	Guyanese American	American Muslim	Guyanese American	Pakistani American	Pakistani American	Pakistani/Arab Muslim	Pakistani American	Hyderbadi Muslim American
Marital Status	Married	Married (Co-Wife)	Married	Single	Single	Married	Married	Married	Married
Born Muslim or Revert	Born Muslim	Revert	Born Muslim	Revert	Born Muslim	Born Muslim	Born Muslim	Born Muslim	Born Muslim
Islamic Sect	Sunni	Sunni	Just Muslim	Sunni	Sunni	Sunni	Shia	Sunni	Sunni
Languages	Urdu and English	English	English	English	Urdu, Punjabi, and English	Urdu and English	Urdu, Arabic, and English	Urdu and English	Urdu and English
Highest Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Technical Degree	Master's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	High School/Some College	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree
Employment Status	Homemaker	Full-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time	Student	Homemaker	Full-Time	Full-Time	Homemaker
Socioeconomic Status	Middle Class	Lower Middle Class	Middle Class	Middle Class	Upper Middle Class	Middle Class	Middle Class	Middle Class	Middle Class
Childhood Environment	Suburban	Urban	Suburban	Urban	Suburban	Suburban	Suburban	Suburban	Inner City
Current Environment	Suburban	Suburban	Suburban	Urban	Suburban	Suburban	Suburban	Suburban	Suburban

48

Themes

Upon analyzing and coding the data, themes emerged across the categories of the framework as well as themes that were presented beyond the framework. This enrichment of information speaks to the complexity of 2GMMAW's lived experiences. To best capture all the information, the themes are organized under the following categories: (a) General Islamophobia, (b) Doing Difference framework, and (c) Gendered Islamophobia. The Main themes that will be discussed under the category of General Islamophobia include Experiences with 9/11, Experiences after 9/11, and Experiences with Islamophobia. Under the category of Doing Difference, the following main themes will be discussed: Femininity, Millennial and Second-Generation American, Skin Tone, Revert Experience, and Motherhood. The final category of Gendered Islamophobia discusses the main themes informed by the Matrix of Gendered Islamophobia, which are Institutionalized, Disciplinary, Hegemonic, and Interpersonal Islamophobia. To highlight the mental and emotional process of these experiences, participants were asked to reflect on their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

General Islamophobia

This section calls attention to the lived experiences of 2GMMAW and Islamophobia. Here, 2GMAW share their recollection of 9/11 as well as how life changed after 9/11. Therefore, the following main themes are presented: Experiences with 9/11, Experiences after 9/11, and Experiences with Islamophobia.

Experiences with 9/11

Many participants were young children at the time of 9/11 and did not fully understand what was happening and did not anticipate the long-term impact of the events of the day. Many

shared that their primary concern was connecting with family who lived or worked in New York. Stacey's dad worked in New York at the time, and she shared,

I think I was too young to comprehend. I was only 11 years old at that time, and so I think I was too young to comprehend the magnitude of this attack and how it was gonna affect the rest of my life at that time or the life of all Muslims around the world. It took some time to sink in afterward. At that point, you just think that the country's been attacked, and I feel like everyone just kind of jumps to whether or not their family is safe first. (Interview 102)

Makayla lived in New York and shared similar sentiments of being concerned about her father's whereabouts as well as the confusion surrounding the day. She shared how this was a day she could never forget,

I got home in a panic because I thought something had happened to my father, but he was just sitting on the sofa watching the news ... he had gotten the last train out of Manhattan actually ... and that train, I think it stopped at a certain point and then he walked home the rest of the way. And when I asked him why he didn't come to pick me up from school, he said school was still important. I think I didn't fully understand what was going on until I got home and was sitting there watching the news with my dad—we lived in Astoria. We were able to go up onto the roof and just see the smoke, and it was definitely, um, spreading, and it was something you can't forget. (Interview 105)

Julia also lived in New York at the time. She had not yet reverted to Islam and identified as Seventh Day Adventist and described the unity among New Yorkers and her own personal feelings as a non-Muslim. She shared,

It was definitely a very sad time ... and everyone collectively came together to hate the religion and Muslims—terrorists ... it was such a raw mix of emotions because there was so much love of one another as New Yorkers. Um, but then there was the hate, the mutual hate that everyone had for Islam and for Muslims and especially the terrorists ... so I think that's, that's pretty much where I stood at that time. (Interview 106)

As evident from these narratives, 9/11 was a day that is etched into the minds and hearts of 2GMMAW and had a greater impact than they could grasp at the time. Various aspects of identity, such as age, location, or religious identity shaped their experience and perspective.

Experiences After 9/11

After 9/11, many participants described the change in their personal lives, such as their parents being more cautious, receiving comments from classmates, and still navigating the impact of 9/11 in their current lives. Some described efforts to be perceived as “less Muslim,” while others described gaining more confidence and presenting the same or “more Muslim.” Linda shared that her mom was afraid and told her and her siblings to remove Palestinian stickers from the cars and school supplies so they were not targeted; Linda also shared this was the first time she was called “towel head” or being told to “go back to her country.” Jennifer expressed having feelings of confusion around 9/11 and said that her parents spoke with them about being more covert about their identity—she said,

My parents sat us down that day and said, ‘don’t say you’re from Pakistan. And if anyone asks about questions at home, be very discreet.’ Even though we were doing nothing wrong ... I was feeling very confused, very guilty, and I was just happy that none of the names that came from the people that did 9/11 were my family’s name. (Interview 103)

Sandra shared feeling more on edge and felt an increase in her parents' effort to keep them safe. She noted an incident in which her mom was mugged and one of her first encounters with Islamophobia,

I remember our guard level going up ... From being a little bit more relaxed to no more playing in the park. My mom held us tighter, like when we were at the grocery store or like never taking her eyes off us for a second. My mom got mugged in a parking lot. Somebody hit her over the head, and she just remembers them saying some racist remarks like *go back to your country*. Then they took her wallet and everything. One time my mom and I were in our abayas ... we were walking, and I remember this lady rolls her window down and says, "If you wanna wear those clothes, you need to go back where you came from." At first, I thought maybe she needed directions or wanted to compliment us ... but after she said that, I was like, okay, if you can wear a mini skirt, I can wear this, but my mom was telling me to shut up and just walk away. (Interview 108)

Sandra's experience here indicates that she assumed the person would be polite to them; however, she was surprised at the remark and inclined to defend herself, but her mother encouraged her not to engage. Ronnie talked about recognizing the impact of 9/11 on her shaping her identity and noting that she did not realize this until much later in life. She was hesitant to share aspects about herself out of fear. She said,

Growing up post 9/11, I was very young, so a lot of times, I did not realize many of my experiences occurred because of 9/11. One of the biggest things I've come to realize is how much of my personality was shaped because of 9/11. I was never comfortable sharing my identity as a Pakistani, I was never comfortable sharing my cultural life, I was never comfortable speaking of my Muslim identity because I thought kids would think

Saddam Hussein is bad, and me being a Muslim, of course, meant I'm related to Saddam Hussein. Many of the things my parents did were out of fear, and I didn't understand that fear or where that fear came from until I got older. I realized it was because they had seen Muslims taken out of their homes and jailed for doing nothing bad, so they made sure that we were always open with the police and teachers and making sure that nothing was out of line where they could be questioned.

Experiences with Islamophobia

Participants were asked to describe how they know when they are experiencing Islamophobia and what they believe has contributed to the phenomenon. All of the participants noted that they had not had physical encounters with Islamophobia and that it tends to manifest in conversation or casual interactions with strangers and people who they go to school/work with in their daily life. In describing what Islamophobia is, many participants noted the heavy influence of the media, people's stereotypical ideas passed down from generation to generation, and just general ignorance of Islam rooted in fear. Linda shared, "Islam is put all over the media in a bad way ... people are like, *oh no, this is what this is*. It's a hundred percent ignorance." Participants elaborated on how they can discern whether someone is approaching them in a genuine, curious manner rather than an Islamophobic manner. Makayla describes aggression as a marker of an Islamophobic encounter; she said,

I feel like Islamophobia is any type of aggressive ignorance. Um, it could be a question that comes off with an aggressive tone, an action that might seem harmful—any type of leering or criticism that is the intention behind it is to inflict fear or worry. I'm mostly aware of the other person's body reactions. If they sort of lean a type of way ... if it seems maybe a bit aggressive or it seems domineering or mocking. (Interview 106)

Other participants have noted people's stares are also a marker of Islamophobia. Julia describes, "The stares you get ... people become abrupt with you even when you put on your best smile."

And Linda shares having to learn ways to discern why people may stare at her, she says,

It's hard to explain what the look is, um, or why they're looking at me, but, um, it's just, it's just something that you know they're looking at you because either they wanna ask a question, they don't approve of how you're dressed, or they had a bad experience, or it's just out of fear. It took me a really long time to differentiate that, that feeling. (Interview 100)

Sandra describes similar experiences and describes a process of self-reflection to analyze the moment,

I know this sounds weird, but I just get like a vibe. Um, it's just a feeling that I have because if I come across somebody who's Islamophobic and I feel like, okay, I've done nothing to give this person a reason to have an attitude with me, dismiss me, or have any kind of conflict with me. And I search within myself first, like, did I say something? Did I do something? And when nothing comes to mind ... is then okay, this person is Islamophobic. (Interview 101)

Similarly, Ronnie assesses a situation before forming an opinion. Her perspective is informed by her experiences of being out in public with her husband and experiences he has had in public when not accompanying her. She notes that he can "kind of pass as non-Muslim" when he is out by himself, so he does not have Islamophobic encounters unless he is with her. She says,

So, I'm very careful before I blame someone as being as Islamophobic. But I would say when someone who visibly does not look Muslim gets treated better even though I am nicer in a public setting. A lot of times, my husband is seen as non-Muslim, whereas me

wearing hijab immediately labels me, and he gets treated differently when we're together or when we go somewhere alone.

As noted by all participants, discerning the “look of Islamophobia” was something that they learned over time through the process of self-reflection. There was a unifying theme that markers of Islamophobia include how someone approaches as well as the energy they provide, which is assessed through body language and tone of voice.

Doing Difference with Considerations for 2GMMAW

This section presents information about the omni-relevant identities of 2GMMAW; some of these categories were specifically asked about, while others emerged as a theme in talking to participants. The omni-relevant identity of gender will be further discussed in the next section within the context of the Matrix of Gendered Islamophobia. It is very important to highlight the diversity of the participants. While they may differ in cultural backgrounds, economic status, and skin tone, the data present similarities in the omni-relevant aspects of their identities as they navigate life. In this section, the following main themes will be discussed: Femininity, Millennial and Second-Generation American (subthemes: Beyond the Bubble and Prepared for Islamophobia, Skin Tone (subthemes: Passing as American vs. Perceived Foreignness and Colorism in the Muslim Community, and Colorism within Family) Revert Experience, and Motherhood.

Femininity

Femininity is a main theme primarily structured around (a) Cultural values and behaviors in the context of Western society and (b) Islamic values and behaviors in the context of Western society navigating cultural ideas around femininity stemming from familial tradition and the significance of the clothing style. Susan shares that where her parents grew up in India, wearing

salwar kameez was a marker of being Muslim, as Hindus primarily wore saris. Several participants noted that growing up, wearing traditional clothing, like salwar kameez, was common at home, at family gatherings, and when attending masjid. Participants noted that this may have been an effort by parents not to raise their children “too American.” They noted experiences when wearing traditional clothing outside of cultural environments may lead to being treated differently. Stacey describes when she is in public with Pakistani clothing, “I don’t necessarily wear hijab out in public often, but I wear salwar kameez, and people will give you an unwelcoming look, and I guess that’s probably like the most common form of Islamophobia.” Her perspective indicates that cultural clothing is another marker of foreignness closely associated with being Muslim; therefore, even when Muslims do not wear hijabs, they are still susceptible to perceived Islamophobia. Susan echoed similar sentiments of when she wore salwar kameez in public, that people would treat her differently, as she shared, “people wouldn’t serve me right away, wouldn’t talk to me correctly, wouldn’t gimme the respect and I would just have to deal with these things.” Jennifer shares similar experiences of being stared at for wearing a kurta to school and feeling insecure about her Pakistani identity in an American high school. Jennifer shared,

I remember I wore like a Pakistani kurta to school one day, and everyone was staring at me, and I felt so embarrassed. Thankfully, I had my gym clothes, so I quickly changed into my t-shirt, and it was literally like 15 minutes into school. I felt as if everybody at their lockers were looking at me, and maybe they weren’t looking at me, or maybe I felt a certain type of way, but I had always felt shame wearing my Pakistani clothes outside the home because I just felt like we’re the odd ones out and we’re weird. I don’t feel like that anymore, but I still felt it up until a couple years ago. I don’t know why I have that shame

because my mom and dad always said to be proud of your culture, but I guess, because no one wants to be the different person. (Interview 103)

It is evident that during her formidable years as a high school student, wearing traditional clothing indicated that she was different from her peers. Participants noted that as they have grown up, they have seen Pakistani and Indian cultures become more accepted in Western culture through TV shows and media. It became more familiar to Americans and perceived as less foreign and more accepted. Non-desi participants shared ideas of femininity aligned with Islamic values of femininity. For participants with a Palestinian or Yemeni background, traditional clothing is similar to Islamic clothing, like longer dresses or an abaya. Colonized values heavily impacted indo-Caribbean participants; therefore, everyday clothes included Western shirts, skirts, and pants. In learning more about Islam, they unlearned these colonized values and embraced more Islamic ideas around femininity.

Participants noted that Islamic ideas around femineity include both physical and non-physical characteristics, such as speech and behavior. Makayla noted that hijab is a marker of being a Muslim woman, as she shared,

I think it is very important. In Islam, distinguishing yourself as a female is a priority; it's almost part of self-care. We are told in general to dress beautifully, especially when we are praying because we are in the presence of Allah. We are told to beautify ourselves because Allah loves beauty within His creation. I think that there are definite feminine aspects to being a Muslim that is shown physically in how we dress, what we wear, how we walk, how we talk, how we interact with other women, with men, with elders, with children. We walk modestly, we dress modestly, we talk modestly. I know to Western standards, it can seem like it's oppressive, but it's quite liberating because we only follow

the commandments of our Lord and it's quite comfortable. We're not following Western society standards ... we're not here to impress anyone else, and that's quite liberating.

(Interview 105)

Jennifer also talked about how Muslim women carry themselves and noted following Islamic principles, such as not drinking alcohol, and describes carrying herself with modesty in dress, personality, and demeanor. Julie noted similar ideas around modesty informed by Islam, as she said,

My modesty shows in the way I dress, the way I conduct myself, my manner of speech. My kindness to just anyone. I was kind to people before I was Muslim, but I think embracing Islam made me more aware of how I treat all creatures of Allah ... the kindness, even when someone's being unkind to you, you kind of turn that other cheek ... and I try to demonstrate this religion of love and peace by my actions and in a difficult situation—how you speak and how you represent yourself as well as your religion speaks volumes to people. (Interview 106)

Julia highlights another emerging theme that talks about being a self-appointed representative of Islam through her actions, presentation, and whole being. This will further be discussed under Adaptation Skills. Similarly, to how Desi participants wore cultural clothing in socially accepted environments, Julia calls attention to the fluidity of femineity depending on the environment and emphasizes the Islamic idea of adorning oneself as a Muslim woman. She shares,

The way I dress on a normal day versus workday versus the masjid is all completely different. When I go to the masjid, I wear abayas to cover up more ... when I'm home or out and about in the grocery store, a mall, any type of family events, I'm in loose-fitting clothes. If I'm not wearing a dress, I'm wearing a skirt. If I'm not wearing a skirt, I'm

wearing loose pants, or if I'm wearing jeans, I'm wearing a shirt that comes down to my knees. Allah knew what he was doing when He created women. We love to adorn ourselves ... it did not say that you can't adorn yourself. Just dress modestly and conduct yourself in a modest way. (Interview 106)

In navigating femineity, Linda is the only participant with an American parent. She shared her perspective about negotiating femininity between her American and Palestinian identities; this is also layered with the idea of differentiating between Palestinian culture and Islamic values. She shared,

I'm torn between cultures because I'm like half and half ... like because of my American culture, I am going to be outspoken. I am going to be loud. I am going to tell you that you're wrong. If there's a group of guys or girls, I'm gonna step up and say something because that's like—I believe—my American culture. Now the, the Islamic part of it, um, I do struggle with the girls are supposed to not shake hands with non-mahram men or stuff like that. I try my best to follow the sunnah, but I also try my best to differentiate between Palestinian culture and Islam as well. (Interview 100)

Millennial and Second-Generation Americans

This section discusses being a Millennial and the children of immigrants; these topics are combined as the narrative is interwoven. The section titled *Beyond the Bubble* highlights how participants' parents stayed within communities that were similar to them—they stayed in the bubble. However, many participants noted that they—as millennials—have moved beyond the bubble to combat Islamophobia. The next section (*Prepared for Islamophobia*) inquires about participants' perspectives on if their parents prepared them to face Islamophobia.

Beyond the Bubble. Participants described how their parents deal with Islamophobia compared to how they, as millennials, may handle a situation; this is referred to as the subtheme known as *Beyond the Bubble*. Participants also shared reasons why they think generations differ in their responses, which many described their parents as “staying in their bubble,” whereas millennials have generally navigated life *beyond* the bubble. The bubble refers to staying within one’s community, which is layered and can mean the Muslim community and/or cultural community (i.e., Arab, Pakistani, West Indian, Indian), which ultimately meant interacting with people similar in culture, religion, and immigration status and if confronted with Islamophobia, parents tended not to engage and ignore the situation. Sandra spoke about this earlier when her mom encouraged her to stay quiet and keep walking. There were elements of fear and mistrust for immigrant parents; Susan also described parents’ fears of their children becoming “too American,” which meant staying in the bubble to preserve culture and traditions. She said,

They didn’t interact much. They tried to keep us within our cultural and Muslim environments as much as possible. They didn’t try to take us out and put us in too many outdoor situations. When they came here in the 70s—you hear it from the other families too—*oh, if you put them in too much American things, the kids will get away from culture, get away from Islam and whatnot.* So, that fear was within our parents a lot. I feel like that made how they interacted with the community different ... like they helped out, they did community work, helped out with shelters, but in creating non-Muslim friends, I feel like they didn’t do that as much. (Interview 101)

Sandra said that her parents did not trust “anyone who was not Muslim or any other race.” She noted that her parents did not allow them to have sleepovers or visit non-Muslim homes. She was told not to trust guidance counselors or teachers because “they hate Muslims” and would take

them away from their parents. This resulted in much confusion for her as she went through school because she did not know who she could trust when mistreated. To combat becoming “too American” and to keep them safe, her parents put her in an Islamic school, moved her around to multiple public schools, and sent her to Dubai for school for one year. While it was a struggle for her, Sandra also empathizes with her parents’ perspective, as being a mother herself has helped her understand their choices. She shared,

Anytime he didn’t like the environment or he felt like something was not good for me, my dad would take me out and put me in another high school, and it just turned into going to seven high schools, and I barely graduated. It was really hard because I know how it is now. Like if I put myself in their shoes, like I’m a parent, and I can see why they were scared, and I can see why their concerns were valid, too. This was a new country to them ... they’ve never been exposed to the kind of things that we were exposed to ... and they could not trust anybody on like the outside of their bubble—but at the same time, we didn’t have parents who were familiar with the system, and we had to learn everything on our own. So, I felt like the burden was on both of us. And, of course, as a teenager, I was like *this is all your fault. You brought us here*. But now that, now that I’m a mom, I’m like, *oh, damn ... now I can see where they’re coming from*. (Interview 108)

Stacey’s parents only had to deal with Islamophobia in America since they grew up in Pakistan. This, coupled with a language barrier and just trying to establish roots in America, contributed to remaining in the bubble. She shared,

I don’t think my parents had to deal with it as much ... my parents grew up in Pakistan, and they moved here in like the 80s. I don’t know if I can relate to that ... they didn’t

have to grow up in a country that's not Muslim. They have always been involved in Pakistani communities ... we lived in New York, and there was a huge Pakistani community there. And my parents were very much involved and everything. (Interview 102)

Jennifer describes the same notion and that extended family played the role of family friends and neighbors for their parents. She highlighted that when encountering Islamophobia, her parents grounded themselves in their gratitude for being in America and did not engage in such circumstances. She said,

We had our family ... we did not have any outside friends, we didn't have any White friends, and we didn't mingle with our neighbors. We had this like close-knit circle that we stayed in, and because of that, my parents didn't really experience Islamophobia. They said, "*we didn't bother anybody and no one bothered us.*" That was intentional. When there was some kind of microaggression or Islamophobic remark, my mom and dad were very clueless to that and would say, "*we're lucky enough to be in this country.*" (Interview 103)

Participants shared ways they moved beyond the bubble that kept their parents comfortable, which they could do because they were born in America and knew their rights. Participants described other ways Millennials have dealt with Islamophobia differently from their parents, such as embracing their Muslimness, proving their Americanness, and educating themselves and others about Islam. Jennifer said, "I was born here, I have a right to be here, and I consider it my country—but I also criticize it ... because all Americans do that. Like, America is lucky to have me." (Interview 103). Sandra shared a similar sentiment:

We're American citizens and we have a right to be here as much as anybody else does ... but that wasn't the mindset for our parents ... It was more like, they're lucky to be here and they don't wanna sabotage that in any way so they're going to blend in and hide—even though they would never be able to. I feel bad for them because it was constant fear for them—and for us, it started off as fear, and then it was like, okay, we don't need to have this fear because we belong here as much as anybody else does. And I feel like my parents had more of a survival mode that their parents passed down to them ... versus actually living their life. (Interview 108)

Linda elaborated on the choice to present her Muslimness; she said,

I feel like generation after generation, we're getting a little bit better with that ... we live in America, we are the minority, and the only way for the majority to learn about the minority is for us to be a little bit more involved. I feel that's the difference ... I'm gonna wear hijab, I'm gonna go to a public school, I'm going to teach the people about Islam instead of staying back in my bubble and homeschooling. I think that line is starting to be crossed a little bit, which is great ... if they only know about it from what the news is telling them, of course, they're not gonna learn about the religion. (Interview 100)

Moving beyond the bubble required Millennials to learn about their religion, which meant they were combatting stereotypes from the media from non-Muslims and sharing that knowledge at home to dispel cultural values that were not Islamic. Makayla shared that Millennials essentially exercise their rights as an American citizen to enact change; she said,

I feel like with millennials, there's a lot of focus on educating yourself Islamically and knowing what your religion is about ... identifying yourself as a Muslim, not just by name or by birth, but in full faith and by action. Um, so I think millennials would handle

Islamophobia with protests and having educated discussions and conversations, being more proactive, and being more verbal rather than staying silent. (Interview 105)

Similarly, Ronnie noted that Millennial Muslims born in America have a greater sense of belonging that America is home. This allows them to advocate in ways their parents may not have known because they are more familiar with the system, the language, and their rights. Julia highlights characteristics of Millennials that help move beyond the bubble, such as “being outspoken because of the nature of Western society, being outspoken is encouraged ... so, some Muslims are unapologetic.” She also noted a tendency to want to feel accepted by society, as she said,

For Millennials, everything is about acceptance ... not being accepted is not easy, and I think you lose the courage and the backbone to say, well, this is what I believe and no matter what anybody else thinks. I feel secure. I think security—so millennials have this thing with security, and that comes with the acceptance as well. They need to feel secure. They need to feel accepted, and sometimes because Western society is saying that these are all of the things that we accept. We forget what our religion says about what’s accepted and what’s not accepted. We forget all of that. So, the religious aspect of it’s taken away from it to be more accepted. (Interview 106)

Julia’s comments called attention to navigating Islam in the context of Western societal values; this is another unlearning and learning process for Millennials.

Prepared for Islamophobia. This subtheme occurred when participants were asked to reflect on conversations their parents may have had to prepare them for facing Islamophobia. It was noted that their parents had those conversations with the younger siblings but not necessarily older siblings. Older siblings were, as Stacey put it, “kind of left to navigate that part on our own

for the most part ... they would talk to me if something happened, but they didn't really say anything beforehand." Susan shares similar experiences as she is one of the older siblings in her family; she said,

No. <laugh> They did that with my younger siblings. <laugh> They didn't really do that with us older siblings. I guess it was just a different thought process and generation.

Parents didn't have too many open conversations. They just said, this is what you need to do, period. That's it. There's no discussion, and as kids growing up, we just did things because we knew our parents know better. Just follow the flow. (Interview 101)

Although neither of them was Muslim then, Makayla and Julia shared about their parents' tendencies as Indo-Caribbeans that shared similar sentiments to Susan's narrative. Makayla said,

I definitely don't think so because at a time when Islamophobia was at a highest point, I wasn't Muslim, and I think generally, in my household, and other households of Indian descent ... you're told to do things without an explanation as to why ... so don't go out late or don't stay out late, can be something that's cultural or a fear of Islamophobia—but you don't really know. Cause that's not explained to you. I think—especially my mom—she didn't feel the need to explain herself, if she said something, it was understood—I'm your mother, you listen. I think that's Guyanese parenting, and I definitely don't think my parents prepared me for Islamophobia. (Interview 105)

Julia shared a similar perspective and described her Indo-Caribbean mom as "old school Indian." She continues to share how she saw the mindset and struggles of her mother and indirectly prepared herself for the world. She said,

She's very close-minded. She doesn't know how to express herself—her feelings, and she never prepared me for life. I took everything that I was going through in life or that I saw

in my childhood and said, I'm gonna do the opposite of that. I think just situations just kind of prepare you for, um, the struggles of what life really is. (Interview 106)

Similarly, Nicole said there was no active conversation about being prepared to face Islamophobia, but she noted they made comments like "don't draw attention to yourself," which could have been their way of preparing them. From these narratives, it is evident that immigrant parents' experiences varied greatly from parents who are not immigrants. As Nicole concisely stated, "My parents had little information compared to generations of other White parents that had kids or that have been living here."

Skin Tone

Narratives around skin tone and Islamophobia varied depending on the person's perceived skin tone, which meant different things in different aspects of their life. Participants highlight the impact of skin tone in American society, the Muslim community, and their families. Subthemes associated with skin tone include (a) Passing as American vs. perceived foreignness, (b) colorism in the Muslim community, and (c) colorism within the family heavily influenced by colonized standards of beauty. It is important to call attention to how the system of oppression associated with colorism is navigated on a macro-level (American Society), Mezzo-level (Muslim Community), and micro-level (within the family); this speaks to the reach of colonization.

Passing as American vs. Perceived Foreignness. Several participants noted light skin tones afforded them a White-passing privilege as they would be perceived as American unless there was an overt indicator of foreignness. Susan said, "there is that concept of if you can pass off as American people don't care, but then if you don't ... then there's fear, but you're the same person." Sandra and Linda shared that their fair skin tone is White passing unless they wear a

hijab. Sandra shared, “When I would not have a hijab on, people would think I’m White ... such a drastic change. Either I’m this White girl, or I’m this girl with a hijab on and is definitely Muslim, but not White anymore.” Linda shared a similar narrative in that her hijab was a marker of foreignness and highlights being treated differently since wearing hijab, as she said,

Honestly, I think it depends—I know this might sound really silly—but it depends on if you wear [a] hijab or not. The reason I say that is because before I wore hijab, I, I look like ‘your typical White girl,’ so like, I did not feel any discrimination or anything different at all until I started wearing hijab. ... So, I feel that like, once you put the hijab on, it makes a big difference when it comes to Islamophobia. (Interview 100)

Makayla talked about the impact of skin tone in the workplace and noted that there is an understanding of why some people move up in the company. She shared,

A lot of the times, religion and culture get interchanged and mixed up, and used incorrectly. I think it would actually be more because I’m brown-skinned as reason that I wouldn’t get promoted—rather than being Muslim. At my work, they have promoted, Muslim, female colleagues into higher position, but will those colleagues get even higher than where they are? Probably not because the higher up you go, there’s a certain skin tone—a lighter skin tone. (Interview 105)

Jennifer noted that browner skin tones could also be a marker of foreignness and Muslimness because it is distinct. It is evident that certain characteristics are associated with *Americanness*, which are not seen as a threat, such as lighter skin tones and not wearing a hijab. This affirms the narrative that White-passing skin tones are less likely to be perceived as Muslim unless they present as overtly Muslim. Therefore, increased experiences of Islamophobia = perceived foreignness based on skin + perceived Muslimness.

Colorism in the Muslim Community. Colorism in the Muslim community is heavily influenced by colonization, and the combination of participants' narratives outlined a hierarchy that is an unspoken practice within the Muslim community. Participants describe the hierarchy of skin tone utilizing cultural groups, which call attention to White passing cultural groups as being able to pass as American and may afford them different experiences in life. Susan calls attention to this hierarchy and notes the impact of perceived Muslimness as a factor in acceptance by American society. She said,

Growing up, I felt like ostracized by the girl group cuz they were mostly Pakistanis, and I was Indian. Like you could see the little cliques, everyone kind of made ... like the converts kind of stayed with each other, the Africans kind of stayed with each other, and the Arabs just stayed with each other. Within the Muslim community itself, there's a lot of inside racism and stuff, and it comes down to just like the colonial mentalities. I see a big connection there with Muslims that are Arabs—more White-skinned—Even some who are Pakistani. If they don't cover, they can pass off as American, and people don't care because they don't look a certain way. And they'll get more opportunities at times within work and other situations than someone that's darker skinned, that blatantly looks different, and looks like they're from somewhere else. (Interview 101)

Sandra talked about the hierarchy between Arabs and Pakistanis as she identified as both and experienced polarization among each group. She shared,

There's some conflict there ... like Arabs and Pakistanis don't get along, and I'm speaking from my personal experience. I have Arab family members and Pakistani family members, and I've been in and out of environments that have both kinds of people. It seemed like the Arab side of my identity were a little bit more arrogant ... they have

more superiority—like as a race versus Pakistani people who are considered lower in caste. I actually went to high school in Dubai for a year, and there was a whole other dynamic there, and I remember not feeling comfortable sharing that I was Pakistani over there. Um, just because I felt it was looked down upon—to be Pakistani. So in terms of that, like my personal identity and then when it comes to like being an American, Pakistani, definitely had a lot of issues with trying to find myself as a person and realizing that it doesn't have to be like one or the other, which is what I thought my entire life—that I could never be both. If I could ever go back and tell my younger self, like it's okay to have all these identities, it's okay to be different because I felt like an imposter in my own body.

From her perspective, it is evident that navigating various cultural identities is everchanging depending on her environment; she highlights the mental process of navigating omnirelevant identities. Jennifer also talks about the hierarchy within the Muslim community as she noted a similar hierarchy among Arabs and Pakistanis and also elaborated on how this pattern continues; she said,

I don't get it as bad as other people do, but when I have gone to a predominantly "Arab" masjid, there is like a colorism. There's this unspoken thing about the Whiter you are, the better. Like, if I go to a Pakistani masjid, the Pakistanis will do the same thing the Black Muslims or Bengali Muslims. So, it's a lot of issues that we need to work through as a Muslim community. (Interview 103)

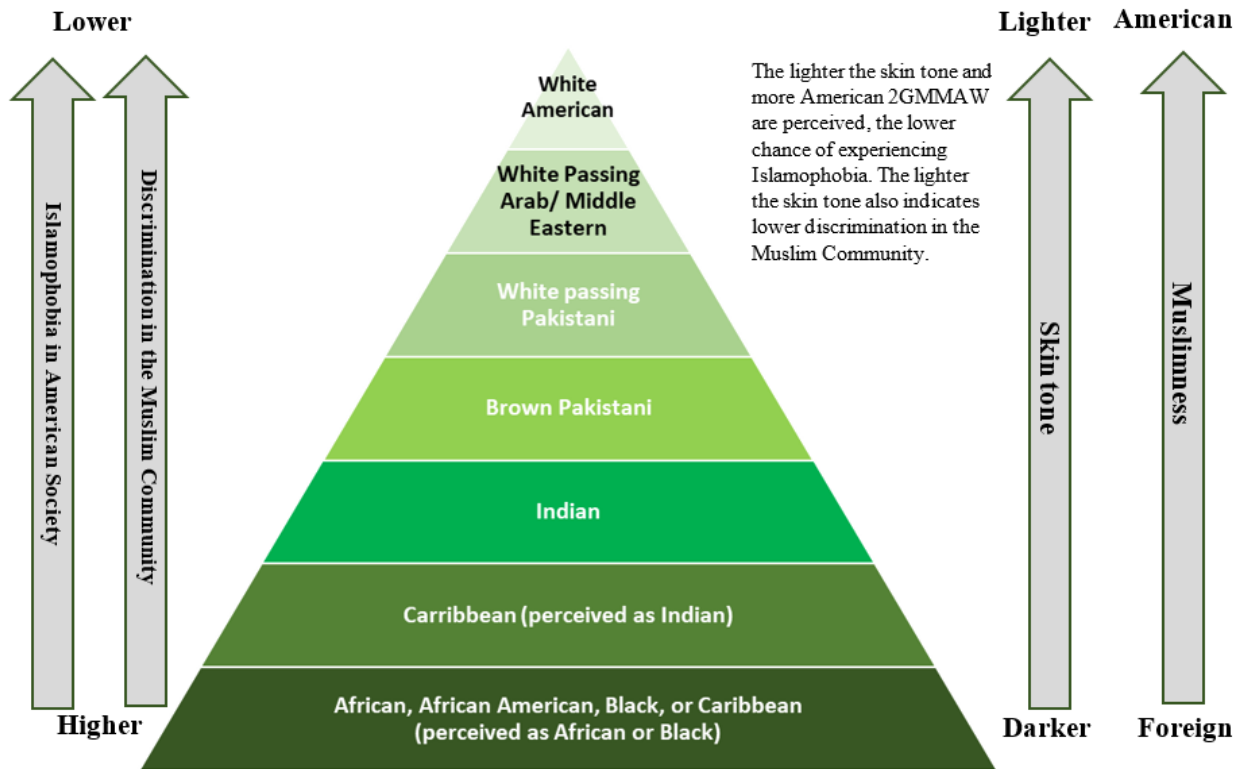
Julia also articulates that discrimination in the Muslim community, noting how African and Black Muslims are perceived by other cultural groups, and also talks about discrimination within the African community. This is an important narrative to highlight as it demonstrates the

perpetual discrimination rooted in colonization that manifests within communities of color. Julia noted within the Black and African Muslim community, discrimination can show up in being critical of modesty as a Muslimah. She said,

So, you face discrimination with the foreign Muslims—there are so many times that foreigners, the Arabs or the Pakistanis—they look at African American Muslims like we don't know anything, and we don't know this religion. Like they're the original kind, and we're beneath them. So, that's one discrimination that you may face in the masjid the second discrimination is if you go to an African American masjid and the sisters are niqabis—they're not about colorful clothes ... they're about black, green, brown [muted tones]. So I personally love color, and I'm not a niqabi. Um, and I may not wear my hijab traditionally ... I cover ears, neck, and breast. In the African American masjid, if they see color, it's like *you're drawing attention to yourself*. So, you kind of get shunned for that, or if you're not covering properly ... you kind of get frowned upon. You're gonna get it. You're gonna get it from the Arabs. You're gonna get it from the African Americans. It's just people. (Interview 106)

From the narratives collected, Figure 3 displays the relationship between the various omni-relevant identities for 2GMMAW regarding skin tone and perceived Muslimness and how that impacts their experiences in the Muslim community and Islamophobia. Words identified by participants informed the cultural categories; interestingly, each participant validated and expanded on the hierarchy given their lived experience.

Figure 3. Colorism in the Muslim Community



Colorism Within Family. Some participants also noted experiences of colorism they faced when growing up within their family unit. Julia shares about the favoring of her lighter-skinned and lighter-eyed siblings from a young age. She shared,

Because of my skin tone. They call me “darkie” and “black sheep” ... those were two names that were very familiar to me growing up ... my siblings are very light—light-skinned and light eyes ... Everything was White-based, especially back then ... they came to America, they started dating Caucasian men. My family on my mother’s side favor more towards my siblings, who were all fair-skinned, because they could identify more with White America versus me because I looked like I was mixed and like I was from back home. I had a very difficult time fitting into my own family, even with my siblings, because they noticed the acceptance that they were receiving from my mother’s

side of the family because of the color of their skin ... they used to get compliments about their eye color. It was very difficult for me to fit in. So not only did I have identity issues in America, but also in my family and a social acceptance that I was trying to, so I was trying to be accepted as an immigrant's child in America.

Susan talks about her experiences with colorism in her family as well and notes that it is also something her children face. She said,

Within family and friend structure, each of my children have different skin tones, and I see the difference in how family members, sadly, deal with them differently because of that. They'll call the lighter one more beautiful, and it creates those feelings. I try to tell my girls this is not what life is ... Sadly, people just have those misconceptions and don't let it get to you, but it does, it does get to the kids, no matter how much you tell them.

Here, Susan calls attention to how microaggressive comments rooted in colonization can lead to internalizing unhealthy narratives for girls with darker skin tones. This will further be discussed in the implications of social work practice, policy, and education.

Revert Experience

The term revert is used to honor the principle that everyone is born Muslim, perhaps raised in another faith, and then recites the Shahadah later in life to reembrace Islam. It is important to highlight this main theme as both Makayla and Julia identify as reverts and have shared details about this aspect of their omni-relevant identity. In addition, both participants are of Guyanese descent, and their relationship with religion is described in their participant profile; this section highlights aspects of the revert experience pertinent to navigating Islamophobia.

Makayla and Julia wear hijab and have noted that most people are surprised when learning that they have reverted to Islam. There is a common assumption, because of their

presentation of modesty and skin tone, that they chose to be Muslim. Makayla said, “Most people assume that I’m actually supposed to be Muslim. They assume that I’m from India a lot of the times, and I think people just see hijab and assume oppression and also that I’ve been in this religion for decades.” Makayla was acquainted with Islam as her mom’s family identified as Muslim, and she learned more about Islam after reverting and taking Islamic classes. Makayla shares how when dealing with instances of Islamophobia, she tries to find common ground; she talks about an experience in which she was shopping with her mom, and a woman asked her for help looking for an item and then used the opportunity to talk about Christianity. This interaction also highlights the assumption people have that Makayla was born into Islam. She says,

One of the best ways to connect with Christians is to acknowledge that we both believe in Jesus—but a lot of Christians are prepared for this answer now. So, now they’ll talk about how their belief in Jesus is higher because they look at him as the son of God. And we just look at him as only a messenger. So she said, “How would your mom feel if I told her that you weren’t her daughter, that you were just the messenger?” And I said, “My mother would be proud because being a messenger of God is a higher rank than being the daughter or the son of anyone.” So, her response comes directly in relation to your question about being a revert ... She said, “Oh, I know you’ve been in this religion for maybe 20, 30 years?” And I said, “No, I’ve only been in this religion for a few years because I converted to Islam. I used to be Christian”—Christians distinguish between being Christian or Catholic, so I always say I am Christian. So, she said, “Oh, I don’t have to worry about you. You’re just a little lost right now, but you’ll find your way back.” (Interview 106)

From this microaggressive, Islamophobic story, Makayla calls attention to the complexity of navigating omni-relevant identities, and she does so by leaning on her values, kindness, common ground, and knowledge of Islam and Christianity. Julia's experience differs a bit because she was not acquainted with Islam from a young age in the same way that Makayla was. In fact, Julia shared that she was a person who believed Islamophobic ideas. She said,

Before I became Muslim, I was Islamophobic, and I was very ignorant to what the religion was ... just the way someone appeared was scary to me. I didn't understand it. I discriminated against them ... I didn't see many Muslims. So, I didn't understand the religion or the people. I would shy away from them because of their dress and because I didn't understand the religion or the people. I lived in New York and where there is *The Lost Tribe of Shabazz*, which they would dress like Muslims, but they were preaching a lot of hate against Caucasians or anyone that didn't believe what they believed. And I kind of melted them into people of Islam ... So I automatically kind of shunned away from them ... and really didn't take what they said for any type of value. Um, I didn't wanna learn about the religion because of the things that they were spewing or the things that they were talking about, especially with a lot of hate. I had a lot of ignorant comments myself to the religion and especially with the modesty of how women covered.

Julia's narrative highlights her lack of awareness about Islam led to her fear of Muslims and assumptions about them before her revert experience. She also shares that after she reverted, she was on the receiving end of assumptions that she had at one point. She shared that people questioned her intentions for becoming Muslim and often challenged people. She said,

When I first became Muslim everybody's question is, did you become Muslim for a man? That's everyone's first response. But ... when I became nondenominational, did

anybody say that I did that for the man or when I became a seven-day Adventist? Did anybody say I did that for a man? No. But for some reason, they associate, especially with women who revert to Islam, with doing so because of a man. (Interview 106)

Names also play an important role in the revert experience. Julia talks about this experience and also calls attention to names in Guyanese culture, whether someone is Muslim or not. She shares in Guyana, it is common to have a nickname in addition to a more formal name that is used to assimilate into Western society, which may have been one's legal birth name or an Anglo-sized version of one's actual name. She notes that her mom was more intentional in choosing a name to fit in, whereas her father accepted the alternate names given to him. She said,

My mother has her birth name—her Indian name—and then she has her American name, which she identifies with more as, because of society. Um, my father has an uncommon American name. So, everyone—even his bosses—instead of calling him his name, they chose a name to call him by. He did not give himself an American name, but they changed his name to fit society. My mother. She purposely changed her name. She didn't legally change her name, but she changed her name to fit society. I have an aunt who also changed it. They have their American names, and then they have their birth names, which is their cultural names to fit society.

Julia shared that when she chose her Muslim name, she thought about the meaning associated with the name as that was a guiding principle. She shared,

Not just Islam, many cultures—the name chosen for a child is important because of its significance. That's how you want the child to be—the values that you want the child to grow up with—names, hold a lot of meaning and a lot of power to the person. As soon as

I became Muslim, I chose a name—It took me a while to legally change my name to a name that holds weight, something that expressing who the values that I try to live by.

Motherhood

The main theme of motherhood for 2GMMAW was central to several conversations as several participants described how their parenting style differs from their parents. It is evident that 2GMMAW intentionally instill Islam as a positive, empowering force in their child's life.

Linda said,

For most millennials—we're like first generation ... like, we were the ones that were born here, but our parents are from overseas ... my children are probably gonna be the generation where it's really like *this* is what Islam is ... *this* is what Muslims are and it's okay that we don't celebrate Christmas and we're gonna do a little Ramadan activity, I'm really glad that my children don't have the hesitancy that I had because I tried to raise them a little differently and try to let them be okay with it. (Interview 100)

Susan shared a similar narrative as she talks about the fear of Muslims that has come after 9/11 and how that has influenced her parenting style. She stated,

I feel like my generation—because of 9/11 made us change, and we were teenagers at that time—for us just became like we saw how life was before, and we saw the difference after and we wanna bring back what we had with fellow Americans and the non-Muslims. Not having that fear, not having to explain ourselves all the time, and just having our kids. I think that also makes a difference is just that we want our kids to be in a safer environment, so for that reason, like some people just naturally want to create change, and other people just kind of go with the flow, and I've always been part of trying to be a part of change ... and I try to teach that to my kids ... It's a blessing to see

their growth and stuff, but it's just, it's hard too—as a mother to see them struggle like that. You don't want them to have that. You want them to have something better ... 'Cause I wanted them to grow up with less fear and less racism, but I mean, they're gonna deal with it regardless.

Similar to Susan and Linda, Jennifer also shared intentional efforts in educating her children and cultivating a dialogue with her children for moments when they may experience Islamophobia. She shares this was different from how her parents raised her and she is purposeful in approach; she said,

Parents try to make our life a little bit easier—I don't know if our parents did that <laugh> —but that's what I do ... trying to make sure my children's experience in life is a little bit easier and I'm gonna try to educate them so they can advocate life in a Western society better than I knew how to do it. I feel like I wasn't equipped with the right tools to deal with it, and I had to figure it out on my own. My kids are gonna have me to kind of map it out for them and understand that this is not how you're meant to be treated. I actually went through it first, and now they don't have to go through it. And even if they do go through it, they'll have me to talk to about it, and I can be like, *yes, this is something that happens*, and I can explain to them how best to deal with it. And I feel like it's gonna make them a stronger person. It doesn't hurt me. It makes me feel like they're gonna become a stronger person ... having these experiences—it's like a double-edged sword. It is bad that it happened, and it shouldn't happen, but it also makes you a stronger person. And I feel like it makes you into more of a well-rounded individual, and I feel like it does build your character. (Interview 103)

Jennifer, like other participants, described the certainty of her children experiencing Islamophobia and noted that it is not an easy process for the mother or child. Julia shares how her teenage daughter experienced Islamophobia in school and how that impacted her as a mother. It is important to note that her experience also calls attention to her daughter's African American and Muslim identities. She shared,

My daughter had an experience with being African American and being Muslim when it was her first year of covering. We switched her from homeschool where she was in this diverse school system to another school district that is a predominantly White and a rich district. And her first year, her principal—who was Caucasian—isolated her for laughing and some things that legally you do not do. They were minute things, but I knew that this was her targeting her because in her entire school, she was the only Muslim in her whole school. She was 13, and I know she targeted just her because it was a group of about six girls, and they were all laughing at their table and she targeted just her and she moved her to a table by herself with a bunch of boys. She could have moved her to any table, she could have sent her to the principal's office, or she could have sent her to the guidance counselor's office. But she chose not to do any of those things. And she chose to have her sit with a group of boys by herself that she didn't even know. She probably thought she was liberating her. So that emotionally drained me because—as an adult, you know how to turn things off, and people are people, but for a child just learning to identify herself as a new covering Muslim, and just accepting that and then to have something like this thrown at her ... I was emotionally drained for her and for myself and for society itself, like in today's day and time are we still going through this? And it's an adult doing this to a child.

Gendered Islamophobia

This section will share the main themes specifically related to experiences of Gendered Islamophobia while calling attention to the internal process of 2GMMAW when experiencing Islamophobia. This is accomplished by highlighting thoughts, feelings, and behavior in the moment or subsequent moments after the experience. Inquiring about thoughts, feelings, and behaviors were inspired by cognitive behavioral therapy practices as well as calling attention to the mind-body connection of the human experience with the hope to give insight into the Invisible load of Islamophobia, which will be further defined and discussed in implications for social work education, practice, and policy. Under each category of the matrix (Institutionalized, Disciplinary, Hegemonic, Interpersonal), experiences will be shared by each persona to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the experience to their thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Highlighting the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral process for 2GMMAW during encounters with Islamophobia speaks to their experiential knowledge and is a prime example of leaning on differential consciousness when navigating discrimination.

Institutionalized Islamophobia

Institutionalized Islamophobia focuses on “the exclusion and/or restrictions of Muslim women that lead to unequal outcomes in social institutions such as labor, education, family, media, politics, and the legal system” (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020, p. 654). Seven out of the nine participants shared experiences of Institutionalized Islamophobia.

Linda. In her experience, Linda shared about the job interviewing process and an instance in which her resume met or exceeded qualifications; she completed several phone interviews, but when she presented in person, she noticed a reservation. She felt this way because of the line of questioning in some of her interviews. She shared,

The person that interviewed me was like, well, “If we had a pizza party and I ordered pepperoni pizza, would you not touch it?” And I’m like, “oh, I’m applying for office manager ... I dunno.” Then he said, “if you saw wine in the refrigerator, would you feel excluded?” They were asking like such silly questions, and I’m glad, you know, that I can’t drink or eat pork, but what does that have to do with me managing your office? So it was kind of the questions that they asked based on me being Muslim, but it did not relate to the job, if that makes sense.

Here, Linda shared that this line of questioning was inappropriate as it was not related to the job for which she was applying, so she walked out of the interview. Linda was asked to elaborate on her **thoughts, feelings, and behavior** about this experience. She shared,

I felt myself getting frustrated and just in disbelief and I could actually feel myself in anger almost where it’s like, *if I don’t walk out, I’m probably gonna say something that is not gonna be a good response*. So, I’m going to politely tell this guy that he is crazy <laughs> and excuse myself from the interview. I felt kind of like intimidated by the person that was interviewing me, and I felt like my qualifications for the job had *nothing* to do with what I can or can’t eat. I mean, it was kind of common sense, especially because it was in a professional atmosphere.

In these moments, Linda was assessing several aspects of the dynamic simultaneously and noted her feelings of dumbfoundedness derived from her assumptions that it was a professional environment. She shared,

I felt that this person—especially because they were the manager and it was a professional company—that they should be at least a little bit more professional because they were knowledgeable [about Islam], so it wasn’t ignorance. It was just them kind of

picking at me ... like poke fun of the religion ... so that was the reason why I walked out. It wasn't the professional thing to do, but it was so ridiculous what this person was asking me. I didn't have to be there answering those questions. So, I'm like, this is obviously not gonna be the right workplace for me."

Susan. Susan talked more about experiences in her school in which she felt teachers treated her differently or harsher to her than other classmates. She noted this story is from middle school in which she and fellow students of color were marginalized by a teacher. She said,

I just remember in our teacher of mine was just super critical of my artwork and, and just gave me B's and C's, which discouraged me from art for a while. She didn't give it to any of her White students, but she was like that toward her non-White students. So, and it wasn't necessarily because we're Muslims or not, but we never spoke up against it.

Susan's experience calls attention to the fact that she has increased awareness of being treated differently from her peers from a young age. It is also normal, culturally, to not question the teacher's opinion; she noted fighting that cultural norms to stand up for herself and uncovered her instincts were, in fact, correct. She shared her **thoughts, feelings, and behavior**:

I was angry at the teacher for this and I was also fearful for kind of trying to confront her on it. I did bring it up and she said it's all in my head and that I need to know how to take a bad grade. She's the teacher and I'm the student ... basically, that I don't know art.— she does. That makes you second guess your thought process that *maybe I am wrong and like and, I'm trying to make it into an issue when it's not? Maybe I'm not taking my bad grade correctly?* Then, that's when I started finding out from other students. No, it's not just me and that just made me feel validated that okay, what I felt was correct. Because initially it ... when you have adults in power, you just think that they wouldn't do that to

you. So just after fact just being validated in that experience felt good to know that it wasn't in my head, and I didn't create a there. Right. So, but that creates like the second guessing in you.

Jennifer. Similarly to Linda, Jennifer shares context of the interaction is important as she has had phone interviews and conversations that she believes went well; however, when she is in person, the person is surprised at her appearance. Jennifer shared,

I've talked on the phone ... and when they hear me speak on the phone, my English is quite fluent and when I go in person, they did not expect to see me ... like the voice does not match to the face ... like the hijab in front of them. Um, or sometimes it's been at like a certain job interview where they said, 'Oh, your English is so good.' I was like, 'Yes, it should be, I was born here.' They automatically assume because I'm darker or if I'm wearing a hijab, I'm not from.

It is evident that Jennifer's experiences highlight the privilege of speaking English in what is perceived as not foreign, proper, or American. Her story highlights that the assumption of her race is made over the phone; therefore people are surprised when she does not fit the preconceived image. She shares,

People just assumed that I am White or Black over the phone because of how I speak English. I can't even count times someone said, 'Oh wow, your English is so good.' I don't put them on the spot anymore, but I have before, I would say, 'What do you mean by that?' Then it goes on ... , that conversation where they say like, 'Oh, you're where are you from?' And I'm like, 'I'm from here from New York' ... 'But where are you really from? 'You know, that whole thing, which is quite common.

Jennifer shares about her **thoughts, feelings and behaviors** when navigating these types of situations. She says,

It makes me feel like they were trying to make me feel like I was the odd one out ... just because I look 'foreign' and not from here. And it would just wind me up in my mind because I think the original people of these lands look like me more than they looked like White people. Every person that asked me this question was always a White person. It's frustrating because if I asked them, 'Where are you from?' They're like, 'Oh, I'm just from here.' <laughs>.

This quote shows that Jennifer navigates the Whiteness of this interaction; she is frustrated and perceives that the person wants to make her feel like she does not belong. She describes being wound up in her head and notes that, in some cases, her behavior would be to ask the same question back to the person. This example demonstrates the process of an Invisible Load of Islamophobia during a microaggression encounter.

Julia. Julia talks about experiences of institutionalized Islamophobia in the job-seeking process as well as in the workplace. She shares that she works in the medical field and her experience in job-seeking in an upper-class, White neighborhood. She said,

It was such a discouraging time because [I] was going to entry-level job interviews with my hijab—I was experienced in working with children, and the position that they were looking for was entry-level. I interviewed with all Caucasians, and I think I must have been on 10-11 interviews, and not one of them even had the decency to call me back. So, I didn't know for sure, but I felt that my attire and my appearance is what first caught them off guard. And the reason that I say that is because the last one of the last interviews that I had was with, it's a very well-known pediatric office in as a very high class

particular pediatric office that care of a lot of celebrities, children. So, the office manager, she was African American. Um, and the only reason why I got the interview is because I knew someone that knew her, so they kind of put the word in for me. So when I had the interview, the interview went well, and then one of the last things she asked me was, you know, your head attire. Is that something that you need to wear on a daily basis?

From this experience, Julia highlights the difficulty of acquiring interviews in a well-known, rich, White community as she highlights that she got one interview by someone putting in a word for her. She described an instinctual feeling that seems uncertain to put into words, in which she knows she was not hired because of her foreignness. Having the last interview experience confirmed her instincts proved true for this interview. She continued to describe her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** related to this interview:

So, she said, “Your head attire, you need to wear that on a daily basis?” In my head, I was like, “*what?*” and then I said, “Yes, it is part of my religion. So yes, I do.” And once she asked something that is religious based, she couldn’t say, “*oh, you’re not, um, qualify for this position*” ... but I still didn’t get the job.

Julia shared more experiences working in another medical setting in rural Pennsylvania. She talked about navigating the aspects of her omni-relevant identity as she moved from the city and was viewed as an “out of townner.” She said,

I was literally the only minority until they hired another Spanish lady and in the office of 25 people. So not only did I have to struggle with being an out of townner because that’s what the locals called us. Then I had to struggle with being a Muslim on top of that ... they didn’t understand. “Why do you wear that thing on your head?” That’s everybody’s first question.

At this time, Julia describes always having to defend herself and that it became very taxing for her. She shared, “I was always defending and explaining myself for every little thing ... and Caucasian never have to explain themselves.” She talks about how wearing a hijab in the workplace has changed over time because of all the explaining she had to do on a daily basis. She says,

When I transitioned the other office, I said to myself that I’m not gonna cover conventionally—as in the way I wear hijab. Um, I was still covered. It was just like more it was more taught around my neck, and it was like a bun. It wasn’t the, the traditional way of wearing your hijab. So, I went from that to wearing an Erykah Badu style where you just kind of bun it in the back ... and nobody at work had anything to say about that.

Here, Julia is describing that she chose to wear hijab in a way that was perceived as less “Muslim” and, in doing so, she noticed less questions from her peers. She continues to explain that this choice did not value her and explains going back to wearing hijab more traditionally and the impact of the in the workplace. She shared,

I got tired of wanting to please people ... because I would still hear comments like “I don’t want her taking care of me,” “Can somebody else do my injection, or can somebody else do my intake?” It was mentally exhausting but then I got tired of saying that, I wanna be accepted by my peers or be accepted by my patients. And I was like, “no, no, no, no, no, no. <laugh>, I’m gonna be me!” And if they don’t accept me, then that’s their loss. This is not something that I haven’t dealt with before. I’ve been dealing with not being accepted my entire life and I’ve always pushed through it. I went back to covering the way I was supposed to cover.

So, my manager pulled me aside one day and said, “Hey, um, why, why all of a sudden are you covering like that?” And I said, well, “it’s my own personal journey. And I wanna do what I’m supposed to do for myself and for my religion, and this is how I’m supposed to cover,” and she was like, “oh, well, you know, I really liked the way you used to cover before.” Because the way I used to cover before it didn’t identify me as a Muslim. And it’s not that I didn’t wanna be perceived as a Muslim ... it’s that I didn’t want to constantly get the questions and always having to explain.

This encounter with her manager demonstrates the microaggressive comments that 2GMMAW face in daily life and Julia highlights, not only the journey of learning to live in a way that is accepting of herself but the aspect of presenting as a Muslim is an internal struggle that she continues to navigate; this is yet another aspect of the invisible load of Islamophobia.

Nicole. Nicole talks about her experience in requesting off for the Muslim holidays, Eid-ul Fitr and Eid-ul Adha. She called attention to how these holidays are not recognized on the traditional American calendar that does recognize Christian-based holidays. Because it is not recognized, she has to use her Paid-Time Off, which is something her colleagues do not have to do in order to celebrate their holiday. She shared,

I remember having to use my PTO to take off for Eid holiday. I don’t know what the ruling is on that or something of like, whether or not that’s like an excused religious absence where you don’t have to use your PTO. But I remember a friend who was in law school who was telling me, and she was most was telling me that like, “oh, like, why don’t you ask HR if it doesn’t have to be taken from your PTO, because this is like a religious thing.” So, I emailed the HR lady to ask and she just was like, “Nope, we don’t do that ... we only take off the standard holidays.” I tried to kind of like push her a little

bit to be like, what's the difference? And she's just like, "Nope, we don't do that. Nope."

So, I just used my PTO, and I just do that to keep going. There was no flexibility.

Nicole's experience calls attention to the policies in place that are common in the American workforce that dismiss holidays for non-Christian holidays. She explained more about her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** about this experience. In this instance, her behavior included advocacy; she shared,

I felt it is unfair. I think Eid was a holiday, I never really compromised on, but I always like did the right procedure to get it off ... whether it was from class or from anywhere. And I have friends who just like go to work on Eid, and I never compromised on it, but I always like went through the procedures. I just thought like this is just like an extra thing that's doable, but it's like unfair because other people, the majority of people don't have to deal with it. I don't wanna rock the boat too much because I don't know if it was worth it.

Taking off for holidays was something Nicole was familiar with doing from her school days; she noted that in school, it was seen as an excused absence, and she did not understand why the same principle would not be applied in the workforce. More specifically, she called attention to the privilege of co-workers who recognize Christian holidays. It is important to highlight that even though Nicole feels the process is unfair, she still followed procedure to practice this aspect of her faith. She also noted not wanting to 'rock the boat,' which demonstrates the tendency to people-please in the workplace.

Sandra. Sandra talks about several instances throughout her life in which she experienced Institutionalized Islamophobia. The first story talks about her experience in getting a job during college. She shares the complexity of navigating economics and how wearing hijab—

or rather not wearing hijab—was essential to her earning income and paying for her education. She said,

I was 19 and I really needed the job ... it was a really hard time and nobody would hire me because I never worked and there was a family friend referred me to a pizza shop. I went in for my interview and I was wearing my hijab and manager sat me down and said that she was willing to hire me if I took it off—keep in mind that I wasn't even like on the cash register, we're talking about the back of the kitchen, making the pizzas, prepping the stuff. So, nobody would even see me.

She said it so blatantly that I was telling myself, "She's probably saying that because it has to do with the hygiene problem, or the scarf will be an issue when I'm making the pizzas, or I'll get too hot in [the] back of the kitchen." Now, when I think about it now that I'm older, I'm like, wow, that's crazy that I was like making those excuses up for her in my mind. So, I permanently took it off because I needed to get a job otherwise, I couldn't pay for college anymore.

In this story, Sandra highlighted the intersection of economics, education, and her religion in procuring a job. At the time, she found herself rationalizing the hiring manager's request but now realized the absurdity of the request. Sandra shared another story about Institutionalized Islamophobia in her dream and journey to becoming a member of law enforcement. She shared a back story about being charged with a misdemeanor in one state and when applying to the academy in another state, which should not impact her ability to be admitted, ultimately leading to her not being admitted. First, she shared questions she would be asked during her psychological evaluation interview:

I was 21 when I started applying for the academy and by the time, I was 25, 26, I couldn't get into any other academy. They would ask me some weird questions on my psych evaluation like "You consider yourself a Muslim?" and I would say, "Yes, I am a Muslim." And so they would ask me questions—and I figured that these were routine questions—like, "So how can we expect that if there's a domestic violence call and one person's Muslim and the other person's a non-Muslim, how are you going to deal with that? And what if the other person is telling you to believe them? And are you gonna, are you gonna believe them?"

It was my fourth or fifth interview where I was getting a little irritated with these questions. And my—one of my family members is a police officer and told me, "They're just trying to irk you. They know where you're from, and they wanna see if you can handle that pressure." So, I sucked it up and ... I would smile and answer their questions and just go about it.

She continued to share her experience after the vigorous interviewing process and then finally being admitted to the academy; she said,

I got accepted and everything was good to go. First day of police academy, I show up, I have my badge, and my Lieutenant takes me to the side, and he's like, "We can't let you in." And I said, "Why not?" And he's like, "there's like a Texas Board of Police Commission, and they've decided that because of your misdemeanor, you can't be a part of the police academy." I couldn't even wrap my head around it. I said, "But I did all the research. Like this is just a misdemeanor, it's a traffic violation." And he tried to break it down to me, "In California, you have a class, A, B, and C misdemeanor, but it's not like that in Texas, and your misdemeanor comes under like something where we can't have

you here in the academy.” And I said, “But wouldn’t you guys do that in the background check where I was clearly stated that I was arrested for this violation? And wouldn’t you tell me that when I’m like before I buy my books and my uniform, I come the first day of class?” And he said, “Okay, You can do an appeal,” and then gives me a whole appeal process, tells me I need to speak to this Texas commissioner, this woman, and I need to call her, and I need to talk to her.

I get ahold of her, and I speak to her on the phone. And she’s just, she’s just shutting me down. Like anything I say like, “Okay, can we ...” She would say, “No, no, no,” and she wouldn’t let me even speak. And at the end, I said, look, “I’ve worked really hard to get here. And can you just tell me what I need to do?” And she said, “You need to wait three more years before you think about applying because in 3 years, that misdemeanor will count as 10 years on your record.”

Sandra shared her **thoughts, feelings, and behavior** during this situation. She talked about what it was to experience in the moments to follow, as well as looking back at the experience:

It broke my heart. It broke me because I worked so hard to fight my entire family for *this* moment to get into the police academy, to physically and mentally prepare myself to overcome my personal obstacles, to just be shut down at the very end—when I was at the finish line. I just went into depression after that. I know that I was depressed. I mean, the like not wanting to get out of bed ... not having motivation to even do anything, not knowing my purpose, just feeling really low about myself and I just didn’t know where to go. I put all this effort into something and I just didn’t know what I would do next.

Now that I’m a little bit older, I feel like it was God’s plan—it was meant for me not to be a part of that because the more I was exposed to information about what exactly the

police represent and what the community is like, I would tell myself like, *wow, did I really want to represent that? Is that who I am as a person?* And that actually started helping me healing ... and they definitely helped me like pick myself back up.

Sandra shared the emotional impact of this experience of Institutionalized Islamophobia which left her feeling depressed and uncertain about the future. In hindsight, she attributed this to Allah's plan as she realized her values and identity did not align with the institution, and this realization was helpful to her in overcoming her depression.

Ronnie. Ronnie shared an experience at the DMV in which she was getting her new driver's license; she noted the typical experience of waiting hours in line but also the interaction with the DMV representative who was insistent on seeing her hair for documentation purposes. She shared,

The man at the desk was an African-American older male, and he said, "What color is your hair?" and I said, "Black." He said, "Well, you have to show me your hair." I said, "No, I have it covered, and it's black." He kept insisting and said, "Well, for all I know, you could be a blonde, and I wouldn't know, so let me do my job."

As the conversation progressed, Ronnie described her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** related to this interaction. She said,

At this point, I'm about to cry because I'm just tired of this, and I said, "My eyebrows are black, why would my hair be any different?" I was so aggravated that I pulled out a strand of my hair and showed it to him. It definitely bothered me at that point but I was so fed up that I was sort of forced to abide by the law type of thing ... whereas it should have been an exclusion ... I should have stood my ground and it's not so much about

what I did that I'm upset about—which I am—but the fact that I was forced into a situation where I felt like someone used their power to make me feel inferior.

In what is typically a daily interaction, Ronnie described feelings of frustration with the system and within herself. She called attention to how power, which seems to be invisible, presented itself in the interaction between her and the DMV representation and leveraged in an Islamophobic manner.

Disciplinary Islamophobia

As outlined by Alimahomed-Wilson (2020), Disciplinary Islamophobia is the security efforts that “surveil, monitor target, and inculcate” Muslim women, which produces “gendered strategies of counterterrorism.” She notes that a “core feature of this domain is disciplining Muslim women to accept their collective subordinated position within society while simultaneously discouraging their heir agency and resistance to the ensuing inequalities they experience” (p. 661). Five of the nine participants noted experiencing Disciplinary Islamophobia, and their stories primarily involve encounters at the airport with TSA agents or witnessing the FBI interview their parents following 9/11.

Linda. Linda shared how her mother always prepared them when traveling to the airport. Her experience called attention to the element of the disciplinary domain in which Muslim women “accept their subordination in society [and] discourage their agency by not resisting.” Linda said,

My mom always knew, she's like, “Yep. We're gonna be randomly checked.” We might as well make sure that we're a couple hours early ... we just kind of accepted it ... It is what it is. Whether it's for safety reasons or they're discriminating ... they're just doing their job. It's not the TSA fault that they're profiling. They were taught to profile

<laugh>. It impacted us, but very little because of our mentality. Um, and I think again, like having that immigrant dad and the American mom kind of mesh kind of helped us like overcome those challenges.

Linda's experience also notes that being able to cope with the profiling came from her American mom as she prepared and rationalized why they were experiencing the random checks. Linda's **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** indicate that she understands the TSA agent's role, empathizes with their position, and is compliant during these searches. She said,

I understand a Muslim person would be upset because they're pulling them to the side ... but at the same time, I understand why the person is patting that person down, especially right after 9/11. If you see on TV that these people who 'look Muslim' are they're blowing planes up—and that's the only view you have—of course, you're gonna be scared of these people when you see them. I don't know if that's the correct way, but I mean that, that's how humans think, you know, if you have a bad experience with a certain race or a certain culture or a certain religion, and that's the only experience you would ever [be] exposed to, you're probably gonna prejudge the rest of the people that you ever come across until another person changes your mind.

If I'm ever pulled to the side or like patted down or for whatever reason, I mean, as long as it's a female, it's okay. I'm not hiding anything, and I'm not gonna blow anybody up.

Susan. During her time in college, Susan shared stories she heard from her fellow Muslim classmates. At the time, she wanted a safe place to pray at university; however, many of the young Muslim men were hesitant to call attention to themselves by asking for or establishing a Muslim Student Association on campus because they were fearful of being targeted and sent to Guantanamo Bay. Susan shared their fears:

These brothers told me what they went through ... the FBI literally raided their homes ... being followed. Yeah. They were fearful that they would be taken away. There are lot of Muslims that are still unaccounted for around that time and were unjustly imprison. Valid fears ... it's not irrational fears and even the FBI, NYPD, and other police forces have said they have pretended and sent converts into our communities.

This calls attention to how authorities used their power to incite fear in Muslim communities, causing them to be skeptical of new people in their communities. Susan talks about frequenting a particular masjid with her children, but they were informed the masjid was under investigation by the FBI, and her family was advised by fellow masjid-goers to refrain from coming to the masjid to avoid being investigated. She notes stories of Muslim men in their community being falsely accused, and that created fear in the community. Susan shared her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** during these times. She said,

I feel like my family shouldn't have had to make that choice. We loved going to that masjid. But out of fear of an FBI investigation and whatnot, we had to do that. I wasn't directly in any investigation, but that fear was always there, and then whenever any converts came into our inner circle, we were always fearful. "Is this FBI planned? Be careful what you say to them." I felt like I was betraying my community. I felt like I was falling into a trap, and I just felt like I'm betraying that masjid by not coming back to it. It just hurt that I had to do that.

Jennifer. Jennifer recalled a story when the police came to her home to question her father and grandfather. She noted that it was surprising because they had recently moved, and the FBI seemed to know their most updated address. She shared,

When we moved to our new house, the first thing my dad did, was put up a really large American flag—that’s not the type of thing he would ever do—but he wanted everyone to know that we supported America. And at that time, I was like, why is he doing this? But then I understood it afterwards, like many years after. My dad likes America, but he’s not patriotic. He had been living in America for about 16 years, and the FBI came and asked my grandpa and my dad and said, “Have you been to Pakistan? How long has it been? Did anyone try to kind of get you to join any terrorist groups?” They told them that they had obligations to this country to spy; they asked what masjid they went to and said if they see anything out of the ordinary, they have to report to the FBI. They gave their cards and said they’d be checking up. They didn’t check up after that. But they stayed for an hour and a half, just asking every little detail that they could to make sure that there was nothing.

Jennifer shared her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** surrounding this memory. Similarly to Linda, she demonstrated an understanding of the authorities “doing their job” while noting that the execution of doing their job was inconsiderate. She said,

I wasn’t feeling scared because I was taught to never feel scared of the police and that they’re here to keep us safe. I knew we’d done nothing wrong, so I didn’t think there would be anything to [be] scared [of]. And for a long time, I said, “Ooh, they were doing their job.” And, you know, even if you were doing your job, but even if you were doing your job doesn’t mean that it was right.

Nicole. Nicole talked about her father’s role as president of the masjid and talked with them about being surveilled after 9/11. She noted that this planted doubt in the community and fear of the FBI. She said,

Growing up my dad would always say that our phones were listening to us. I know that even when we were younger and like right after 9/11, I remember my dad talking like openly and he was mentioning how they were other uncles in the community talking about there being FBI contacting the masjid and interviewing them, just to see if there was new suspicious activity type thing. I think my dad mentioned FBI informants. So, I feel like that they always knew they were being surveilled.

Nicole also reflects on her own experiences related to a possible informant at Jummah prayers. She talks about having a seed of doubt because she could not discern whether the person was a convert or an FBI uncover agent; she shared,

I don't know if this was an actual informant, but I remember there was a White woman, she was wearing abaya, and I'd never seen her there before because I go there frequently and I know the Desi or Arab aunties. This woman just came up to me and she's like, "oh, do you come here often?" And she was, uh, asking me very weird questions like, "Oh, so like how frequently do you come?" It was just like very odd questions. And I swear she must have been an informant because I never saw her after. It was just so weird cause she was a White woman in burqa. And that, that you don't see that all the time. I think, if anything, it just felt like somebody is just looking for a mistake that you're gonna make.

But who knows, she could have been normal. I have no idea, but I felt hesitant.

Here, Nicole talked about the **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** in the process of trying to discern the person's intentions in talking to her. This demonstrates another aspect of the invisible load of Islamophobia as Muslim women are typically assessing daily interactions as either a threat or a genuine, inquisitive person.

Sandra. Sandra mentioned the general experiences with TSA agents as noted by other participants, and she elaborated on a particular time in which she felt that she was inappropriately searched when coming back from an international flight. She shared,

The way I was searched was not the way I was searched regularly. It was like, this person was touching parts of my body and making me feel extremely uncomfortable and I didn't even mind that when they searched my hijab, but it was like other parts of my body where it was just like, *is this necessary?* And I went through a metal detector, check my scarf, and a pat down is good, but *what is this?*—that was in my head. And then they take me to the side for questioning where a TSA officer starts to ask me questions about why I left, what I did when I left? And I didn't understand why he was asking me this question. So I asked him questions and I was like, is there something wrong? Like was I not supposed to go there? And he's like, "No, no, these are just routine questions."

Similar to Jennifer and Linda, Sandra has a certain level of understanding in being searched; however, she noted her **thoughts, feelings, and behavior** during this experience as confusion at the moment as she was being treated as if she had done something wrong. It is evident that Sandra accepted the fact that she would be searched; however, when she started to feel that the search was different from other searches, she contemplated in her head about the morality of the search. This is an example of how Muslim women "discourage their heir agency and resistance to the ensuing inequalities they experience" (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020, p. 654).

Hegemonic Islamophobia

Hegemonic Islamophobia demonizes Muslims in mainstream Western culture and justifies Muslim women's subordination by displaying controlling images of Muslims (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020). Eight of the nine participants shared their experiences with

Hegemonic Islamophobia, which seemed to occur in daily interactions with peers or strangers. These experiences capture micro and macro-aggressions toward 2GMMAW.

Linda. Generally, Linda shared how media of Muslim women are frustrating as it is then perpetuated on social media platforms; she noted that she often combats these narratives with an educational approach. Common questions that she found frustrating include, “Why are you wearing that? I can’t believe your husband makes you wear that; you’re probably so hot under that.” She noted that she is able to discern from someone’s tone if they are asking these questions in a genuine inquisitive manner—which she does not mind responding—or in an ignorant, aggressive manner—which is frustrating. She shared about a hegemonic Islamophobia experience when she was in the doctor’s office, and the receptionist, who was wearing a cross, was talking about her with another patient. Linda was wearing a black abaya and her hijab as she was coming from Jummah prayers; she said,

The lady said, “Can you believe this poor woman she has to wear this thing? I don’t mind that she’s wearing the dress, but why does she have to cover her hair?” So, I turned around, and I’m like, “Are you Christian?” and she confirmed that she was. And I said, “Do you know the Virgin Mary?” And she’s said, “Yeah.” Then I’m like, “Look at how the Virgin Mary was dressed. Was she oppressed? Was she made to dress that way? And did you feel bad for her?” Instead of answering, she looks at the person next to her and says, “I can’t hear what she’s saying.” So I’m like, okay, point taken, and then I just moved forward in line and went into my doctor’s appointment. I didn’t need to say anything, but if you’re visibly showing your cross, then you obviously know your background and that the Virgin Mary is a perfect example of how women are supposed to

dress—and you idolize her. So why are you looking down to me and feeling that I'm oppressed?

Linda's experience demonstrates her efforts to educate by finding common ground between both faiths; however, her efforts were dismissed. Linda shared more about her **thoughts, feelings, and behavior** during the experience. She said,

I really like to educate people ... I wear hijab because I chose to, and I tell them the reason behind hijab for me, um, and while I wear hijab and I wear it proudly, there might be a Muslim who's a hundred times better than me that doesn't cover. I feel proud ... like I feel happy that I have the knowledge to tell people and have the opportunity to share. I think that it also goes back to maybe she doesn't know, so let me say something. Let me teach her a little bit. Uh, let me, let me just give her a comparison, you know, so hopefully, in the future, she doesn't say that to somebody else ... I felt it was necessary for me to correct her.

In her experience, it is evident that Linda is a unofficial representative of *all* Muslim women—something inflicted upon Muslim women by society. What is interesting here is that Linda has reclaimed what it means to be a representative of Muslim women by means of dispelling stereotypes and challenging microaggressions by educating about Islam. This will further be discussed in the Implications for Social work Practice in Adaption Skills. She notes that being able to educate in these encounters is something that makes her proud.

Susan. Susan talked about an experience with her girl scout troop and noticed the increase in people's judgmental attitudes during the 2016 Trump vs. Clinton elections. She shares that her troop would set up in a common spot as other troops; however, they would not

make as many sales. She believes this was because her group was all young Muslim girls. She shared that they would regularly receive judgmental comments. She said,

We would be at the same location that another troop has around that time and we've noticed we don't get that foot traffic or monetary amount that other girls got. We're not doing anything different. We're not selling different products, but we just feel like we get marginalized and people don't wanna support us. Not that we are girl Scouts, but because we're a Muslim girl scout troop and I feel like a lot of people make that differentiation.

Susan talked about a particular encounter made toward her and her troop that left them feeling uncomfortable and unsafe. She shared,

So, I saw the uptake in people's attitudes—especially people who wear MAGA gear. A lot of them would pass by make snide comments ... and make rude comments. One person made it so uncomfortable. I just remember, he just came up to us and said, "Oh, why are you wearing that? You don't have to wear that. Tell your dad you don't have to wear that" [to one of the girls]. He asked what countries we're from, why don't we go back to our country. Why are we here ... all kinds of things, and he says, "Why can't you guys talk to me, answer my questions. Why do people wanna, bomb and kill all Americans? Why do you guys wanna bring Sharia law here?" He was saying the nonsense things to hear spouting on TV, on news and stuff. He gave us a dollar bill that said, *Make America Great Again* and said, "Well, here's something for you," rudely and just left. We ended up packing up and leaving for the girl's safety. So just having all of those things around us has just made me want to pray less out in the open just for safety reasons.

Susan's experience is a clear demonstration of hegemonic Islamophobia that controls the image of Muslim women, portraying them as subordinate to the Muslim man as well as Western society. She shares more about her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** during these circumstances. She said,

I just felt uncomfortable with the way the questioning was happening. At first it was just anger inside ... I have a naturally loud voice and when I get upset, my voice gets higher, and I might come off as more aggressive than I actually am. So just try to remember, *don't come off as too aggressive*—and that's the other thing I don't understand—when women speak loud, we're considered aggressive. Sometimes there's just anger that things not changing and other time it's just tired. Complete exhaustion from doing so much and just not having the capacity to take care of everything else And, and, you know, like when you're overwhelmed with too many things, you have to the most important thing and sometimes community work act, activism work has to take a back door to just your family.

Susan's experience speaks to the invisible load of Islamophobia as well as the mental exhaustion of Islamophobia—both further discussed in *Implications for Social Work*. Like Linda, she also calls attention to her self-awareness of how she is communicating to not be perceived as “too aggressive” during an interaction. Susan also shared that she shared her troop's experience in the group leader's Facebook group noting her frustration, and some of her fellow group leaders commented, inquiring, “Why are you creating a problem? You're creating division. The guy just wanted to give a tip to the girls.” She noted this response from her peers felt like gaslighting their feelings and experience.

Jennifer. Jennnifer talked about the hegemonic Islamophobia that she faces on the Internet; she noted that she posts on TikTok regularly, and she mostly has Muslim followers. However, she notes that she still gets random comments like “you’re oppressed” from non-Muslim followers. She shared her thoughts about why she gets comments:

People—especially on the Internet—just assume that women are oppressed because they wear hijab because they cannot fathom that a woman would want to cover herself ... because in the western society, it’s the absolute opposite where they try to uncover more and more, and it’s considered more confident in your body. They don’t understand that ... we do it for the sake of God. And I feel like there are, um, very few instances that I personally know of where the man of the family forced their daughters or their wives to do it. For example, my mom did not nor do any of my relatives. So for them, It’s just crazy to them that why would a woman choose to cover up her beauty, which is kind of your hair because they like to show off their beauty.

Jennifer called attention to how the media fails to acknowledge the context of Islam principles and, instead, focuses on details of a concept that casts Muslims in a bad light. In talking about her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** related to social media comments, Jennifer shared that when she reads comments on her personal page, she does not respond to them because “you can’t change them with a reply—their thinking is so the way they think is so like deeply embedded in their brain that you just change it with a comment.” However, she does if she sees an ad or a more public page with Islamophobic content or comments. She described,

I get a bit defensive of my religion because what they say is not true. I also try to educate, and a lot of times and if the person is truly like ignorant, they’ll try to understand and say, “Oh, I didn’t know it was like that.” But a lot of times people just troll. If a person does

not wanna be educated on the subject, there's not much you can do if they're not open to discussion.

Jennifer demonstrates a certain level of acceptance for the reality of the situation. Acceptance here indicates knowing when it is effective to engage in conversation versus when it is not; this has come with several years of experiencing and navigating Islamophobic interactions.

Makayla. Makayla shared an experience in which she was shopping with her mom and a lady for her help in finding a shirt. When helping her, the lady brought up her faith, Christianity, and proceeded to give Makayla a “spiel.” At this moment, Makayla noted that she just listened to her and then tried to connect with her by finding common ground—similar to Linda’s experience. Makayla said,

One of the best ways to connect with Christians is to acknowledge that we both believe in Jesus ... but a lot of Christians are prepared for this answer now. So, they’ll talk about how their belief in Jesus is higher because they look at him as the son of God. And we just look at him as only a messenger. So, she came at me, and she was like, “how would your mom feel if I told her that you weren’t, that you weren’t her daughter, that you were just the messenger?” And I said, “My mother would be proud because being a messenger of God is a higher rank than being the daughter or is the son of anyone.” She said, “oh, I know you’ve been in this religion for maybe 20, 30 years.” And I said, “No, I’ve only been in this religion for a few years because I converted to Islam. I used to be Christian.” So she said, “Oh, I don’t have to worry about you. You’re just a little lost right now, but you’ll find your way back.”

This story highlights people’s assumption that because Makayla covers, she has been practicing for many years, which is another aspect of the Invisible load of Islamophobia for reverts.

Makayla also shared another experience in which she used a similar approach to educating the person about Islam and noted that in this encounter, the person was more open and receptive to her perspective. She shared,

I was helping my friend to re-pin her hijab and there was this woman who was sitting in the seat across from us. She was not very aggressive or impolite tone—I think she thought that she was saying something that would be in our favor. She said, “I wish I had a scissors to just cut that right off of you.” I do think that she was coming from a place of good intention. My friend got very upset ... body, language wise, she looked like she was about to, to say something aggressive, but I just started speaking to the woman. I was just like, “Why would you say that?” And I ended up having a conversation with her in which she felt like hijab was so oppressive to women ... that it benefited men to have women so subservient. Mm. And I was actually able to educate her on women’s rights and she got off on her at her stop with a smile on her face. And she was like, “Thank you for letting me know.”

This experience shows that every encounter is unique and that Makayla similarly broached each conversation by trying to provide education and dispelling stereotypes around Islam. In talking about her experience and the related **thoughts, feelings, and behavior**, Maykayla calls attention to the Adaptation skills of 2GMMAW (further discussed in Implications of Social Work Practice). Makayla said,

I would definitely say I was taken aback because my focus was on finding her the shirt but I’m not really surprised. There have been many instances where I’ve used an Islamophobic encounter as ways to educate many people that come across with a judgment or criticism. Many people come across with a criticism with some type of

aggressive comment or insult. They really don't know much about Islam ... many of their encounters are just what was on TV, and that's surprising to me living in New York City because New York City is very highly populated with Muslims. I feel privileged to have the kind of knowledge that I have, to stay patient, and to educate. I'm not trying to change anybody's mind. I'm not trying to get that person to become Muslim. I'm just trying to say the way that you just attacked me; it was unnecessary. There was no need for that aggression. With the lady who made the hijab comment, there was just that feeling of like, you know what, I know my religion, I know what I believe in, I'm going to explain it to someone—she actually gave me the opportunity, she didn't speak over me, and she asked questions. And I was able to also educate my friend on the importance of the knowledge and why it's so important for Muslim women to be aware. I didn't feel like that was an attack.

Julia. The stories that have been shared thus far are encounters with strangers; Julia highlighted instances of Hegemonic Islamophobia with people who know her either personally or professionally. She talked about comments made by some of her coworkers, who have known her for 4-5 years; she shared,

This was when everything in the news was about ISIS. One day, one of the coworkers came to me and said, "If I didn't know any better, I would say that you could be part of ISIS." And I was like, "what?" And the other coworker—who, I thought that we were good friends. And I thought that they knew me—she turned in and jumped in and said, "Yeah, because what if you were hiding a, a bomb under that under your headscarf?"

Julia was surprised at these comments because she was under the impression that her coworkers knew her. However, as noted by several other participants, the media has heavily influenced the

manner in which they perceive Muslims. This demonstrated that no matter the personal connection, the media has a strong influence on how people perceive Muslims, and they may not challenge these ideas because of a personal connection. Julia shared her **thoughts, feelings, and behavior** during this experience:

I just thought, *oh my gosh, you don't know me*, and I said this to them—"You guys sound real ignorant. We've worked together for 4 or 5 years. I've been to your house, you've been to my home, we've been out together going out to dinner, and you guys don't know me." That was, that was such an eye opener that no matter how much I'm always going to have to fight for the person that I am, not just for my religion, but for the person that I am.

Julia called attention to another element of the Invisible Load of Islamophobia as she was not seen as a human or friend to her coworkers; rather, their idea of her was clouded by stereotypes, fear, and ignorance based on the media.

Nicole. Nicoles shared an experience with one of her co-workers in which she had to explain the wisdom behind Muslim women not fasting during the month of Ramadan when on their cycle. She noted this usually happens at work, and she has to dispel White feminist-based views of equality. She shared,

I remember a coworker noticed I'm not fasting Ramadan and I was on my period. And you're explaining that it is a break for Muslim women. The immediate reaction always is like, "Oh, isn't that sexist?" I think in the beginning of like, when I first started experiencing that, I was like, you know, I don't think so. And then I, I kind of like did my own research and kind of now know this is a relief for women ... you're going through so much pain and it can be difficult, so it's actually a big blessing. I think because

everybody perceives or some people perceive Islam as just oppressive towards women.

And I feel like that the impression when people have and then they're like that's sexist.

Nicoles's lived experience highlights an important element of the Adaption Skills of 2GMMAW: taking it upon herself to learn the meaning behind Islamic practices. This is important because, often, Muslims grow up following practices without learning the meaning behind them. The adaption skill here is Learning the Roots of Islam (further discussed in Implications of Social Work). She also talked about another implication for social work practice around the Invisible Load of Islamophobia, which has also shown up in others' narratives.

Sandra. Sandra shared experiences from her childhood as well as adulthood that captured hegemonic Islamophobia among her peers. She talked about overt bullying and subtle microaggressions—both experiences influence the media and the portrayal of Muslims as either a threat or a victim. She talked about an instance in middle school:

I started getting bullied by these guys started with, “Hey, take that, rag off of your head” or called me rag head. That was like the first insult. I still remember ... it was just two guys that constantly would just be on my back. And, um, one day, I was sitting in class, and one of the boys pulled my scarf, and I turned around, and I slapped him in front of the whole class. That was the first time I think I actually like stood up for myself, and my teacher asked me to stay back, and once everybody left the classroom, and she asked me, “Why did you slap him?” And she was making it clear that she was taking me to the principal's office, and I told her he pulled on my scarf, and she just looked at me and she said “okay,” and she just let me go. And she didn't take me to the principal's office—I thought I was just gonna be suspended when I did that.

For Sandra, this encounter with her teacher was confusing because her parents taught her not to trust teachers and guidance counselors; therefore, she was confused as to why she was not reprimanded for her reaction. Sandra also talked about a recent conversation with her friend in which she was dispelling stereotypes of Muslim women by combating the ideas of White feminism. She noted that her friend was asking about Sandra's experience living in Saudi Arabia because of a recent movie she saw. Sandra shared,

My friend asked me, "Wasn't it tough? Like being there because females don't have their own life?" She said, "I watched this movie once, and this woman, she goes back home, and she gets married, and then her husband, like, doesn't let her go anywhere ... Oh my God, it is so scary. Did they do that to you?" And I was like, "No, they didn't. What are you talking about?" And she said, "Because after I watched that movie. I was scared for you." And I responded, "You didn't need to be scared for me." She said, "Isn't it like more conservative?" When she was talking, I found myself going through my mental process again ... like why do I have to always like prove a point? It starts with my mind ... you need to explain why that is not what Islam is, and you need to give them the right image, and ... you're against Hollywood, so you better make it good!

In each story, Sandra talked about the ways she has defended herself in different parts of her life. As a teen, she matched physical aggression with a physical defense, and as an adult, she matched verbal aggression with a verbal defense. She talked more about her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** about these experiences; she described the mental process that she goes through when assessing a situation; she said,

I started learning how to separate the way people would treat me. Like I started to categorize people like circling back to Islamophobia. If somebody had a problem with

me, that's the first thing where I would be like, *I don't know this person, I didn't do anything to them, they must not like Muslims, and now I need to have my guard up because this person does not like who I am. God knows what they're gonna do.* So now I have this wall up, and then it was this constant, just tiring thing of like wall up, wall down ... like one person's okay ... they don't seem Islamophobic, and it was really hard to make friends. It was difficult to connect with people sometimes because it was the cycle. I wanted to have those walls down. I wanted to meet different people that weren't like me but because we were always told to just stay away from anyone who is not Muslim, it was hard. And then at the same time, like, okay, these are kids that are my age and we have so much in common and I wanna be friends with them. But at the same time that distrust and your gut from being bullied is there and it's taught by our parents to be careful and to not trust. So, it was definitely tiring going through this constant up and down of the walls.

Sandra highlighted one of the Mentally Exhaustive factors of Islamophobia (further discussed in Implications of Social Work Practice), which involved the constant assessment of others. She noted the impact of these on her forming friendships and generally navigating the idea of trust. She also talked about her process with her friend and noted that she remains a source with whom her friend can ask questions about Islam. She shared their candid conversations:

I told her that I don't even blame her for thinking that because that's the only piece of information you have about the religion. And she's like, "I appreciate that you always like answer any questions that I have," because anytime she has a question like that, she'll call me and ask me, and I'll be happy to answer. But at the same time, that burden aspect of I need to make sure that I'm well educated about everything because there's so

many things that I don't know about Islam, but it's this constant ... like we're teaching we're, we're portraying we're, we're giving examples and, and it's like, sometimes it even interferes with, I feel like us being closer to Islam because we're so busy trying to prove what it's not that we don't even have time to understand fully what Islam is ... and it's a constant battle. It's a constant struggle. You're just trying to learn as much as you can, and then you're trying to be the best representation that you can be ... but just so much pressure.

Sandra outlined the mental and emotional process that is involved when demystifying Islam to non-Muslims. While she noted that she is happy to answer any questions, she also noted another Mentally Exhaustive factor in which she is always having to explain the same things that she is unable to explore her religion in new ways. This mentally exhaustive factor is coupled with the adaption skill of being a self-appointed representative, which encompasses knowing everything there is to know about Islam in order to demonstrate there is nothing to fear about Muslims to non-Muslims.

Ronnie. Ronnie talked about an experience at work in which her coworker asked about her clothing. In this interaction, Ronnie called attention to the ways 2GMMAW have to navigate conversations to dispel stereotypes placed upon them by media and White feminist values while simultaneously upholding the values of Islam, so they do not come across as “too strict.” She said,

I feel like every hijabi wants to make sure that everyone knows that we are not oppressed—this is my personal choice, this is what my religion instructs, but it is up to me. My father and my husband are not forcing it upon me, and that is rooted in the public from mainstream media. I wore a dress to work one day that was just printed, but it was a

normal dress that I got off of the Western website, and my coworker said, “Is that dress something from your culture?” Just because it wasn’t a typical dress that a normal western person would wear, even though I got it off a Western website ... It was seen as something from my culture because I was wearing it, and I am Muslim. It was extremely covered up and loose ... because the media often portrays us as covered and oppressed woman, people think we are not happy—when it’s quite the opposite. (Interview 104)

Interpersonal Islamophobia

Interpersonal Islamophobia refers to the “everyday experiences of Muslims, including the double sword of oppression that Muslim women experience with sexism in Muslim communities ... and focuses on the resistance of Muslim women within the matrix of gendered Islamophobia” (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2020, p. 654). An extremely important aspect of calling attention to is the idea of sexism in the Muslim community that all the participants faced is not based in Islam, but rather the impact of toxic masculinity rooted in cultural beliefs and mores. Eight out of nine participants shared their lived experiences with Interpersonal Islamophobia. It is important to call attention to the fact that many participants’ **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** were difficult to identify for them, especially those who spoke of general sexism in the community as opposed to a specific personal experience. This may indicate that the identification of the mental and emotional impact of sexism is normalized and can be difficult to articulate.

Linda. Linda shared her experience during her time as a teacher at an Islamic School. She talked about her qualifications for the open job position of vice principal and how she did not get the job. While they were looking for a vice principal, she fulfilled the role on an interim basis. She shared being overlooked for the job because she did not identify as male and explained this as a toxic trait of culture. She said,

I had the background knowledge, I was a teacher, and I was an interim vice principal, but I was never hired as a vice principal or a principal. Somebody else came into the community where their background in biology—it was not related to early childhood education at all. But because they were a male, automatically, they were hired as a principal. I'm like, *Why? I did everything, but they would never change titles of me.* And the same thing happened to one of my female coworkers—as soon as that person from outside came in, who had no background knowledge in education, they immediately gave them that title.

She elaborated on her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** during this experience. She shared that her behavior was motivated by her American-ness as she advocated for herself and challenged their decision. She shared,

That's where my American culture came in ... I was happy <laughs> that I said something, and I like wrote a long email about how it was wrong. And then I was like threatened that I would lose my job <laughs>. They're like *you can't talk like this to us and we cannot deal with the insubordination* and after all that, I decided to continue teaching for the sake of Allah, but I was to a point where I just closed the classroom door, I stayed as a teacher, and it kind of like put me away from the community. Because I do all of this and that culture aspect of it was unfair. I didn't even wanna hear the unfairness. But at the same time, I was teaching at an Islamic school, and I did commit to the children. So, I continued teaching at the school, but it's still—it hurts that at the same time I could change it, unfortunately.

In her description of the experience, Linda described that she ultimately continued teaching to honor her intentions. She demonstrated that while toxic cultural traits were unfair, her Islamic

values helped manage the situation as she refocused her attention on her intention of teaching the children. She talked about her feelings more in-depth; she said,

It was just complete sadness ... I didn't understand why it happened and just the fact that this person—I didn't care if they were female or male—had no qualifications or no business being a principal for the school. I just wanted to know why that person chosen instead of me. If you put my resume against this person's resume, what qualifications do they have that I didn't possess ... so just a lot of why? That led me to the email the school board, which led for trouble. So, I'm like, it kind of taught me a life lesson. Like sometimes things are not gonna go your way and those people are wrong, but you just do you and what, what makes you happy.

In talking about her feelings, Linda highlights Adaption Skill and factors associated with Mental exhaustion, both of which are further discussed in Implications for Social Work Practice.

Susan. In talking about her experience with interpersonal Islamophobia, Susan noted her experience is compounded by her identity as a female and as an Indian Muslim. She noted that she feels as if she has to prove the validity of her perspective on the women's committee and the executive committee for the masjid. She shared,

I'm a Muslim from India ... So, when I'm in these discussions, sometimes when I bring in my Islamic knowledge, they try to play it off as, I don't know enough because I don't speak Arabic. We were having a discussion in our executive committee So I was bringing up the thought process of why we should follow moon siting. And I brought up something my grandfather, who is a scholar, taught me and I can go back and find it in the book—it's a valid point. And someone else on the committee brought up that we

shouldn't follow culture or just follow what our grandparents did. And I think tried to dismiss that he's not a proper scholar.

Susan described having to justify his credentials of attending an Islamic University and fluency in several languages; she noted her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** associated with this experience (and many others like it); she said,

At first, I just anger inside so I was just trying to stem my anger ... but because my grandfather didn't go to an Arab School, his Islamic knowledge is not valid. So just feeling that and having to go through that a lot of times in these circles is hard to deal with. And then there definitely sexism ... like they try to compartmentalize the women and to just do kids, kids and food stuff and leave the other stuff to men. I do not do that in the committee ... I'm always vocal and I always tell them, I don't think this is right. I think they just kind of get tired of hearing me all the time, but I just wanna make sure we have that space and we talk further about it.

Susan's experience demonstrates how navigating aspects of her omni relevant identity shows up in the Muslim community and calls attention to the cultural and linguistic hierarchy displayed above in Figure 2.

Stacey. Stacey noted that the leadership at masjids has a great influence on the way in which women are treated:

I think how you are treated as a female depends on the masjid actually ... some masjids are very open. The masjid that I go to—the Imam is an American convert and he's very open to everything. Like we don't even have a separate prayer room for the women right now, so we all pray in one room, and it's, you know, it's very welcoming. But I guess growing up, the masjid with an Imam from Egypt, who did not understand America—

there definitely were some discrimination issues with women, and like I don't think they were very welcoming with having women in the board initially and had to fight to have their own events at times.

Stacey's experiences indicate that different leaders with different backgrounds, educations, and experiences cultivate different environments.

Jennifer. Similar to Linda's experience, Jennifer noted that the way Muslim women are treated is mostly rooted in culture from countries of origin, as she notes the masjid that is led by Islam encourages women's involvement and perspectives. She shared,

I feel like the men need to be in charge and they feel that women are not as smart. And it's crazy because of men that are smart and learn in Islam are the ones that encourage women to go and be on the boards and be involved and do this and try change the ways things are. They say we need more women's scholars so that they can debunk a lot of the false Hadiths and the Fatwas that have been put out there. It is starting to change ... there are more women that have been born here that are trying to make sure change. I do see a change in tide. But here is an example of how things still have a way to go ... like I think last week my friend sent me a text message and said, this is the women's side of the prayer room. It was literally all the furniture and junk that was just pushed into the women's side, but you'll never see the men's side like that because that's more important. It needs to be clean. It's very common, they're not respected even though it's just as important. And women's sections are always so small, even though they're the ones that have the kids. They just prioritize the men ... like if they're changing the carpets, it'll be the men's side first, because that always takes a priority.

Jennifer noted examples similar to other participants in the ways women are treated differently; she also called attention to the fact that change may be occurring because of the women who were born in America who are advocating the ways women should be treated based on Islamic values.

Makayla. Makayla's experience with interpersonal Islamophobia is similar to Jennifer's observation about allowed space for women. She shared,

I took a class at a particular masjid in Manhattan where they weren't very female-friendly as in the space for women was significantly smaller, and when we tried to move the partitions to make the space bigger for the sisters, we were met with aggressive behavior. The religious leader who was leading the class ended up leading the prayer downstairs in the basement where we were having classes, so the sisters could be comfortable.

Makayla continued to elaborate on women on the board, and her experience is similar to the manner in which previous participants described women as being limited to certain responsibilities. She noted this is more related to a culture based on people's country of origin, not Islamic practices. She shared,

Women on the board are not taken as seriously, I personally feel that way. A lot of the times a woman's voice is heard only regarding things for other women. Such as, if the sisters had a fundraiser ... So that'll be run completely by the sisters no problem. But if a woman were to mention something beyond 'sisters' responsibilities, that's gonna be met with some type of resentment and resistance. Given what Islam teaches us about the standard or the level that women have ... that they should be having, to me, these issues are cultural—not Islamic.

Julia. Like Stacey, Julia notes sexism in the Muslim community is influenced by the leadership and the Imam of the congregation. She shared,

The masjids that are run by Arab Imams—especially the ones from overseas—it’s old school. It is definitely like you’re seen, but you’re not heard ... and we don’t take into account what you feel as a Muslim woman or your opinion. So, I’ve definitely seen it.

She also talked about the tendencies of African American women in the masjid; she believes that it is the African American sisters of the community that advocate for change. She said,

The African American Muslim women who definitely do wanna be heard and they want their opinions to matter, especially when it comes to the Muslim community because the Muslim woman is a stronghold within the Muslim community. We are the ones raising these children to be functional, steadfast, strong, Muslims in the world. Um, so I do believe African American Muslim woman are very wanna be heard, especially within their community.

Nicole. Nicole shared similar sentiments to previous participants about the women’s section of the masjid being smaller, as the expectation is that going to masjid is “optional” for women. She shared a particular incident at Sunday school where an imam called attention to the way some of the young girls were dressing. She shared,

I remember in Sunday school, there was an announcement by the principal on the mic. He was a very nice guy, but I remember, I think he must have gotten complaints or something about girls in jeans. He told all the girls to wear less tight jeans in the masjid. You wanna be covered and that’s important, but I think it was just a very odd thing to hear an uncle telling girls to wear because all these girls are under 17. It was a weird moment. So, I think it definitely came up with clothes a few times.

Nicole elaborated that dressing in loose clothing is a value of Islam, and that was not really the issue, but rather the way she decided to give the message over the microphone and only direct what felt like shame upon the young girls. She noted that notions of shame are commonly embedded in the language and culture in other countries; she said,

Like it was an Islamic value, but the shame part was more cultural. I think I definitely, in that circumstance and even in other examples, it was mostly men in their criticism that I had observed—at least growing up. And that’s what I mean by, like maybe culturally it was executed, but the value was based in Islam. In cases where I did see any auntie bringing it up, it was always in private ... and that’s more Islamic, to talk to someone privately.

This distinction demonstrates what will be referred to as a Growth Factor and is further discussed in Implications for Social Work Practice. In reflecting on her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors**, Nicole shared that she was feeling self-conscious after the announcement was made. She also questioned why the younger boys were not called out for wearing short shorts and skinny jeans; she noted the double standard when it comes the clothing between the sexes is also based on culture, as it is common in her culture for males that “get away with more.”

Sandra. Sandra shared her experiences at two different worksites in which she was sexually harassed by her fellow Muslim co-workers. She reflected on an experience at her first job—that asked her to remove her hijab. She noted that she was working with four Middle Eastern Muslim men and that she was “pretty naïve because I thought that these guys looked at me as their little sister and that I was just one of them.” As she began to work regularly, she thought she was making friends with them because she talked to them the way she would talk to her brothers. A few of them exchanged numbers and wanted to be friends with her, and as

months passed, one of them expressed that he liked her; she did not return the feelings and noted that she was just friends with him. A few weeks later, she described when he made advances toward her and how she handled the situation. She said,

He locked me in the freezer, and then he came in the freezer and locked it, trying to make advances [toward] me. And I told him to open the door. And at first, I was just laughing it off, like as a joke. When he unlocked the freezer, I went straight to the manager, who was sitting outside smoking a cigarette. I was like, hey, this is what just happened. And he's like, "Well, what do you expect from somebody like you?" And I said, "What do you mean? Somebody like me?" And he is like, "Someone like you, someone who shows herself like she's something." So he was not basically implying that I was slut. He was more implying this because I was friendly with all the guys. I even like asked him to clarify, and he clarified for me. He said, "You're the kind of girl that goes around, and you will tease guys. And then, when they make a move, you'll step back, and this is what you deserve."

Sandra elaborated on her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** around this experience. She noted that she was second-guessing herself and questioning her actions; she said,

Here I am questioning myself. Like, *was I flirting with all these guys? What is wrong with me?* And I was just feeling like a terrible person. I just remember that day very clearly ... I went home, and I showered, and I just felt dirty. Like, I couldn't be—it was just a terrible feeling. I left there, and I actually thought of pressing legal charges when I quit, but I just never had the guts to the courage, and I would tell myself ... *I have no proof that he said that to me.*

In her mental and emotional process, Sandra describes one of the Mentally Exhaustive Factors (further discussed in Implications of Social Work Practice). She second-guessed her intentions and actions because her manager invalidated her feelings and experience. Sandra shared another experience that happened closer to the time she was engaged and working at another workplace that a Pakistani Muslim family owned. She noted her floor manager was related to the owner of the company. His interactions with her started as a helping hand when her car broke down, and then they advanced to inappropriate sexual advances as she continued working. She noted feeling increasingly uncomfortable and seeking support and guidance from people who had worked there longer than her. She was told that he often made advances toward the women, and if they didn't comply, he would use his power as a manager to make their life more difficult, such as giving them a more difficult schedule. Nothing would be said to him because his family owned the business. As the advances increased, her friend suggested talking to her dad, who also worked there. She shared this interaction:

So, I go to her dad, and I tell him everything, and her dad goes to tell me, in Urdu, “Child, you can only choose to be one kind of person. You can be this Western American girl, or you can be a Muslim Pakistani girl, and you cannot be both. So if people are gonna treat you that way treating you, then you cannot be this other girl when you need to be the—you cannot be a Western American and show yourself as a forward-thinking, American westernized girl ... you need to portray yourself as a Muslim Pakistani girl who's not gonna put up with that.”

By the way, I recorded the conversation—Being a Muslim Pakistani girl meant not being harassed. And being Western was speaking up for myself, not wearing hijab, speaking to men as equals, wearing jeans to work and a t-shirt, and being friendly with my

coworkers. He said that to me, and I cried a lot after, but I didn't let him see me cry. Like I tried to hold it in. I was like, I'm not about to let him see me cry. And then I walked out of there, and I told my friend what her dad said, and she started crying in front of me, and she's like, I'm so sorry. And I told her. "You're not your father."

After this interaction, she decided to file an official complaint with a timeline of events and witnesses of events and encouraged them to check cameras. She noted that upon coming to work after filing her complaint with the manager and HR person, she was locked out of the system and was escorted to a conference room. She was let go on the grounds that she made comments about Muslim, Pakistani men, and that was not part of the work culture. After leaving, she decided to file a complaint with the city for sexual harassment—the case is still pending after 3 years.

Sandra's experiences describe a Mentally Exhaustive Factor of Islamophobia—similar to Linda's experience—of navigating between what is perceived as the "good cultural Muslim girl" vs. the "westernized Muslim girl." Navigating this process will further be discussed in implications for Social Work Practice. Sandra shared how she was holding back her tears during the conversation, and she elaborated more on her **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** during this experience. She shared,

I was just baffled that he was treating me this way—and there were a couple other instances that I just don't feel comfortable right now talking about—but just the advances that he tried making at me, and I had it at that point ... I had this anger inside me ... like I need to do something about this.

In talking about her experience, Sandra realizes that it really was not just Pakistani Muslim men that acted this way as she recalled her previous experience involved men from other cultures. She elaborated that it is said Muslim men are the problem, but it is really the culture in which they

grow up; the commonality between all of them is being a Muslim man. Labeling it as “Muslim men” is an inaccurate way to describe the perpetrators in these situations because it is not Islamic behavior. She shared,

Now that I think about it, I think it’s more of the cultural part of it. And that’s just based on like my experience because it wasn’t Muslim men ... it was Afghani, Kurdish, Pakistani men. Like every time I’ve had to deal with that within our community, it’s more on the cultural side. I mean, there’s nothing that religion has to do with it.

Shockingly ... I am saying it out loud to myself ... um, it’s crazy that it, actually, we say that these are Muslim men, and we say that, but their thoughts and behavior reflect more of definitely the culture side.

Figure 4 captures the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes of 2GMMAW during Islamophobic encounters.

Figure 4. Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavior Process During an Islamophobic Encounter



CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

The primary purpose of this study was to call attention to how 2GMMAW experience Islamophobia with an emphasis on the mental and emotional process. It is important to highlight that this study is not intended to add to the “struggle” of a marginalized population but to call attention to how they uplift Islamic values as they navigate their personal identity and identity concerning societal expectations (Western and Eastern). Utilizing the *Doing Difference* theoretical framework allowed for in-depth analysis of individual aspects of their omni-relevant identities. From the themes that emerged organically, I have discerned the following interpretation of the data and noted these as significant elements that 2GMMAW experience because of Islamophobia. This section highlights the role of differential consciousness, intrinsic knowledge, and ways of being in the world that 2GMMAW have established and evolved. This will be discussed under the following headings: Growth Factors, Islamic Protective Factors, Adaption Skills, and Mental and Emotional Exhaustive Factors.

Growth Factors

The term Growth Factors refers to elements of participants’ identities that promoted personal growth and played a role in their experience in navigating Gendered Islamophobia. Growth factors discussed include Motherhood, Unlearning Culture and Learning Islam, and their Revert Journey that has aided in their ability to cope with Islamophobic interactions.

Motherhood

Seven of the nine participants were mothers, and each talked about their experiences of parenting their children, noting that it may differ from their parents because of their experience post 9/11. Aspects of being a mother that motivate growth are often described as a paying it forward narrative in which 2GMMAW are *doing* the work of explaining Islam so that their

children may have to do less of it. In addition to explaining Islam to non-Muslims, participants also talked about nurturing Islam as an empowering part of their child's life. This was noted as participants described having to learn Islam independently, as it may have been interwoven within Western and Eastern cultures. Participants also noted their intentional efforts of being a safe haven for their children, in which they can have open dialogue and conversation about their experiences related to their Islamic identity. The significance of these findings indicates that 2GMMAW experiences with Islamophobia have influenced their personal development in their journey of parenthood to (a) pay it forward to their children, (b) cultivate Islam as an empowering element in their family, and (c) be security to their children in developing their Islamic identity and discuss their experiences with Islamophobia.

Unlearn Culture and Learn Islam

After 9/11, several participants described the necessity to learn the true values of Islam that are unpolluted by cultural values—both Eastern and Western culture—to dispel myths and stereotypes prominent in media. This Growth Factor shows up in the participants' narratives in several forms, such as understanding how culture influences navigating daily life and interactions in general, specifically Islamophobic interactions. Unlearning Eastern culture presented different challenges than unlearning Western culture. As noted previously, for the participants who identified as Indo-Caribbean, Western values such as wearing a shirt and pants, not wearing a hijab, and shaking hands with the opposite sex were normalized. Therefore, learning Islamic values meant challenging Western values rooted in patriarchy and White feminism. Whereas with participants from a South Asian and Arab background, it was difficult to delineate their culture vs. Islam values because these were interwoven in daily life. The cultural ideas rooted in toxic masculinity and patriarchy upheld social expectations for women to

behave, dress, and speak in a particular manner. This was noted in participants' narratives describing the tension between "being the good Pakistani Muslim girl vs. the American Westernized girl" or "I have my American culture ... and then I have my Palestinian side." Here, we can see the interwovenness of women's 'goodness' being measured by American and non-American cultures overlaid with being Muslim. Given this intersection, possessing 'goodness' is often associated with the non-American aspect of 2GMMAW identity. This highlights how omni-relevant identities present navigational difficulties in combining one's cultural and Islamic identities as if they are the same. The language around 'goodness' is commonly employed and can make it difficult to dismantle the patriarchal views rooted in culture. We also see this language in the section on Interpersonal Islamophobia as participants shared sexist interactions in the Muslim Community using language like "Middle Eastern Muslim men" or "Pakistani Muslim Men." Several participants noted that the sexist interactions are not rooted in Islam, but it was difficult to refrain from combining cultural identity + religious identity + sex. Because of this, I posit the idea of the fourth domain of Gendered Islamophobia to be reexamined or expanded upon and centralize that the patriarchy in Muslim Communities is rooted in the culture/country of origin, not Islam. 2GMMAW are also uniquely positioned to understand patriarchy in both the Eastern and Western world, which is often done in daily conversations of either explaining their culture to Americans or explaining American values to their families. Whether it's aspects of participants' Western or Eastern identities, the process of unlearning was a commonality between all participants as they noted finding sense in Islamic values to navigate Islamophobia.

Revert Journey

Being a revert to Islam was another organic theme that emerged during the interview process. As noted previously, Makayla and Julia reverted in their young adulthood and noted their experience involved exploration, being inquisitive about Islam, and comparing it to the religions they have already practiced. The revert experience is noted as a Growth Factor since reverting to Islam involved introspection and the courage to learn about Islam in post-9/11, despite the negative media. Because of their inquisitive nature about Islam, when confronted with Islamophobic encounters, both participants noted that they had done extensive research, taken classes, and learned from fellow Muslims about the values of Islam; therefore, navigating Islamophobia encounters often result in answering questions they may have themselves at some point of their revert experience.

Islamic Protective Factors

Islamic Protective Factors refers to practices, values, and beliefs of Islam that aid 2GMMAW in navigating Islamophobia. Many of these protective factors are daily practices for Muslims that involve a process of self-reflection in order to increase their connection with Allah (*Subhanahu wa-ta'ala*). Because of daily practice, the narratives shared by 2GMMAW indicate their mind and heart have been conditioned and grounded in the connection to sustain their mental health. It is important to note that this does not mean they do not feel anger, frustration, or any other feelings during an Islamophobic encounter, but rather they have the skills and ability to navigate the encounter either during or after it has occurred.

Practices and Beliefs

As noted, daily practices sustain good mental health for 2GMMAW. These practices include offering daily salat (prayers), giving zakat (charity), and being involved in the

community (non-Muslim and Muslim). Beliefs that are interwoven in these practices include believing in the Afterlife and Allah (*Subhanahu wa-ta'ala*), belief in and learning from the stories of the Prophets (peace be upon them), and understanding that good mental health is promoted in Islam. Belief in the Afterlife and Allah (*Subhanahu wa-ta'ala*) is a motivation that the goal is to achieve Jannah (Heaven) and that this life is temporary, and many participants noted that experiences that happen—good or bad—are part of Allah's (*Subhanahu wa-ta'ala*) plan to aide in achieving this goal. Grounding oneself in this belief can sound like “I remind myself that I don't care what other people think because I am getting the blessings ... if I hold my tongue ... I'm doing it for the sake of Allah” (Jennifer). Part of this belief also understands that human knowledge is limited and may not always understand an experience; this was noted as a reminder by participants as a notion of the trust put in Allah (*Subhanahu wa-ta'ala*).

Leaning on the stories of the Prophets (peace be upon them) also helps in dealing with Islamophobia, as participants noted the many hardships they faced during their time. Accepting that sustaining a healthy mental state is part of being a practicing Muslim was also noted as a belief. This was described as equating physical practices with cognitive engagement with one's faith; this was described by Makayla when she shared the functions and purpose of prayer. It is evident that 2GMMAW noticed how basic beliefs of Islam were emphasized in the “doing” part of worship. While noting the importance of that, 2GMMAW have also cultivated and married it with cognitive and emotional ideas of worshipping. This has led to a generation striving to achieve and sustain healthy mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being by leaning on the tenets of Islam.

Adaption Skills

Adaptation skills refers to the techniques and mindsets used by 2GMMAW in navigating Islamophobia; it is important to recognize that a combination or none of these skills may be used in any given Islamophobic encounter, and it varies based on the individual. By no means is this an exhaustive list of skills, but rather common skills shared by this study's participants, including Being a Representative, Assessment, and Humor.

Being a Representative

Being a representative of Islam has come with unique circumstances. One could argue that this role was inflicted upon 2GMMAW following the political climate and media coverage after 9/11. Participants mentioned this, noting things like, "you are up against the media"; however, many participants described *wanting* to demystify Muslims. The efforts to combat stereotypes in media involve building a connection in the Islamophobic encounter that would lead to that person challenging stereotypes of Muslims. Wanting to dispel stereotypes and taking on this responsibility sounds like, "I wanna show you what Islam is, not what Muslims are—it's always misinterpreted because people judge Islam on Muslims" (Linda, Interview 100). Here, we can see that Linda and other participants believe that non-Muslims who form a judgment of Muslims based on the actions they hear about in the media would afford 2GMMAW the same courtesy and think about Muslims positively. I would also like to recall Julia's story of facing Islamophobic comments from longtime coworkers. She noted surprise and was shocked that even though she has a personal connection to them, it did not transfer to their thoughts of Muslims. Rather, people's fear triumphed over a personal connection. Participants who wear hijab noted taking on the responsibility to be a representative mainly because the hijab is a distinct marker of Islam. Each person noted they are the same person with or without hijab, but

how people perceive them differs. Characteristics and mindsets of being a representative showed up in the following ways: being open to questions, being mindful of one's behavior and reaction in case it is the person's only encounter with a Muslim, and the belief that personal connection would dispel stereotypes formed by the media.

Assessment

One major adaptation skill that 2GMMAW have embraced is the ability to assess a situation. This assessment happens very quickly, and the intention is to gauge if the situation is coming from someone with (a) good intentions vs. bad intentions, (b) being mindful of one's behaviors and tone (being friendly and kind vs. being direct and harsh), (c) if the person is open or closed to the conversation, and (d) if the situation is safe vs. unsafe. Sandra outlines her cognitive checklist to assess the intentions of the person, the safety of the situation, and assessing her role in the encounter. It is also important to note that she noticed the time she spent on this cognitive assessment decreased over time because of getting older and the frequency of Islamophobic experiences. Another aspect of assessment is knowing when you can or cannot carry on a conversation with someone. Several participants shared learning the difference between talking to someone who is willing to listen and learn versus someone who is unwilling to do so. Therefore, part of the assessment process can be accepting the person for who they are and knowing that there is no control over the outcome of the situation.

Humor

Throughout the interview process, in sharing their stories, several laughs and sarcastic comments were made when sharing their experiences and how they coped. It seemed to be instinctual to process Islamophobia experiences, as many times, participants were taken by surprise by the comments and situations they experienced. Once able to process the situation, the

participants could step back and assess their true feelings at the moment. Sandra explained it when she said, “I know that we tend to laugh about it, to cope with like all the things that we’ve gone through ... but all jokes aside, I was angry, like really, really angry.” Humor is sometimes a reflex response for some 2GMMAW to adjust to the situation or conversation and then try to analyze the disbelief and subsequent feelings during an Islamophobia interaction.

Mental and Emotional Exhaustive Factors

Another important notice in the interview process was the participants’ perspectives on whether Islamophobic interactions take a mental and emotional toll on them. It was interesting because when asked directly if they found these experiences mentally or emotionally exhausting, some participants said that it was not the question; however, in sharing their experiences, it was not uncommon to hear things like, “[it] gets tiring being treated like you’re invisible but also a threat” (Sandra, Interview 108), “It gets tiring, but I know this life is not permanent, and that keeps me going” (Jennifer, Interview 103), or “It got really hard when I had to watch my daughter go through it” (Julia, Interview 106). Each of these perspectives speaks to the complexity of the mental and emotional experience of 2GMMAW in navigating Islamophobia as there is an exhaustion that is difficult to define, but there is also an openness to the experience as they are grounded in Islamic principles to cope and adapt.

Implications for Social Work

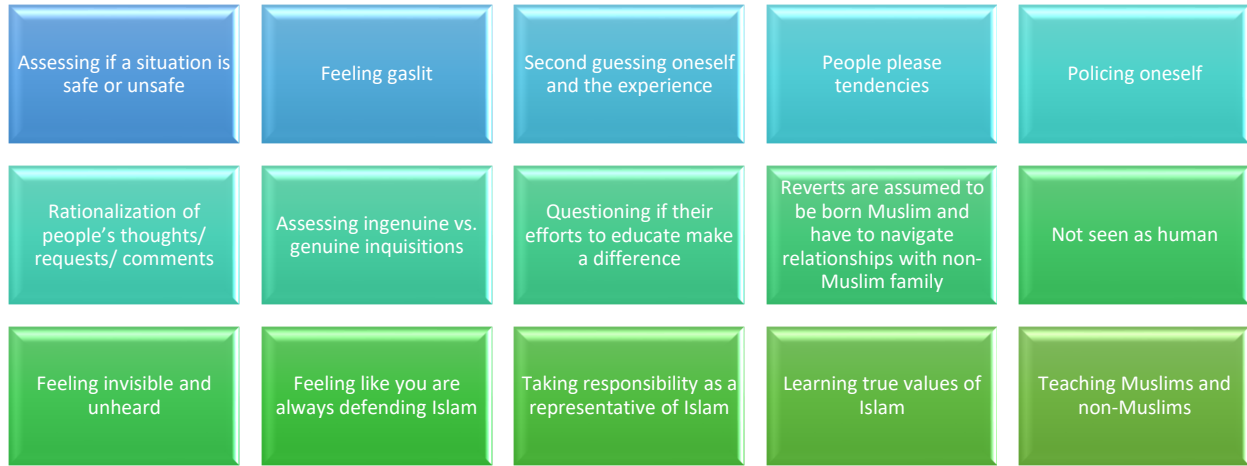
As Chapter II outlined, the professionalization of Social Work education, practice, and policy has excluded religion from the teachings rooted in evidence-based practice. However, there have been recent discussions to include spiritual and religious identity as part of being culturally responsive social workers. Nevertheless, the lack of instruction and guidance on incorporating religious and spiritual beliefs into education, practice, and policy has yet to be

defined. For 2GMMAW, I discuss important aspects to consider in working with this population that may be transferable to other populations. This section highlights important considerations in working with 2GMMAW, which may be transferable to other populations. These considerations are known as (a) the Invisible Load of Gendered Islamophobia, (b) the Merry Muslimah, and (c) Religion in Social Work.

Invisible Load of Gendered Islamophobia

The Invisible Load of Gendered Islamophobia captures practical, mental, and emotional processes that are common in the lives of 2GMMAW as they navigate Islamophobia. This list was culminated based on the narratives provided during this research process. It is certainly not an exhaustive list, nor does it only apply to 2GMMAW, as other populations of Muslims may have similar experiences. The Invisible Load of Gendered Islamophobia refers to the cognitive, emotional, and physical experiences of 2GMMAW during an Islamophobic encounter. While they may be triggered during these interactions and trying to process their emotions, 2GMMAW also aim to maintain a composed presentation of themselves, not to feed any stereotypes associated with Muslims. Elements of the Invisible Load are captured in Figure 5, influenced by participants' narratives around their **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** related to experiences with Interpersonal, Hegemonic, Institutionalized, and Disciplinary Islamophobia.

Figure 5. Invisible Load of Gendered Islamophobia



The Merry Muslimah

The Merry Muslimah describes the natural tendencies of 2GMMAW to be kind, outgoing, open, etc., that they become increasingly aware of during an Islamophobic interaction. Depending on the interaction, a Merry Muslimah can be internally managing a range of emotions but aim to present as *Merry* as possible in order to demystify Islam to non-Muslims. In describing their approach during Islamophobia encounters as well as describing their perspective of being a Muslim woman, several participants noted “being nice.” It was noted there is a personal commitment to work towards the kindness that is naturally part of them as it is also a virtue set forth by Prophet Mohamed (peace be upon him). As a byproduct of their personal aspirations, during Islamophobia encounters, 2GMMAW describe a heightened awareness of how they are talking to others. As Linda stated, “I need to present myself with good character—being kind, be non-judgmental, using nice and kind words, always smiling and being open to all people, especially living in America” (Interview 100). She continues to describe that this is her natural personality; however, during an Islamophobia interaction, she becomes increasingly aware of the attributes. This idea of the Merry Muslimah also shows up when participants said things like, “I could be the only Muslim that person meets, so I want it to be a good interaction”

(Interview 103). Participants also noted that while it was their natural tendency to be merry, it can be difficult during Islamophobic encounters because they are managing other emotions, such as anger, frustration, disappointment, etc.

Religion in Social Work

As reviewed in the literature review, there is hesitation to incorporate religion and spirituality in social work as it is often associated with rigid beliefs and values. However, to move toward a more culturally responsive approach, I encourage social workers to think with a more open and fluid approach that uplifts with religion and spirituality in the context of the person's lived experiences.

Implications for Future Research

Findings from this study indicate several opportunities for future research derive from narratives provided by participants as well as utilizing the findings to apply to other populations. It would be reasonable to investigate the Invisible load of Gendered Islamophobia when talking to populations beyond 2GMMAW. For example, this study included two reverts; a future study could explore how the Invisible Load is nuanced for the revert experience. Several participants noted their experience might be different than their siblings because they are the oldest; it is an unspoken reality in the immigrant community that the oldest sibling takes on additional practical, mental, and emotional responsibility for the family. Therefore, replicating this study with a focus on the oldest child of immigrant children would be beneficial as focusing on this omni-relevant identity would call attention to the distinctions of their experience, similar to the revert experience. Replicating this study with Black Muslim American women would also be insightful to call attention to the compounded gendered and racial experience. Participants for this study were located throughout the east coast—some in the south and some in the north. This allowed

for diversity in geographic location as participants lived in rural, suburban, and urban communities, and it may be useful to expand this study beyond the east coast. As noted by a participant who briefly lived on the west coast during 9/11 made it feel like she was a bit more removed from the experience as participants who lived in and around New York at the time noted it as a day that they would never forget.

Conclusion

Throughout this study, I presented the narratives of 2GMMAW and their experiences with Islamophobia. More specifically, I provided detailed insight into their mental, emotional, and behavioral process when experiencing and reflecting on Islamophobic encounters. While living in a post 9/11 America has presented its challenges, 2GMMAW have demonstrated the ability to adapt and develop coping skills independently. This study centered voices of 2GMMAW as the knowledge source of their lived experience with Gendered Islamophobia. This led to articulating the Invisible Load of Gendered Islamophobia and the intricacies of navigating aspects of their omni-relevant identities while combatting stereotypes imposed upon them by Western society as a victim *and* a threat. For Social Work, this study offers insight into the diversity of 2GMMAW and their unifying experiences in America.

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Participants Needed!



Recruiting for Second Generation Millennial Muslim American Women to share their lived experience about the impact of Islamophobia on their mental health.

Eligibility Requirements

- Self-Identify as a Muslim
- Millennial (ages 24-40 born between 1980-1996)
- Second generation American (born in America with at least one parent born internationally)
- Self- identify as female
- Comfortable speaking English
- Someone who has experienced Islamophobia
 - Definition: ethno-religious and racialized discrimination leveled at Muslim women from historically contextualized negative stereotypes that lead to individual and systemic forms of oppression

Contact for Primary Investigator

Aalih Hussein, LSW, PMH-C., PhD Doctoral Candidate (she/her)

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484-362-9456

Please email, text, call, or use the following QR code for screening



APPENDIX B: SCREENING SURVEY

Q1. Do you identify as Muslim?

- Yes
- No

Q2. Do you identify as a Millennial (born between 1980 and 1996)?

- Yes
- No

Q3. Do you identify as Second Generation American (you were born in the United States, and you have at least one parent born abroad)?

- Yes
- No

Q4. Do you identify as female?

- Yes
- No

Q5. Are you someone who has experienced Gendered Islamophobia?

Definition: discrimination leveled at Muslim women that lead to individual and systemic forms of oppression.

- Yes
- No

Q6. Are you comfortable speaking English?

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX C: DRAFT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Study Title: Impact of Islamophobia on the Mental Health of Second-Generation Millennial Muslim American Women

Primary Investigator: Aalih Hussein, Doctoral Student

Read to the participant: You are being asked to participate in this study because you identify as (1) a Millennial (born between 1980-1996), (2) second generation American, (3) self-identify as a Muslim, (4) self-identify as female, (5) comfortable speaking English, and (6) someone who has experienced Islamophobia. This study aims to learn about lived experiences of Second-Generation Millennial Muslim America Women and the impact of gendered Islamophobia on their mental health. Please note participating in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you have the right to terminate the interview if you change your mind during the interview process. If you agree to participate in this study, you will provide verbal consent for the conversation to be recorded. Additionally, you are not obligated to answer questions; you are invited to answer questions that you feel comfortable answering.

Purpose of the Research

You are being interviewed in this research study because this study aims to learn about lived experiences of Second-Generation Millennial Muslim America Women and the impact of gendered Islamophobia on their mental health. The purpose of this study is to provide a space for the diverse experiences of Second-Generation Millennial Muslim America Women to exist and provide awareness of how Islamophobia affects daily life.

Procedures

If you choose to participate in the interview, please know it will be a one-time semi-structured interview that will take approximately 60-90 minutes. You will be asked questions related to your experiences of Islamophobia, mental health, and identity. This interview will be recorded and transcribed. None of your identifying information will be included in the interview process, as you will choose a pseudonym for the interview process. Additionally, the audio recordings will be transcribed, de-identified, and verified. You will be invited to review a summary of the data collected for accuracy. The audio recordings and transcriptions will be kept in a protected cloud-based storage, Box, that is only accessible to the Primary Investigator and the dissertation chair. These practices are in place in order to protect confidentiality.

Risks

There are minimal risks to participating in this study. Please note you only have to share information that you are comfortable sharing. If a question is asked that may cause discomfort, you are not obligated to respond.

Benefits

There are no direct, personal benefits to participating in this research study. The purpose of this study is to explore an area that is not typically researched in order to learn about self-care among Muslim American Women.

Compensation

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Confidentiality

Your personal information and responses for this interview process will be kept confidential and stored in password-protected files on UNCG-Box server. Your identity will not be revealed during this interview process. The interview will be labeled using the date and an identification number. The data gathered from this study will be used to publish manuscripts and conference presentations. You will not be identified in the audio recording, transcription, or manuscript of the presentation. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Participation/Withdrawal

Please note your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There is no penalty for withdrawing from the study. It is also possible to skip a question during the interview process and participate in the research study.

Contact

If you have questions, please contact Aalih Hussein at a_husse2@uncg.edu or Dr. Sharon Parker at sdparke3@uncg.edu. If there are questions about your rights as a research study participant, please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351 or ori@uncg.edu.

Statement of Consent:

The informed consent has been reviewed with me. I confirmed that I am at least 18 years old, and I am voluntarily consenting to this research interview that is audio recorded.

Participants name:

Verbal Consent given over the phone: Yes No

Date: _____

Primary Investigator: _____

APPENDIX D: DRAFT OF DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. What is your current age? (Write in)
2. Where was your mother born?
3. Where was your father born?
4. How do you identify culturally?
5. What is your marital status?
6. What is your highest level of education?
7. What is your employment status?
8. Are you a revert of someone who was born Muslim?
9. What sect of Islam do you align with?
10. What other languages do you speak? (if applicable)
11. What are your pronouns? (for example, she/her, he/him, they/them)
12. How do you describe your sexual identity? (for example, heterosexual, bisexual, asexual)
13. Where did you primarily grow up?
14. Where do you currently live?
15. What is your socio-economic status?
16. Have you ever received mental services?
17. Have you ever received mental health diagnosis (i.e., anxiety, depression, etc.)?
18. On a scale from 1-5 (1: no distress; 3: neutral, 5: extreme distress), how much distress does experiencing Islamophobia have on your mental health?
19. Have you ever experienced worry, racing thoughts, anxiety, (etc.) because of Islamophobic experiences?
20. On a scale from 1-5 (1: not protective; 3: neutral, 5: very protective), do you think Islam serves as a protector of your mental health?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

Assalam Alaikum and welcome! Thank you all for taking the time to participate in my research study about the impact of Islamophobia on the mental health of Second-Generation Millennial Muslim American Women. My name is Aalih Hussein, and I am a Joint Ph.D. student of Social Work at North Carolina A&T State University and the University of North Carolina Greensboro. I wanted to take the time to give you some background about the study before we begin. Muslim American Women who grew up in post-9/11 America have a unique lived experience as we face discrimination, both in the form of microaggressions and macroaggressions. This study hopes to highlight those lived experiences and call attention to the impact of gendered Islamophobia on mental health while honoring the complexity of identity. Factors such as being the children of immigrants, growing up in certain neighborhoods, and how we present ourselves to society are all unique, and this study aims to celebrate the uniqueness of each voice. Please feel free to have a real talk and discussion because the intention is to learn and inform the literature about Muslim American women. You are being asked to participate as you have unique lived experiences as a Muslim woman; however, we each have different lived experiences based on how we portray ourselves, our cultural background, and other aspects of our intersecting identity, and some of the questions may ask you to explore those aspects of your identity. Let's Talk!

Research Question

What is the impact of Islamophobia on the mental health of Second-Generation Millennial Muslim American Women?

General Islamophobia

1. Now, I would like to talk with you about Islamophobia. How do you define Islamophobia?
2. How do you know you are experiencing Islamophobia?

Intersectionality/Doing Difference

3. What are things about your presentation as a Muslimah that may impact your experiences?
 - a. Wearing hijab
 - b. Presentation of being feminine
4. Do you think you "show up" differently as a Muslimah in different spaces? Such as in your home, school, work, the grocery store, or the park? If so, how?
 - a. How do you show up in a predominantly Muslim group?
 - b. How do you show up in a predominately non-Muslim group?
5. How do you think your cultural background/ethnicity impacts your experiences?
6. Do you think skin tone plays a role in your experiences? If so, how?

7. Do you feel like you face discrimination within the masjid? If so, how and what does that look like?
8. Do you think Islam is a protective factor to your mental health in coping with Islamophobia? If yes, how? If not, why not?

Millennial

9. What was your experience like growing up in a post 9/11 America?
 - a. What was your K-12 school experience like? How about college (if applicable)
 - b. What was your relationship with Islam?
 - c. What was your community like?
10. How do you think the Millennial generation deals with Islamophobia compared to the previous generations? How about compared to the upcoming generations?
 - a. Probe: Mental health/ intellectualization

Second Generation American

11. What is the impact of being the child of immigrants while navigating post-9/11 America?
12. Tell me about the ways in which you navigate a dual identity as American and _____.
13. Do you think being the child of immigrants contributes to other forms of discrimination? If yes, how so?

Gendered Islamophobia

We are going to discuss 4 categories of Gendered Islamophobia and your experiences with them. Please note I will provide the definition for each section.

The **structural domain focuses on institutionalized Islamophobia**, which is the exclusion and/or restrictions of Muslim women that lead to unequal outcomes in social institutions such as labor, education, family, media, politics, and the legal system.

14. Do you think you have had experiences with institutionalized Islamophobia? If so, please provide context.
15. During that moment, do you remember what you were:
 - a. Thinking?
 - b. Feeling?
 - c. Behaving like?

The role of the **disciplinary domain of power focuses on surveillance and the counterterrorism** security apparatus that surveils, monitors, targets, and inculcates a societal ethos of surveilling Muslims because of their supposed predilection to terrorism, including producing gendered “terrorist” profiles and gendered strategies of counterterrorism. A core feature of this domain is disciplining Muslim women to accept their collective subordinated position within society while simultaneously discouraging their heir agency and resistance to the ensuing inequalities they experience.

16. What experiences have you had with disciplinary and/or counterterrorist efforts?
17. During that moment, do you remember what you were:
- a. Thinking?
 - b. Feeling?
 - c. Behaving like?

The **hegemonic domain manufactures gendered Islamophobic ideology**, which provides the rationale for the demonization of Muslims within mainstream Western culture. The ideological justifications for Muslim women's subordination are rooted in controlling images of Muslims, including femonationalists.

18. What experiences have you had with hegemonic Islamophobia?
19. During that moment, do you remember what you were:
- a. Thinking?
 - b. Feeling?
 - c. Behaving like?

The **interpersonal domain** is concerned with the everyday experiences of Muslims, including the double sword of oppression that Muslim women experience with sexism in Muslim communities and gendered Islamophobia in public spaces, including violence. This domain focuses on the resistance of Muslim women within the matrix of gendered Islamophobia.

20. What experiences have you had with Interpersonal Islamophobia?
21. During that moment, do you remember what you were:
- a. Thinking?
 - b. Feeling?
 - c. Behaving like?