Muslim Women Resist: An Arts-informed Participatory Qualitative Inquiry

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MUSLIM WOMEN RESIST:

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Abstract

Every day Muslim women in the United States wake up to a harsh political world that attacks their identities, communities, and freedom. In this context, Muslim women endure immense psychological tolls on their sense of identity, safety, and relationships. For many of them, walking out the door and claiming their Muslim identity is an act of political resistance. Despite the disempowerment they may experience, many engage in social actions to resist these oppressive forces. Yet, Muslim women activists have received strikingly little attention in the psychological literature. To date, no research has explored the psychosocial experiences of Muslim women who engage in activism, nor the meanings they make of these engagements or their trajectories of resistance.

Using a participatory research approach informed by art-based inquiry techniques, this inductive qualitative study explored 10 Muslim women activists' trajectories into and experiences of engaging in social action. A constructivist theoretical model of Muslim women activists' processes of resistance and community liberation was developed through qualitative inductive analyses of in-depth interviews and participants' illustrations. Eight "clusters" have been configured to map a model that represents both processes and outcomes of how these 10 women engaged, experienced, and made meaning of their activism. They include: (1) living in a post 9/11 sociopolitical context; (2) navigating the Muslim community context; (3) internal experiences of being a Muslim woman; (4) guiding ideals toward activism journey; (5) development of political analyses; (6) resistance actions toward social change; (7) burdens and benefits of engagement in resistance; and, (8) supportive forces in the process of resistance.

Although only representative of 10 participants, the model is sufficiently theorized to suggest that life in a multiply traumatizing context shapes Muslim women activists' experiences,

precluding and contributing to their persistence and resistance throughout and during their engagement in social change work. Political analyses and ideals are vital in their descriptions of their trajectories of becoming activists. Benefits and burdens that are inevitable in social change work include both the thrill and fun of engaging in activism as well as the costs to relationships and conflicts inherent in such work. Finally, encouragement by other Muslims and allies is discussed as a valuable source of support to Muslim women activists. Limitations are discussed and implications are proposed to inform possibilities for future healing-centered research and action.

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"When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful." –Malala Yousafzai

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND STUDY OVERVIEW

#IAmMuslim. Mosques hosting blood drives. Protesting in the streets against violence and wars in the Middle East. Wear a hijab day. Creating "know your rights" hotlines for Muslims to call when they are profiled and surveilled by police. Each of these actions exemplifies how brave Muslim women stand up for their communities and combat stereotypes of Muslims in a terrifying political climate. Across the globe there has been a rise in ethno-nationalism (Bieber, 2018) and neo-fascism (Robinson, 2019). Alongside the rise in nationalism, anti-immigrant mobilization has taken form (Swain, 2019), including a rise in hate crimes and anti-immigrant policies globally (Schweppe & Walters, 2016). Muslims, regardless of their citizenship status or family roots in the United States, are seen as racially "outside" and are often perceived as foreigners (Iwama, 2018; Sáenz & Manges Douglas, 2015). They are among those most affected by the rise in violence, as evidenced by global anti-Muslim mobilizations including Christchurch in Australia (Poynting, 2019), Brexit in the United Kingdom (Redclift & Rajina, 2019), the Citizenship Amendment Act in India (BBC News, 2020), Rohinga killings in Myanmar (Schissler et al., 2017), and ongoing violence toward Palestinians in Israel (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014), to name a few. In the United States, anti-Muslim violence is on the rise (Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project, [IRDPUCB], 2016) with a surge in hate crimes against Muslims and increased structural policies targeting Muslims in recent decades (Kundnani, 2014).

In the midst of this anti-Muslim global climate, Muslim communities are mobilizing a diverse range of responses to these unjust and oppressive sociopolitical conditions. Muslim women in particular, have not sat idly by while their identities have been under attack. Instead, many have engaged in social action to resist and fight back against the anti-Muslim context

(Muslim Girl, 2019). This study focuses on some of their experiences; it resists the status-quo emphasis on damage-centered research (e.g., Tuck, 2009) so prevalent in psychological research on Muslims, and instead documents Muslim women's strengths and their political resistance to the anti-Muslim context in which they live. In this study, 10 Muslim women activists who live and work in the Boston area were interviewed between December 2017 and May 2018. This research project was designed as one among many responses to the rise in anti-Muslim violence in the United States.

The dissertation includes a discussion of multiple literatures that frame this qualitative participatory feminist inquiry– including theory and research on the rise in anti-Muslim policies, practices, attitudes, and behaviors, Muslim women as targets and scapegoats, Muslim mental health in an anti-Muslim context, resistance to and fighting back against anti-Muslim violence, and Muslim women as leaders, community organizers, educators, and activists. Secondly, the literatures on journeys to and experiences of engaging in resistance are summarized to identify factors that contribute to becoming an activist, as well as some of the psychosocial benefits and burdens of engaging in activism, and understanding how to sustain Muslim women organizing for the long haul. Third, the need for research on Muslim women activists is argued, and the research questions explored in this study are summarized as they were framed in the context of a participatory, arts-informed research approach. Fourth, participants are introduced and their experiences and perspectives shared through the model developed from an analysis of their interviews. Specifics of the process of Muslim liberation, as well as of the 10 clusters through which the model was developed are elaborated. Finally, implications, limitations, and future directions are discussed.

As all research and creative endeavors do, this study took place at a particular moment in time, within specific global, political, and cultural realities. Even during the course of this study, that reality shifted – new powers took political office, two Muslim women Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar were elected to the U.S. congress, and “they” was introduced as an official singular gender-neutral pronoun by the American Psychological Association, to name just a few. This paper assumes that realities evolve, change, and shift; thus, it intends to document and explore the realities of 10 Muslim women in the greater Boston area of the United States in this particular moment in time.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Rise in Anti-Muslim Policies, Practices, Attitudes, and Behaviors in the United States.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres claimed in a press briefing at the UN headquarters in New York City that Islamophobia is poisoning our society (UN News Center, 2017). According to the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR, 2015) it is estimated that there are 5.4 million U.S.-born or naturalized Muslim-Americans; a large number of those who are not citizens have various other statuses including being undocumented, having permanent residence, and being international students. Other estimates suggest that 3.4 to 7 million Muslims live in the United States (Padela & Heisler, 2010; Pew Research Center et al., 2017). Today, Muslims in the United States are demonized, seen as the "other", racialized, and subsequently subjected to legal, social, and political discrimination (IRDPUCB, 2016; Kundnani, 2014). According to the (IRDPUCB, 2016), the definition of Islamophobia is as follows:

> Islamophobia is a contrived fear or prejudice fomented by the existing Eurocentric and Orientalist global power structure. It is directed at a perceived or real Muslim threat through the maintenance and extension of existing disparities in economic, political, social, and cultural relations, while rationalizing the necessity to deploy violence as a tool to achieve "civilizational rehab" of the target communities (Muslim or otherwise). Islamophobia reintroduces and reaffirms a global racial structure through which resource distribution disparities are maintained and extended. (p. x)

Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim violence[1], has a long history in the West and is manifested in structural and in direct interpersonal forms. Historically, Islam and its followers became a

[1] "Islamophobia" is the term most recognizable in public discourse, however it does not accurately convey the making of racial and religious "others" that fuels the insidious suffering and structural violence (see e.g., Farmer, 1996) Muslims face in the United States. The term Islamophobia frames these forms of discrimination and their violent roots solely as a problem of religious discrimination. Calling this a "phobia" suggests that this discrimination is solely a problem of individual bias, which obscures the structural and systemic production of anti-Muslim violence. Conceptually, a focus on anti-Muslim violence is connected to an analysis of history and forms of dominance – from white supremacy, slavery and settler colonialism, to multiculturalism and the security logics of war and imperialism – that produce various forms of

religio-political enemy for Christians in the seventh and eighth centuries when Islam took over political power in the Middle East and in Africa in historically Christian controlled areas (Buehler, 2011). After World War II and the formation of the nation state of Israel the West developed a more focused antagonism toward Muslims and negatively portrayed Muslims as the 'Arab-other' in the media (Buehler, 2011). Buehler (2011) argues that this negative portrayal continued as the United States psycho-culturally needed an enemy after the dissolution of the Communist empire in the early 1990's, setting the stage for what he calls a second 'Cold War' against Muslims, involving wars in the Middle East, surveillance programs in the United States, and a widespread sense of fear propagated by mainstream media. Zainab Arain, coordinator of the Department to Monitor and Combat Islamophobia at the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), claims that the U.S. is in its third wave of Islamophobia, the first emerging after the 1979 Iranian Revolution (e.g., see Banuazizi, 1993), the second with the 1991 Gulf War, and the third with 9/11 and continuing since (Sunshine, 2017). Arain argues that Islamophobia is the glue that unites the far right in the current U.S. political system as Islamophobia serves as a replacement to previous anti-Semitic and anti-Communist conspiracy theories which were central to far right platforms (Sunshine, 2017).

After the events of 9/11 and the U.S. president Bush's response in launching a "war on terrorism", blatant anti-Muslim hate crimes increased dramatically throughout the U.S. Human Rights Watch reported that post-9/11 backlash against Muslims "distinguished itself by its ferocity and extent" when compared to previous waves of hate crimes in the United States (Human Rights Watch Report, 2002). The United States Patriot Act, a federal law designed after

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racial exclusion as well as incorporation into racist structural violence (Khabeer et al., 2016). The term Islamophobia will be used when quoting or referencing sources which use it. Otherwise anti-Muslim violence will be used.

9/11, increased targeting of Muslims and contributed to the rise in anti-Muslim sentiment (Bonet, 2011). In 2015 alone, 78 mosques were targets of violent crimes. In addition, by 2016 extensive anti-Islam legislation had been adapted, including the implementation of anti-Muslim bills in 10 states (IRDPUCB, 2016). One such form of systemic discrimination that is promoted as a "national security policy" is a program called Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), a law enforcement model premised on the discredited idea that harboring certain political or religious views is an indicator of future violence and piloted in Boston, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles since 2014. The CVE model asks parents, teachers, religious leaders, health and social service professionals, and law enforcement personnel to track and report to the government people engaged in protected First Amendment political speech and thoughts in ways that violate civil liberties (American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU], 2016). The Brennan Center for Justice, ACLU Boston, and the Muslim Justice League (ACLU, 2016) 4/15/20 7:12:00 PMhave protested this pilot program, demanding it be revoked and funding be returned from agencies which have received it.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (2017) reports a 197% increase in anti-Muslim hate groups since 2015. The Trump 2016 election has given rise to further anti-Muslim sentiment and hate crimes throughout the United States, including death threats to Muslims (Garrison, 2017; NBC Washington, 2017; Wires, 2017; Worthington, 2017), mosques being vandalized and set on fire (Hauser, 2017; Rocha, 2017), Muslim's businesses and homes being vandalized with hate speech (Bodley & Chronicle, 2017; Hernandez, 2017; Wang, 2017), online bullying and Muslim's social media accounts being targeted (Awan, 2014), hijabs being torn off of women (Branigin, 2017), Quran's being urinated on (Schwartz, 2017), Muslims being shot at or held at gunpoint (Kirschenheuter, 2015; Marusak, 2017; Rizzo et al., 2017), and the list goes on. There

are widespread campaigns establishing "Muslim-free businesses" which deny Muslims access to multiple business establishments and armed "anti-Islam" demonstrations (IRDPUCB, 2016). Extensive federal anti-Muslim legislation has been put into motion including Trump's Immigration Executive Order (i.e., "the Muslim ban") and the designation of the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization (Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2017). A climate of structural (Farmer, 1996) anti-Muslim violence (Khabeer et al., 2016) is the context within which this study takes place.

Muslim Women as Targets and Scapegoats

Among Muslims, women are considered primary targets of anti-Muslim violence in the U.S. (Gidaris & University, 2018). In a 2017 study conducted with forty diverse Muslim women living in the U.S., 85% of women interviewed reported experiencing verbal assaults or threats within public spaces and 25% reported experiencing physical violence (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2017). One explanation for their vulnerability is that those who wear hijab are readily identifiable (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009; Perry, 2014) and therefore easy targets for abuse and attack (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2017).

In addition to Muslim women experiencing violent targeting, they are often seen as victims lacking agency within the Muslim community (Al-Hejin, 2015; Alimahomed-Wilson, 2017). A discourse analysis of over 3250 BBC News articles published online before 2014 found 72% of articles mentioning Muslim women depict them as victims and describe Muslim men using, deploying, and sending Muslim women as suicide bombers to terrorize nations (Al-Hejin, 2015). This victim-centered framing strips Muslim women of their power and positions Muslim men as the perpetrators of violence (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2017), framing women as needing to be rescued from Islam (Abu-Lughod, 2013). What is ignored is the increased exposure to

violence (promoted by structures including- anti-Muslim rhetoric, US policies, and military invasion) that Muslim women face (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2017). Further, framing Muslim women as victims who need to be saved is a way for the dominant public to use them as scapegoats to justify war and/or immigration bans. A lack in understanding Muslim women from their own perspectives denies their agency.

As a result of this targeting and stripping of agency, Muslim women carry complex internal identities. Abu-Ras & Suarez (2009) highlight six core realities that Muslim women face in the U.S.: (1) their gender status as women facing more discrimination in access to educational, financial, health, and social resources; (2) their cultural identity shaped by gender socialization and patriarchal processes and constraints; (3) their status as immigrants and minorities in a Western country and the resulting social and economic marginalization; (4) their language barriers, which often result in loss of power, influence, and control over their family members; (5) their religious identity, resulting in their separation from men and the wider society; and finally, (6) their Islamic dress code symbolizing modesty and physical integrity, and distinguishing them from non-Muslims, marking them as targets for hate crimes, discrimination, and possible violations of their bodily integrity. Researchers have found that these experiences can lead to increased psychological trauma (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009).

In sum, Muslim women face unique social and psychological burdens due to multiple oppressions in society.

Muslim Mental Health in an Anti-Muslim Context

One of the multiple consequences of the above experiences for Muslim women is that they suffer from emotional trauma at higher rates than men (Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017). An anti-Muslim context (policies, practices, attitudes, and behaviors) can negatively influence

mental health by disrupting several systems at multiple levels, including the individual (microaggressions, stress reactivity, identity development), interpersonal (social relationships and socialization processes), and structural (institutional policies and media coverage) (Samari, 2016).

At an individual level, Muslims experience discrimination and microaggressions which lead to a myriad of mental health concerns. Nadal et al. (2012) conducted a qualitative study on microaggressions faced by ten Muslim women and found that participants experienced microaggressions including: (1) endorsement of religious stereotypes of Muslims as terrorists; (2) pathologizing of the Muslim religion; (3) assumption of religious homogeneity; (4) exoticization; (5) Islamophobic and mocking language; and (6) assumption of being alien in own land. Self-esteem has been found to be impacted when one endures this religious discrimination (Moradi & Hasan, 2004). A number of studies have found Muslims' experiences of discrimination to be closely associated with symptoms reflecting higher levels of anxiety and depression (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009; Rippy & Newman, 2006) and with hypervigilance, including paranoia, vigilance, and mistrust (Rippy & Newman, 2006; Samari, 2016). This presents as a consistent sense of fear and vulnerability (Perry, 2014) including fear of violence, fear of harassment, fear of profiling, and a generalized fear of appearing in public (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009). Continuous feelings of stress can lead to physiological responses including higher blood cortisol and heart rates, continuous activation of the allostatic system, and onset and progression of health conditions (Samari, 2016).

Anti-Muslim discrimination has also been found to hinder multiple aspects of Muslim individuals' identity development (Nadal et al., 2012). Saedi (2012) studied the mental health effects and identity development of Muslim college students post 9/11 and found discrimination

and negative repercussions post 9/11 influenced how Muslims described salient parts of their identities, including their ethnic heritage and religion. Tummala-Narra & Claudius' (2013) study of Muslim college students' experiences found that female Muslim students reported feeling judged for wearing a head scarf and male Muslim students reported being perceived as terrorists. Incidents of identity-based violence, such as anti-Muslim violence, have been identified as "traumatic oppression" by some scholars who suggest they affect those who are targeted in the ways that are analogous to the previously identified effects of rape and domestic violence; in other words, experiencing microaggressions can lead to stress disorder symptoms (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Helms et al., 2012). Identity-based oppression can feel dehumanizing over time (Burstow, 2003).

At an interpersonal level, an anti-Muslim context has a detrimental impact on Muslims' sense of belonging, participation in society, and sense of control and agency over their lives (Perry, 2014). This can manifest in social isolation (Samari, 2016), depriving Muslims of critical aspects of social connection, limiting ties, and increasing vulnerability. For example, Muslim students and youth report feeling silenced (Harper, 2015) and being policed within their own communities (Samari, 2016). Silencing can take place in discussions within and outside the community concerning religion and their own fears of perpetuating stereotypes about Muslim and international students as foreign and socially maladjusted through their actions or words (Harper, 2015). Additionally, Muslim Americans may fear obtaining services or feel misunderstood by health care providers, negatively affecting their use of services. In general, Islamophobia affects interactions with the health care system and prevents individuals from accessing preventative health services (Samari, 2016). Hostility and stigma in the public arena

make it difficult for Muslim Americans to develop a social life both within and beyond the Muslim community.

These interpersonal dynamics can be conceptualized through a discussion of "internalized oppression" or "internalized subordination" (Williams, 2012). Internalized oppression is a phenomenon experienced by members of subordinated groups (i.e., those who are oppressed, in this case, Muslims) and is also known as internalized subordination (Bell, 2007; Hardiman et al., 2007). Fanon, (1952, 1959) and (Memmi, 1991) previously described the effects of European colonialism on the psychology and behavior of colonized African peoples; effects they described included a process through which members of subordinated groups are socialized to fit the needs and desires of the dominant group. Williams (2012) describes these processes as, "the ways in which subordinant groups integrate the prevailing negative beliefs and stereotypes of oppressive systems," (p. 152) and "everyday practices and behaviors of subordinant groups consciously or unconsciously support, reproduce, collude with, and perpetuate systems of oppression," (Williams, 2012, p. 154). Muslims' internal and interpersonal reactions to Islamophobia may reflect, be characterized or described by components of internalized oppression and subordination.

At a structural level, Muslims face extreme insecurity. Recent travel and immigration restrictions directed primarily at Muslim countries by the U.S. government have led to traumatizing experiences for many Muslim Americans (Awaad, 2017). In a study about the effects of the United States Patriot Act, a federal law developed after 9/11, it was found that the law contributed to the growing national anti-Muslim sentiment. It increased targeting of Arabs and Arab-Americans, and had damaging effects on their education outcomes, psychosocial well-being, and sense of nation and belonging (Bonet, 2011). Government interactions, including

surveillance (O'Connor & Jahan, 2014) and harsh handling and long detainments by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, can be traumatizing (Awaad, 2017) and can lead to modifications in behavior to avoid government suspicion and future surveillance (O'Connor & Jahan, 2014) and a loss of freedom of movement and sense of safety (Perry, 2014). Structural oppression has well-documented effects; living in a racially and economically unequal society that impacts physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological well-being leads to social trauma (Chavez-Diaz & Lee, 2015). Across individual stressors, interpersonal discrimination, and structural insecurity – Muslim women are exposed to significant social trauma.

Psychosocial Trauma

Martín-Baró (1994) developed the construct of *psychosocial* trauma to situate discussions of trauma systemically and as a person-context dialectic. He argued that "we can and must orient our analysis toward the pre-traumatic situation, including an analysis of trauma as the normal consequence of a social system's way of functioning," (p. 123). He discussed the social production of trauma and the necessity to address its social roots, that is, its "traumatogenic structures or social conditions," (Martín-Baró, 1994, p.125). According to Martín-Baró, "Psychosocial trauma can be a normal consequence of a social system based on social relations of exploitation and dehumanizing oppression," (1994, p. 125). Broadly, oppression can be defined as "a state of asymmetric power relations characterized by domination, subordination, and resistance, whereby the controlling person or group exercise their power by processes of political exclusion and violence and by psychological dynamics of deprecation," (Prilleltensky, 2003, p. 3). Thus, trauma is conceptualized herein vis-à-vis a dialectic understanding of the individual-social context. In essence, Islamophobic policies such as the "Muslim Ban" and a culture of anti-Muslim violence across individual, interpersonal and

structural discrimination is reflected in the "normal abnormality" of Muslims' psychosocial traumas, marking each individual in particular ways.

Though we have limited understanding of the detrimental impacts on psychological health across individual, interpersonal, and structural levels for Muslims, the existing research is primarily deficit-focused and fails to capture the resilience among Muslim women (see, e.g., Tuck, 2009) and their protagonism (e.g., Crosby & Lykes, 2019) in responding to these everyday experiences. Martín-Baró's framing addresses the roots of psychosocial trauma, suggesting the importance of understanding how Muslim women respond to, contest or resist oppressive social systems.

Resistance to and Fighting Back Against Anti-Muslim Violence

Drawing on the above analysis of psychosocial trauma, we note that some of the multiple ways through which Muslim women engage in resistance to, or fighting back against, anti-Muslim policies, practices, attitudes and behaviors through a variety of social actions. This section draws on a broader literature to define how the term resistance is used in this study, and outlines various forms of resistance and social actions that Muslim women may engage. It parallels the previous section by framing resistance at the individual, interpersonal, and structural levels.

Resistance

Political resistance can broadly be defined as an oppositional act, or, "a social action that involves agency; and that act is carried out in some kind of oppositional relation to power" (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). Another definition, used by Taiwo Afuape (2011) in her book *Power, Resistance, and Liberation in Therapy with Survivors of Trauma,* comes from (Wade, 1997) who argues that resistance is:

> any mental or behavioural act through which a person attempts to expose, withstand, repel, stop, prevent, abstain from, strive against, impede, refuse to comply with, or oppose any form of violence or oppression, or the conditions that make such acts possible…any attempt to imagine or establish a life based on respect and equality, on behalf of one's self or others, including any effort to redress the harm caused by violence or other forms of oppression. (p. 25)

This definition includes a broad range of activities which individuals can engage at individual interpersonal, and structural levels, including but not limited to critical consciousness development, interpersonal resistance, community organizing, social action, and activism.

Critical Consciousness

Muslim women may resist anti-Muslim violence by developing critical consciousness, or promoting it. Critical consciousness, a concept developed by Paulo Freire, describes a process of moving from an experience of "oppression" to a "critical" consciousness, that is, toward an understanding of and taking actions towards liberation and authentic humanization (Freire, 2005). Freire drew on his work with peasants in Brazil to describe three stages through which someone progressively develops critical consciousness. In Stage 1, the "magical" stage, people describe poverty and oppression as facts of life, feel powerless, and conform to a fatalistic understanding of the facts of life. Stage 2 is termed "naïve" where people witness individual level problems but do not see them as connected to structures or systems. In Stage 3 people see instances of oppression as the normal functioning of an unjust and oppressive system, and see the collective group to which they belong as responsible for challenging it. The development of critical consciousness is one strategy Muslim women may engage to combat internalized oppression.

Interpersonal Resistance

Interpersonal resistance refers to responses to oppressive powers within one's particular social context. Afuape (2011) discusses how resistance is an implicative force that cuts across

contexts such as the body, life scripts, interpersonal relationships, family, culture, and politics. Resistance can encompass responding in the individual and interpersonal realms by acting outside of what is supported by the status quo, such as choosing to end a discriminatory, toxic relationship. Wearing hijab is one common example of interpersonal resistance for Muslims (Bilge, 2010; Shirazi & Mishra, 2010) as it can be an act of rebellion against dominant, Western, hegemony (Shirazi & Mishra, 2010). Wagner et al., (2012) assert that religious minorities are forced into constructing their cultural identity in ways that exaggerate their group belonging and difference from broader society. Bilge (2010) asserts the meaning of choices related to wearing hijab is not singular, as some may choose to not wear it as a form of resistance as well. Interpersonal resistance implies whatever choice a Muslim woman makes which affirms her agency (Bilge, 2010).

Community Organizing, Social action, and Activism

In addition to individual and interpersonal resistance, Muslim women can engage in collective resistance – community organizing, social actions, and activism. Activism consists of a continuum of efforts to make improvements upon and change society. A specific subset of activism, collective actions, are defined as “the intentional action of individuals sharing a common group membership to benefit a group” (Louis, 2009, p. 727). Herman (1997) calls this “social action”. Social action can include community building, art-based resistance, civil disobedience, dissent, protest, and more. According to Stall & Stoecker (1998), “[the] process of building a mobilizable community is called "community organizing." It involves "the craft" of building an enduring network of people, who identify with common ideals, and who can engage in social action on the basis of those ideals” (p. 2). Community organizing includes the process

of organizing relationships, identifying issues, mobilizing around those issues, and maintaining an enduring organization.

There are multiple examples of collectives of Muslims organizing at local and national levels to combat the sociopolitical roots of anti-Muslim violence affecting individuals and communities (e.g., *Movement to End Racism and Islamophobia*, 2017; *Muslim Justice League*, 2017). Some of this organizing began in the 1960's, when Arab American activists fought against imperialism and racism in the Middle East during the Arab-Israeli war; they fought (and continue to do so) for Palestinian rights and pressured the United Auto Workers union to divest from Israeli bonds (Pennock, 2017). They engaged in public demonstrations, distribution of advocacy literature, and aimed to mobilize Arab American communities in support of political or humanitarian causes connected to the Arab world and Palestinian resistance movement (Pennock, 2017). More recently, Muslims communities have come together to resist surveillance in the mosques (Reem, 2014) and re-claim their rights as citizens, and have also worked with the government to create community patrol programs, including, for example, the 'Muslim Community Patrol' (Petri, 2019) in response to a rise in neighborhood hate crimes.

Other Muslims resist as a part of larger, social movements (see e.g., Take On Hate, 2019) Social movements are related to community organizing, but the distinction between the two adapted herein is from Stall & Stoecker (1998) and suggests that community organizing is localized and social movements are multi-local. Other distinctions include how actions are defined and what the scope of impact is, and whether politics are focused on opposition to systems and structures or are focused on forming alternative systems. One example of a group working on building multi-local, national movement is the Muslim Power Building Project. They are a collective in Los Angeles, California hosting trainings and working alongside multiple

Muslim advocacy groups including PICO National Network, Inner City Muslim Action Network, MPower Change, and the Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative to support Muslim movement building organizers. There are national coalitions, committees, and organizing groups working to fight anti-Muslim violence (Take On Hate, 2019).

Muslim Women as Leaders, Community Organizers, Educators, and Activists

Although limited in number, some research has found that among Muslims, women play a unique role in resistance and social actions against anti-Muslim violence (Hammer, 2012). Despite this, Muslim women, as described above, are often misrepresented and portrayed as powerless and controlled by patriarchy in their cultures. Their hijabs can make them easily identifiable and a target for violence (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009; Samari, 2016). However, Muslim women exist far beyond these victim-centered representations. Instead– they are filled with power; they serve as leaders within their communities, as community organizers and politicians, as educators and program developers, and as social movement activists (Muslim Girl, 2017). As strong Muslim women are rarely highlighted in mainstream media or psychological literature, some examples of Muslim women engaging in resistance and social actions to combat anti-Muslim violence that informed and frame this study are summarized below. These include Muslim women in positive media representations, leadership positions in government, social change research roles, legal advocate roles, and leadership positions in national social movements.

Dynamic, positive, and fierce media representations of Muslims shift the narrative of Muslim women's realities dramatically. Amani Al-Khatahtbeh (Muslim Girl, 2017) founded *Muslim Girl* an online media outlet aimed to normalize the word "Muslim", give Muslim women the opportunity to shape their own narratives, and to raise the place of Muslim women in society.

Amani Al-Khatahtbeh spearheaded the first Muslim Women's Day held March 27, 2018, a day where *Muslim Girl* partnered with dozens of media publications including Huffington Post, Teen Vogue, and Refinery29 to feature stories that elevate Muslim women and their narratives (Muslim Girl, 2017). Another example of utilizing the power of Muslim women's voices to change and shape new narratives about Muslim women is Samina Ali (Muslima, 2019). Samina Ali is the founder and curator of *Muslima*, "a revolutionary virtual exhibition presenting a wide collection of thought-provoking perspectives and visually arresting artwork from contemporary Muslim women around the world who are speaking to the reality of their lives," (Muslima, 2019). *Muslima* is a global online exhibition supported by the Global Fund for Women. The exhibition shares groundbreaking thought pieces about power, leadership, appearance, faith, generations, and connections, shattering pervasive stereotypes of Muslim women. In her curator's message, Samina Ali states,

> In a world that's grown accustomed to denying the rich diversity of Muslim women's thoughts and contributions, of erasing their complex differences and reducing them into an easy stereotype of an oppressed group, into lesser human beings, this exhibition title highlights the singular form of *Muslima* in order to celebrate the unique passions and accomplishments of each and every Muslim woman who contributes.[...] These women are also artists, mothers, leaders of countries and of companies, visionaries, change-makers. Yet the one aspect of a Muslim woman's identity that is most at issue, the most problematized, is her faith.[...]We feel strongly about doing our part to change negative attitudes that hurt women. Religion is just one aspect of a Muslim woman's life (Muslima, 2019)

Another activist focused on Muslim representation is Mona Haydar, a Syrian-American hijabi rapper, poet and activist (Muslim Girl, 2017). In 2017, she released her first two songs, "Hijabi (Wrap My Hijab)" and "Dog"; she was interviewed by Glamour, People and Marie Claire, among other publications, and her work was widely shared on social media outlets (Muslim Girl, 2017). Hayder went a long way to normalize the hijab during a time when Muslim women were being increasingly targeted for their appearance (Muslim Girl, 2018).

Muslim women are in leadership positions in the United States government, as well. Once a community organizer in Detroit, Michigan and after the 2018 mid-term elections, now one of the first Muslim women in Congress, Rashida Tlaib works tirelessly to champion progressive policies including Medicare for All, $15 minimum wage, and immigration reform (Gajanan, 2018). Alongside her is Ilhan Omar, the first Somali-American legislator elected in 2016, who came to the United States as a Somali refugee. She describes her role in politics as not about the win or lose, but about changing the narrative surrounding women and immigrants of color who run for office. She, like Tlaib, was also elected to Congress in 2018 (Gajanan, 2018).

Muslim women are also spearheading social change research. Research shapes policies and practices, and Muslim women who design research can frame the way questions are asked. Dalia Mogahed is one such researcher, and the director of research at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU), an institute examining the impact of Islamophobia, releasing educational publications, and sharing the most research-driven effective ways of encountering Islamophobia (ISPU, 2019). She also has made appearances on National Public Radio, releasing a project titled “Islamophobia: A Threat to All” a project seeking to unearth impacts of Islamophobia and offer concrete research-driven solutions. Su’ad Khabeer is an associate professor of American Culture and Arab and Muslim American Studies at the University of Michigan and the creator of Sapelo Square, a website that documents and analyzes the experience of black, Muslim Americans (Sapelo Square, 2019). Sapelo Square offers articles, blog posts, interviews, and creative works by, about, or featuring Muslims in the U.S. It serves as a space for discussion, exploration, and sharing of experiences– between members of the Muslim community, or people who just want to come and learn something about the community (Sapelo Square, 2019).

Muslim women also serve as legal advocates. Muslim women lawyers are fighting against unjust immigration practices and fighting for protecting immigrants. Zahra Billoo is a civil rights attorney and the executive director for CAIR in the San Francisco Bay Area (Muslim Girl, 2017). In that position, she's led CAIR as it has sued numerous well-known organizations to protect Muslims in America facing discrimination. Notably, she was a speaker at the Women's March and sued Donald Trump after his "Muslim Ban" (Muslim Girl, 2017). Another Muslim woman lawyer, Azadeh Shahshahani, is a human rights attorney based in Atlanta and legal director of Project South (Project South, 2019). Her work goes toward protecting immigrant communities in the South. She has done research and written about the state of immigrant detention centers in the South and the government tracking of immigrants' electronic communications. She has served as the director of the National Security/Immigrants' Rights Project for the American Civil Liberties Union. She won the U.S. Human Rights Network 2017 Human Rights Movement Builder Award for her advocacy work.

Muslim women are also leaders in national and international social movements. Muslim women activist Linda Sarsour, a political activist and vocal advocate for the Arab, Palestinian and larger Muslim community, made headlines after being one of the five organizers of the Women's March (Seelinger, 2018), a demonstration that was part of the national #MeToo movement in 2017. She was featured as one of the speakers of the march that turned out to be the biggest march in U.S. history (Seelinger, 2018). Regularly, Linda Sarsour fights to get Muslim holidays recognized in New York Public Schools, and is a vocal leader in the fight for Muslim liberation (Seelinger, 2018). Blair Imani, is another vocal activist who converted to Islam in 2015 (McNamara, 2017). Coming out as bisexual, she has been a leader in the movement to recognize queer Muslims, breaking down stereotypes that queer people do not have a place in

Islam (McNamara, 2017). She wrote *Modern HERstory* (Imani, 2019), an inclusive history book that features stories about the women and nonbinary people who have written it. She also founded Equality for HER, which aims to provide educational materials about the issues affecting women and nonbinary people everywhere (*Equality for HER*, 2018).

These Muslim women are a fraction of the Muslim activists and changemakers shifting conditions and narratives for Muslim women, and are national examples of the locally-based social change makers interviewed for this study. Their representations of Muslim women's agency challenge the trope of the "oppressed Muslim woman" (Massoumi, 2015). Their powerful presence can stretch far beyond strategic counternarratives, potentially offering an emotional basis for solidarity (Massoumi, 2015), and inspiring generations of young Muslim women to come. Representation of Muslim women's strengths is essential; despite the increasingly high profiles of some of these national figures, scant research has documented the experiences of Muslim women who resist.

Journeys to and Experiences of Engaging in Resistance: An Unexplored Area

While research has extensively documented Muslim women's experiences of discrimination (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009; Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017; Nadal et al., 2012; Samari, 2016; Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013), and alternative press has documented some of the multiple ways in which Muslim women have organized and given leadership to their communities and beyond, there is very little research that has focused specifically on how Muslim women perceive themselves to have become activists, their strengths, or their fight back against oppressive forces. Previous scholarship has examined journeys and psychological experiences of some women activists (Dutt & Grabe, 2014), of black activists (Neville & Hamer, 2015), of animal rights activists (Herzog, 1993), and more– however an extensive literature

review of English language publications has not revealed any research focused specifically on Muslim women activists' stories of their psychological journeys and experiences as activists, in particular contexts of devastating marginalization in today's anti-Muslim political climate. Such research might help answer some of the following questions: why do certain Muslim women decide to engage in activism? Does engagement in activism benefit the Muslim women activists, and act as a buffer against oppression? Can engagement in activism cause further harm? This section begins by reviewing existing research on factors that have been identified as contributing to how people more generally becoming activists. Next, it outlines possible psychological benefits of engaging in resistance. Finally, it outlines existing research on the barriers and costs to engaging in resistance. Though the research to be outlined does not focus on Muslim women (as it has yet to be done), I have identified concepts within or emerging from the work of other activist communities that have informed the study presented here.

Factors That Contribute to Becoming an Activist

In the study of social movements, in which many activists are members, scholars have found a multitude of factors that contribute to people engaging in activism. Dutt and Grabe (2014) outline three social-psychological concepts—positive marginality, conscientización, and social identity theory—that synthesize various factors contributing to activist involvement. They studied narratives of three prominent activists from marginalized backgrounds: Grace Lee Boggs of the United States, Matidle Lindo of Nicaragua, and D. Sharifa of India, examining how they committed to creating justice in their communities long-term and how their experiences confirmed research on activist identity development.

Positive Marginality

First, positive marginality explains how the experience of being marginalized may equip individuals with a wider lens and unique knowledge of where and how to create equitable change in society – including how to navigate supportive and dismissive messages about one's group, understanding how inequality is substantiated in society, and using experiences of inequity to eradicate injustice. Research also demonstrates that individuals' social and political identities, as well as the sociohistorical context of their lived experiences, are significant predictors of willingness to participate in political action (Hammack, 2010; White & Rastogi, 2009; Wiley et al., 2012). For Muslim women, positive marginality may turn messages of discrimination into lessons on how to navigate and fight back against anti-Muslim violence, and act as a catalyst to participate in social change work.

Conscientización

Second, conscientización, or critical consciousness as described above, is learning about how life is impacted by unjust social and political realities. It is both a form of resistance and a factor in activist identity development. Research has demonstrated that developing conscientización is associated with increasing an awareness and intolerance of injustice and, based on that, engaging in efforts to see such injustices rectified (Brodsky et al., 2012; Hammack, 2010; Moane, 2010). Understanding one's particular group identity as having inequitable access to resources and opportunities (Brodsky et al., 2012; Moane & Quilty, 2012) facilitates an ideological obligation to seek more just structures. Because conscientización addresses the iterative process through which individuals form and use their ideology to influence their surroundings, it contributes to how individuals choose to engage in social change (Dutt & Grabe, 2014). Conscientización for Muslim women might include coming to understand

the political history of Muslim treatment in the U.S. and globally, and learning about possibilities and strategies to engage in social change work.

Social Identity Theory

Third, social identity theory, the forming of relationships based on shared identity, shows how viewing one's identity as connected to the well-being and status of others with the same identity can encourage participation in collective action (Bikmen, 2012; Drury & Reicher, 2005; Wiley et al., 2012). Dutt and Grabe (2014) suggest such efforts involve making the positive views one holds about one's group more widely acknowledged, therefore relationships built when collectively working for these changes can facilitate a sense of empowerment and encourage continued involvement to increasingly actualize these goals (Drury & Reicher, 2005). For Muslim women, connecting with other Muslim women who may be undergoing similar pressures on their identity– whether it be discrimination about hijab, misconceptions about women's agency, or disconnection from one's culture– may contribute to a sense of solidarity and community, providing a base of support from which to enact social change.

In Dutt and Grabe's (2014) study with three prominent activists, they found that what contributed to these women's dedication to social change was guided by the three outlined psychological experiences and processes, but ultimately they differed in what was prominent. For example, Grace Lee Boggs' displayed a lifelong commitment to education which guided her work; Matilde Lindo found activism in a community where she could share and teach about her feminist values from her upbringing in Nicaragua; and D. Sharifa wanted to live out the egalitarian values she learned later in life and be an example to others. Simple involvement in a movement may also heighten desire to make changes in one's life consistent with the values of the movement, and in turn, increase engagement in particular causes (Herzog, 1993; Kaysen &

Stake, 2001). While limited research has focused on factors encouraging participating in activism, no existing research has specifically studied which factors influence Muslim women activists. And, Muslim women may be influenced by similar factors, but what they consider salient influences on their journeys may differ.

Psychosocial Benefits of Fighting Anti-Muslim Policies, Practices, Attitudes, and Behaviors

In addition to factors contributing to participation in social action, little is known about what benefits Muslim women experience by engaging in resistance. Better understanding these benefits could help inform what activities might promote protective buffers against the harmful effects of anti-Muslim violence, and mitigate its damaging psychological effects. Despite the theorized importance of community organizing in multiple psychological disciplines (Goodman et al., 2004; Martín-Baró, 1994), relatively little is known about the psychological experiences related to and/or the psychological effects of engaging in resistance. This section reviews the limited psychological literature about benefits of engaging in resistance, acknowledging that there is no research exploring the unique experience of Muslim women engaging in resistance to anti-Muslim violence.

Well-being

Community psychologists have written about the influence of some elements of community organizing on well-being. For example some scholars (e.g., Moane, 2006; Prilleltensky, 2003, 2008; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2007), have argued that civic engagement activities (such as but not limited to disaster response and subsequent community organizing) contribute to improved community development outcomes, greater social capital, and higher levels of well-being for people who are involved.

Youth participatory action researcher Michelle Fine and colleagues have more recently written about the buffering impact of activism on mental health, physical health, and suicidal ideation, which they found in a sample of nearly 6,000 queer youth activists (Fine et al., 2018). Activism can also be an opportunity to cultivate strengths such as courage, boldness, and pride (Frederick & Stewart, 2018; Grabe, 2018) and promote a sense of belonging and positive identification with other group members (Grabe, 2018).

Healing

Ginwright (2009) calls community organizing a "radical healing process" - one that is important to foster more humanizing and transformative spaces of possibility and hope as systemic forms of oppression threaten the social, spiritual, and emotional well-being of those who face oppression. Collectively, participation in movement activities can facilitate a collective identity among members who may be otherwise isolated, leading to a shared commitment to improve their situation (Vindhya, 2012) and a renewed sense of social connection.

Collective social action can be an important step in the healing and recovery process from trauma for an individual (Herman, 1997); as survivors engage their critical consciousness and externalize blame when partaking in such action. Survivors in this context are women who have endured psychological trauma from living in an anti-Muslim context. For Muslim women who are survivors of trauma, engagement in social action may have a substantial healing benefit. Trauma psychiatrist Judith Herman (1997) claims, "[Survivors] may begin to question previous assumptions that permitted them to acquiesce in socially condoned violence or exploitation," (Herman, 1997, p. 199). Herman argues,

> Survivors recognize a political or religious dimension in their misfortune and discover that they can transform the meaning of their personal tragedy by making it the basis for social action. While there is no way to compensate for an atrocity, there is a way to

> transcend it, by making it a gift to others. The trauma is redeemed only when it becomes the source of a survivor mission, (Herman, 1997, p. 207).

Muslim women, who may carry histories of trauma from their respective circumstances, may find healing benefits in social action.

Herman (1997) proposed a stage-based model of trauma recovery that includes engagement in social action-- starting with the establishment of a healing relationship and safety, remembrance and mourning the loss associated with the trauma, then reconnection with others and finally, commonality. She posits that the stages do not necessarily occur in a linear order and that social action is a part of some survivor's reconnection process. According to her,

> Social action offers the survivor a source of power that draws upon her own initiative, energy, and resourcefulness but that magnifies these qualities far beyond her own capacities. It offers her an alliance with others based on cooperation and share purpose. Participation in organized, demanding, social efforts calls upon the survivor's most mature and adaptive coping strategies of patience, anticipation, altruism, and humor. It brings out the best in her; in return, the survivor gains the sense of connection with the best in other people, (Herman, 1997, p. 207-208).

In addition, Herman discusses the role of public action, "Survivors also understand that those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it. It is for this reason that public truth-telling is the common denominator of all social action," (Herman, 1997, p.208). She describes how survivors, "feel connected to a power larger than themselves," (Herman, 1997, p.208) and states, "this sense of participation is sometimes all that she has to sustain her. The sense of alliance with others who support her and believe in her cause can console her even in defeat," (Herman, 1997, p. 211). She discusses the value of being in connection with others in the healing process, "The encounter with others who have undergone similar traits [social experiences] dissolves feelings of isolation, shame, and stigma," (Herman, 1997, p.215), further, "Although giving to others is the essence of the survivor mission, those who practice it recognize that they do so for their own healing. In taking care of others, survivors feel recognized, loved, and cared for themselves,"

(Herman, 1997, p.209). Here, Herman argues, that engagement in social actions like community organizing or activism that has an element of 'public truth telling' such as a rally, could lend to a healing psychological experience. It is critical to note, that although there are individual healing strategies with organizing work aimed toward liberatory ends, most of the research in this area suggests that communal power is necessary to make transformative change.

Some psychologists encourage social action and organizing towards the ultimate goal of liberation contributing towards healing from trauma (see e.g., Grabe, Lykes, Moane and Fine in Grabe, 2018). After sociopolitical trauma, the communities' ability to protect themselves is compromised. Trauma ruptures connection to self, others, and expectations of a future (Herman, 1997). Rebuilding requires communities to meet their members' basic needs, provide opportunities for positive socialization, re-establish social controls, and achieve high member participation and mutual support for community members (Farwell & Cole, 2001; Herman, 1997).

Community

Camaraderie, connection, and social belonging are documented benefits of social action (Dutt & Grabe, 2014; Frederick & Stewart, 2018). In addition, participation in social action potentially offers a site for group healing processes to take place within communities. Phillips et al., (2015), argue for pursuing community-based coping, because identity-based discrimination and oppression are collective phenomena by definition. Through identity-based coping, they posit communities can help manage the effects of experiences through social support, collective identification, and "relational and ontological security upon which to base acts of resistance," (p. 370). They argue that community-based coping is necessary to preclude resistance, but by itself

coping is insufficient. Coping can buffer the impact of discrimination but does little to directly reduce the likelihood of future oppression, as acts of resistance can do.

One example of intentional community building focused on healing in organizing work is by (Brown & Mazza, 2004), who created a Jewish-Black Coalition which centered on individual healing and social justice activism. In 1984 they launched a pilot leadership training institute, The National Coalition Building Institute. The institute focused on healing from oppression and mistreatment, prejudice reduction, inter-group conflict resolution, and coalition building in an attempt to combine "social justice commitments" and "powerful emotional healing work" (p. 394). They aimed to dismantle institutional racism and built networks and held trainings across 50 cities and 30 colleges, with strong ties in Allentown, PA; Birmingham, AL; Raleigh/Durham, NC; and Washington, D.C. Brown & Mazza outline three principles which guided their social action: 1) tending to the work of individual healing; 2) leadership attacks (criticisms from within and outside the organization), and 3) cultivating a spirit of joy. They assert individual healing is necessary as it takes individuals overcoming internalized oppression to stand up to it. Finally, they are guided by a principle to celebrate anti-discrimination work with laughter, play, and love (Brown & Mazza, 2004). This example shows that some community organizing efforts specifically focus on healing and cultivating joy, which may be true of Muslim social action communities, as well. In sum, social action can provide a multitude of benefits for those who engage in it, including well-being, healing, and community.

Psychosocial Burdens of Fighting Anti-Muslim Policies, Practices, Attitudes, and Behaviors

Despite the multiple potential positive psychological benefits of social action, engagement in social action can endanger people who engage in it. Often those who commit their lives to progressive social change must overcome significant barriers in order to sustain and

grow their efforts and encourage social progress (Hernández-Wolfe, 2011; Moghaddam & Lvina, 2002; Morris, 2000).

Psychological Harm and/or Subjecting One to Further Violence

Engaging in resistance can put activists at risk of job loss, criticism, broken families, imprisonment, re-traumatization, and more (Rugh, 2015). Engaging in resistance can be psychologically harmful. Additionally, activists and community organizers are frequently viewed as "rebel rousers" by those not involved in activism and are often subject to police violence and incarceration (Rugh, 2015). Hernández-Wolfe (2011) studied women human rights activists in Columbia and found their activism contributed to a spectrum of personal experiences including compassion fatigue, burnout, exposure to sexism, and political exile. Engagement in activism put activists in frequent danger and their own well-being on the back burner at times. Activists in Hernández-Wolfe's study faced discrimination within the organizations in which they worked and felt men devalued women and took credit for their work. The activists studied faced persecution and death for being outspoken about oppression.

Muslim women activists likely face the negative consequences of engaging in activism described above, and potentially more because of the ways their identities are uniquely politicized. If engagement in social action can be so dangerous and detrimental to one's health, how do activists stay engaged in it? Psychological reactions of those engaged in activism may contribute to how likely one is to burn out, or maintain, engagement in resistance. Bettering understanding how Muslim women arrived to their decisions to become activists and organizers and their experiences of doing so, may help psychologists, and Muslim communities themselves, understand how to promote, sustain, and support resistance to anti-Muslim violence for the long haul.

The Current Study: An Intersectional Feminist & Liberation Psychology Framework

This study takes an intersectional feminist and liberation psychology (e.g., Lykes & Hershberg, 2012) approach to understanding Muslim women activists' journeys into and experiences of engaging in social action. Broadly, critical feminist methodologies center women's narration of their own lives and recognize lived testimonies as critical to knowledge, praxis, and policy (e.g., Collins, 1990; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992). Speaking one's story becomes a transformative act (Rich, 1995) in a social context in which Muslim women are often not valued, listened to, or believed. The act of telling is a real catalyst for social change– and a symbolic communication to say "I am here," (Solnit, 2017). Importantly, intersectional feminist perspectives (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1990; hooks, 2000) acknowledge various identities (e.g., race, class, religion, gender, sexuality, age) within and across women's experiences. A focus on intersecting identities attends to the multiplicity of subjective experiences and also to the intersecting and marginalizing socio-historical contexts in which lives are lived. This makes room for an exploration of how multiple forms of oppression enter into Muslim women's stories about their lives, as well as for recognition of their resistance, survival, and thriving in the face of that oppression (e.g., Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005).

Liberation psychology (Martín-Baró, 1994) calls on psychologists to engage in liberation, a complex social process which aims to ultimately transform social structures on both psychological and political levels and occurs beyond the scope of a single lifetime. Ultimately, liberation is the goal of overcoming centuries of traumatic oppression (Prilleltensky, 2003). Research geared toward social action can be a site of liberation from oppressive structures (Prilleltensky, 2003). Fine (2006) influenced by Martín-Baró, discussed the importance of research and intervention in addressing systems of oppression, stating that, "power

distributes unevenly throughout systems, then research on the broad reach of injustice must account for all forms of social relations within those systems, not simply documenting the 'damage' or 'resilience' of the bodies or (un)consciousness of 'victims'" (p. 93). She also posits that critical social researchers should uncover collective lies which have been told about people's histories and tell untold stories so that those who have been historically oppressed can regain collective identities. This study takes on the task of utilizing research as a means of social action, through my positioning myself— and the knowledge constructed herein—in solidarity with some of the Muslim women most disproportionately affected by the issues described above.

Mainstream psychology typically medicalizes suffering and trauma inflicted by sociopolitical oppression (Burstow, 2003), and clinicians and counselors traditionally have a limited scope of what they consider to be healing (Goodman et al., 2004; Prilleltensky, 2003). As trauma is a socially produced consequence of dehumanizing systems of oppression, the treatment of trauma must, "not only [be] treating the problems of individuals but also treating its social roots, in other words, the traumatogenic structures or social conditions" (Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 125). Psychologists are tasked to see beyond individualized discourses of victimology and to work with survivors of sociopolitical trauma to reconstruct cultural identities and social and economic networks (Lykes & Coquillon, 2009). As such, liberatory and feminist research geared toward supporting Muslim women in this sociopolitical climate must not only focus on suffering and victimhood, but also focus on sources of strength, resistance, and resilience.

The Need for Research on Modalities of Response to Anti-Muslim Violence

Goleen Samari, a leading health policy scholar, considers Islamophobia a public health issue. She stated, "The overwhelming pressures faced by this group, including surveillance, hate crimes, and institutional discrimination, stimulate an urgent need for

psychologists to better understand and ensure the well-being of this population," (Samari, 2016). To fight back against the negative context in which Muslim women live, many engage in social action. However, few theorists and/or researchers of community organizing or social activism have studied the psychological experience of political resistance, and even less is known about the individual psychological processes which take place when Muslim women are responding to and resisting anti-Muslim violence. Therefore, it is important for psychologists and the wider community to understand diverse strategies to resist anti-Muslim violence and how resistance impacts psychological health.

Understanding how Muslim women may differentially understand and internalize the sociopolitical oppression they face and therefore respond in diverse ways could help inform intervention and contribute to the public discourse about resisting anti-Muslim violence through social actions. In addition, Muslims should have access to the best psychological interventions for healing from sociopolitical violence and resultant suffering and trauma, as a socially minoritized community for which traditional psychotherapy may be ineffective. Without a deeper understanding of the psychological processes attendant to Muslim women engaged in resistance to anti-Muslim violence, we may miss critical opportunities to participate as psychologists in accompanying those who have suffered and in facilitating healing. Understanding these processes may facilitate interventions and treatment recommendations about individuals and communities experiencing anti-Muslim violence.

Therefore, this study sought to better understand Muslim women's' trajectories into and experiences of resisting anti-Muslim violence, towards better understanding their meaning making processes and towards developing psychosocial resources aimed to contribute to enhanced psychosocial well-being.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This chapter presents the research design and methodology for this study, beginning with an overview of the participatory research processes including the arts-based and the qualitative approaches that informed the design as well as the collection and analysis of the data. It also describes the participants and sampling procedures, the approach to data analysis, reflections on rigor, and my statement of researcher reflexivity.

Overview: Study Design

The study's design was informed by participatory and action research (PAR) (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Lykes & Hershberg, 2012), with a focus on engaging participants in various ways in the study and in documenting how they drew on their meaning making to inform actions. Drawing on both qualitative and quantitative methods, PAR describes a spectrum of approaches that share a commitment to three main goals: (1) engaging the communities whom the research is about in partaking or partnering in the research processes; (2) facilitating the collaborative involvement of stakeholders in psychosocial-transformative and critical emancipatory processes; and, (3) producing research that transforms participant's lives, communities, and society at large (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). The aims of participatory research are to work with people to identify and analyze their concerns and through multiple iterative processes, mobilize people to (1) enhance awareness of their abilities and resources, and (2) transform social structures that oppress and marginalize groups (Grimwood, 2015). Bradbury-Huang (2010) and Grimwood (2015) suggest that PAR occurs along a "spectrum" of practitioner and community engagement. They assert that no research will meet the ideals of PAR but that it is important to report how a design is informed by PAR, any limitations encountered, and to always ask oneself, "Who does this research benefit?" PAR interfaces well with feminist methodology in that it foregrounds and

values participants' wisdom and experience as expertise and positions participants as co-researchers and partners in the process of knowledge creation (Lykes & Hershberg, 2012). Specific ways through which PAR strategies informed this research will be detailed in sections to follow.

This study utilized two approaches to data collection and analysis: (1) general inductive qualitative processes and (2) arts-based inquiry, which will be discussed below. Fundamentally, qualitative methodologies are committed to understanding phenomena from the perspectives of those who live through them (Creswell, 2012). The data collection and analysis drew mainly from general inductive research processes (Thomas, 2006) and was informed by arts-based (Leavy, 2015) approaches, and heavily influenced by grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006).

General inductive research (Thomas, 2006) is a health and social science research approach that utilizes a "critical realist" epistemology— a practical method which allows research findings to emerge from frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without constraints being imposed from structured methodologies. Inductive research uses detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data to generate defensible and transparent findings. However, it is guided by evaluation objectives informed by the research question, which guides domains and topics to be investigated. A model or framework that conveys key themes and processes is one outcome of general inductive research. This research orientation is well-aligned with the study's feminist, liberation framework in that it promotes the integrity of participant's knowledge by preserving participants' narratives, rather than being focused on the extraction or confirmation of a theoretical position (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jiménez-Domínguez, 2009). Within an inductive

qualitative research process, some degree of interpretation is not only permissible (Thomas, 2006) but is a critical component brought by researchers whose own positionalities and lenses inform the analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Sandelowski, 2009).

Arts-based research is grounded in an understanding of the arts as a resource that brings about the participants' awareness of the self and others and conveys their truths. By utilizing preverbal ways of knowing, arts-based research evokes sensory, kinesthetic, and imaginary ways of knowing (Gerber et al., 2012; Leavy, 2015). Arts based research utilizes aesthetics (Chilton & Leavy, 2014) and intersubjectivity to draw on the senses and engages the relational quality of arts as knowing (Conrad & Beck, 2015). Leavy (2017) notes:

> Visual art has the capacity to promote defamiliarization, which is why it is a powerful tool for prompting people to look at something in a new way - a great appeal for social researchers. In this respect, visual art has a resistive and transformative capability. (p. 208)

Arts are a particularly useful tool in participatory designs with communities who are often excluded from research, because it can remove language barriers and equalize power with researchers and participants who are co-creating knowledge. An additional utility of arts-based inquiry is its capacity to develop holistic and synergistic research. This study was informed by arts-based research, but incorporated other methods, which is why the study denotes itself as "arts-informed."

Sample and Recruitment Procedures

Recruitment

Inclusion criteria for this study were defined as: (1) identifying as a Muslim and a woman; (2) living in the United States for 10 or more years; (3) being at least 18 years old; and (4) engaging in organizational or community action to respond to anti-Muslim policies, practices, attitudes, and behaviors. Participants' identification as practicing, secular, or converts were

irrelevant for inclusion and all perspectives are represented in the sample. Trans-women were not explicitly sought out as their experiences were not a specific focus of inquiry for this particular study. In discussion with community members after conducting some pilot interviews, the criterion for living in the United States for more than 10 years was added because of the significantly different organizing contexts and political situations in different parts of the world. For example, a pilot interview was conducted with a recent migrant Muslim woman activist from Lebanon who spoke about Lebanon's uprising and revolution, which is a different political context than is taking place in the United States right now. In regards to participants' identities (e.g. ethnicity, age) participants' self-reported salient identities were documented and I aimed to obtain as diverse a representation as possible of Muslim women organizers in the greater Boston context. The qualitative inductive inquiry interrogated the influence of identity, historical context, and setting in the findings (Riessman, 2011).

In order to recruit participants, I collaborated with local organizations with whom I'd developed relationships throughout the Boston area, and sent invitations to participate to activists I'd come into contact within this process. Specifically, in the years leading up to my dissertation design, I began attending community meetings and supporting initiatives within the No Islamophobia Boston Coalition. The No Islamophobia Boston Coalition is a loose collection of multiple Boston-based Muslim and non-Muslim community organizations dedicated to fighting Islamophobia, including Muslim Justice League, Center for American Islamic Relations, several mosques, Jewish Voices for Peace, and multiple other organizations. It came into existence as an informal coalition in 2016 and at that time organized a Fighting Islamophobia Train the Trainers workshop and listserv, both of which I helped develop. These experiences and relationships helped create a network from which to recruit participants.

Building relationship with Muslim community organizations

The process of building PAR-informed relationships with Muslim community organizations involved several steps: (1) attending community meetings; (2) co-facilitating an anti-Islamophobia Train the Trainers workshop in response to community requests; (3) participating in the No-Islamophobia Boston Coalition; and (4) attending *From the Prayer Rug to Couch,* a Muslim mental health event at a local mosque.

Attending Community Meetings

To build relationship with organizers and organizations in Muslim communities, I began to attend gatherings about fighting Islamophobia in 2016. Specifically, I was invited in my role as a student organizer with Eradicate #BostonCollegeRacism to a community meeting bringing together Boston-area Muslim organizers, allies, and leaders from mosques to discuss local issues of Islamophobia and develop a strategy to address them. Two large community meetings of approximately 25 people each took place along with multiple smaller working group meetings. One of many ideas generated during these meetings was to host a workshop to train Muslims and allies in a framework to combat interpersonal, community, and structural Islamophobia.

Co-facilitating a "Challenging Islamophobia: Train the Trainers Workshop" in Response to Community Requests

In response to the idea to host a community-wide workshop, members of the Muslim organizing community requested that allies take on this responsibility, so I volunteered to help develop and facilitate the training. First, I helped develop a 2-hour pilot training on Fighting Islamophobia with Jewish Voices for Peace and it was conducted for the original group of 25 Muslim organizers, allies, and community leaders who brainstormed the idea. We obtained

feedback from that training and iteratively developed a larger training offered to a wider network of people in the Boston area. The larger training became the "Challenging Islamophobia Train the Trainers" workshop and it was co-facilitated by organizers from the Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Boston Workman's Circle, the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center, Muslim Justice League, Jewish Voices for Peace, and the Movement to End Islamophobia and Racism. Sixty people attended the day-long workshop. Participating in the development of both trainings provided me the opportunity to understand the diverse ways Muslim organizers conceptualize Islamophobia and related responses to it. It also was an important way for me to build trust, transparency, mutual commitment, and to establish open lines of communication with these organizers and activists.

Participating in the No-Islamophobia Boston Coalition

One outcome of the workshop was the creation of a list-serv for organizations to communicate, the "No Islamophobia Boston Coalition" mentioned above. I participated as an initial administrator of the list-serv, helping new people join, and sending out informational announcements. The list-serv helped organizations connect with each other and streamlined coordination of community responses to anti-Muslim actions (e.g., a rally on Boston Common in response to the Muslim Ban).

Attending Muslim Mental Health event at Mosque

To further build relationships with Muslim community organizations, I attended a Muslim Mental Health day at the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center. During the event I was exposed to multiple perspectives on and experiences of mental health in the Muslim community, including perspectives on surveillance within mental health, building resiliency of

Muslim youth, and religious and cultural understandings of mental health phenomena in Arab and South-Asian Muslim communities.

Understanding stakeholder interests in developing project goals

The process of developing PAR-informed research questions involved meeting with local leaders to explore ideas and discuss community needs and interests.

Meeting with Health Justice Team

One of the first steps I took to better understand stakeholders' interests was meeting with members from Muslim Justice League's Health Justice Team to inform them about my opportunity to conduct a research project for my dissertation. I met with them because I had previously had informal conversations with members from that team about my dissertation and they expressed interest and support. In the meeting we explored ideas, identified areas of mutual interest, and brainstormed potential research questions that might benefit the community. We discussed an overall interest area in better understanding activists' psychological experiences engaging in organizing and divisions between those in the Muslim community who organize and those who do not. There was an interest in motivating more people to engage in fighting back against Islamophobia, as well as pausing to better understand the lives and experiences of those who are already engaged in organizing, to create better support structures for them.

Meeting with Organizer from Mosque

To further develop my research ideas, I met with one of the community outreach organizers from the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center. We discussed benefits as well as drawbacks of studying Muslim community organizers. Benefits included supporting and sustaining organizers in the movement, by way of acknowledging individual and collective struggles and identifying support strategies. Drawbacks included singling out Muslims instead of

researching activists more broadly, especially as many of the resistance struggles are interconnected and participants include those with multiple, intersectional identities; singling out one identity could further perpetuate the belief that communities are the problem versus the structures which oppress them.

Volunteering with a community agency

The liberation and feminist informed practice component of this research involves ongoing partnership and collaboration with community organizations. As such, I became involved in supporting the organizations with whom I was partnering and also started to bridge discussions I was having in the community to other professional spaces with psychology trainees and mental health workers.

Volunteering with the Health Justice Strategy team

I signed on to be a volunteer member of the Health Justice Strategy team, which involved attending twice per month meetings focused on reviewing healthcare institutions' policies regarding Muslim surveillance programs and developing outreach to raise healthcare workers' awareness of such policies.

Advocating and Designing Direct Actions

Part of my volunteer work included outreach to mental health organizations. I helped organize multiple professional presentations to the psychology community about Muslim mental health and surveillance including a lecture at Boston College, a workshop at the American Psychological Association Annual Meeting, a webinar for graduate psychology students, and an information session for hospital-based psychologists in a monthly ethics seminar.

Additionally, I helped design, support, and implement creative street theater demonstrations in the larger Boston community to raise awareness about Muslim profiling and

targeting in the city. This included engaging in strategy and action design discussions with leading Muslim organizers, planning a non-violent direct action training, coordinating and leading roles in the street theater action, and supporting a healing circle following the action. All of the above described engagements with the community, enhanced my relationships with those most impacted by anti-Muslim violence, and set the stage to conduct this research project.

Procedures

This study was conducted over the course of two years. Participants learned about the study through community organizing networks and word of mouth, and expressed interest in knowing more about the study or in participating either in person or via email. Once someone expressed interest, we set up a 2-hour time slot for the interview and I offered to conduct the interviews in my office at Boston College or a private location of their choosing. The majority of interviews were conducted in private rooms at participants' workplaces or homes; one interview was completed at Boston College. Each interview began with a brief introduction, including thanking the participant for her participation, and reviewing the informed consent materials (see Appendix for informed consent documents). The study was approved by the Boston College Institutional Review Board.

Interviews lasted from ninety minutes to three hours, and were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide including an art inquiry (see Appendix). The interview guide was designed to provide a consistent focus across interviews, but was flexible to not limit the conversation. For example, prompts were used when relevant and follow-up questions emerged organically in conversation with participants. Questions and art inquiries were sometimes asked in different orders or using different wording, depending on participant's previous responses and level of engagement in the process. Questions focused broadly on the following areas: (1) the

woman's perspective on and experiences of anti-Muslim policies, practices, attitudes, and behaviors; (2) her journey into engaging in resistance including goals, rewards, and challenges; (3) her socioemotional experiences of her work; and (4) her sources of and desires for support. The art inquiries were invitations to create visual representations of participants' experiences. The women were invited to visually explore their: (1) journeys into resistance and (2) emotional reactions while engaging in their work. While women were making their illustrations, I created my own visual "echo" reflection of what I had heard in their stories, to: (1) engage in a parallel art making process with the intent of reducing performance anxiety; (2) to provide reflective validation of a participant's prominent strengths and events that were salient for me during her interview; and, (3) serve as a member check of my understanding of her story.

Data Analysis

Preparation and Transcription

The first step of the analysis was preparation (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Interviews were transcribed by me and two volunteer research assistants at the Center for Human Rights and International Justice, an MA-level student in mental health counseling, and a BA-level student with interest in Muslim women's health. I listened to and read all interviews, including those not transcribed by me. In addition to ensuring accurate transcription, this part of the process was critical in establishing my familiarity with the content.

Inductive Qualitative Coding

An inductive thematic approach (Charmaz, 2014; Thomas, 2006) was used to code the data. Inductive analysis is utilized across theoretical approaches including grounded theory and narrative analysis, without being dogmatic in utilization (Thomas, 2006). Consistent with a critical realist epistemology, inductive analysis is often used in health and social sciences to

allow research findings to "emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies," (Thomas, 2006, p. 238) and aims to answer the proposed research questions. As the questions for this study were co-created with community members, this coding approach was an appropriate fit for the data. The categories resulting from inductive analysis have five core features: (1) a category label – a phrase referring to the initial identification of categories (2) a category description – a description including meaning, key characteristics, and scope; (3) text and data associated with the category – quotes or illustrations that show perspectives in the categories; (4) links between categories – to show relationships, commonalities, and meanings; and (5) a model reflective of the interrelations among the categories – which illustrates how one category influences another – to represent and share the outcome of the analysis.

NVivo qualitative analysis software was utilized to facilitate coding. Consistent with general inductive analysis (Thomas, 2006), lower level and upper level coding was employed. Lower level coding stayed close to the data while upper level coding derived from research questions. Lower level coding included two phases: initial and focused (Charmaz, 2006). During initial coding, one transcript was selected and fragments of data were studied – words, lines, incidents – for their analytic value. Participants' own words were identified as *in vivo* codes. Simultaneously, fragments of text were clustered according to which research question they answered in upper level coding (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Thomas, 2006). This initial coding strategy sought to generate knowledge that reflects participants' perceptions and experiences. During focused coding, initial in vivo codes were selected to test them against the extensive data set. This process advanced with each subsequent transcript. Data was compared against other

data and the previously developed codes (Charmaz, 2006). New codes were generated if they did not appear in previous transcripts. Over 2500 in vivo codes were generated across 10 transcripts.

During upper level or theoretical coding, relationships were specified among categories of in vivo codes to help tell a coherent analytic story. I grouped the codes initially as they related to answering each research question, then connections among codes across research questions were made as analytic narratives emerged. For example, codes such as "seeing a powerful Muslim community" and "building Muslim leadership" were seen as related to a higher-level code of "Liberating the Muslim Community" which was interpreted as an ideal and goal within participants' journeys. To further reduce the number of higher-level codes and to draw connections among different higher-level categories, codes were hand-written on multi-colored paper and hung on a wall so I could visualize their connections. This process helped reduce the total number of higher-level codes into thematic categories. In line with general inductive analysis (Thomas, 2006), each category was given a label, description, and examples from participants' experiences associated with it. These higher-level categories are and their lower level sub-categories are described and presented as "clusters" in the findings chapter. Links among clusters were defined as were their relationships, and supporting text were recorded in detailed memos. Coding decisions were made in consultation with the academic advisor and chair of this project. A model illustrating "Muslim Community Liberation" was identified to illustrate how the clusters influence one another. This model is shown in Figure 1.

Art Inquiry Coding

The incorporation of art enhanced the trustworthiness of the data analysis: coherence, congruence, and internal consistency of concepts can be strengthened across interview and arts-based and arts-informed inquiry methods (Leavy, 2015). Art can be used as an elicitation

technique as well as a data source. For this project, art was used to elicit information during the interviews and served as a coherence and internal consistency check to assess how components of the project (i.e., categories from the inductive analysis) fit together. Strength of form (Barone & Eisner, 2012) and resonance (Leavy, 2015) were utilized to assess fit against qualitative interview data. Strength of form and resonance involve the researcher asking the following questions of the art, and utilizing the information generated to strengthen the findings: Does it tell a story? Does it make sense? Does it have a beginning, middle, and end? Does it ring true? Is it believable? Does it feel authentic? Does the work resonate? Art inquiry results resonated with the overall model developed from the findings, and narrative descriptions of participants' and interviewers' images are shared after the qualitative analysis to show strength of fit and coherence with the model.

Saturation

Although other inductive methodologies such as grounded theory use a constant comparative analysis strategy (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) where theoretical sampling, data collection, and analysis occur concurrently, to achieve saturation and develop and confirm patterns in emerging data, an iterative process was not feasible during this research because of scheduling constraints. Due to time constraints, in-depth analyses were not conducted until after all data had been collected. Despite that, participants representing diverse viewpoints were selected to achieve theoretical sampling. Of course, the concept of "theoretical saturation" was limited in this endeavor: each Muslim woman activist's life is unique, and there will always be something new to learn (Wray et al., 2007). Furthermore, a critical feminist perspective wholly rejects any claim that any sample could reflect the entirety of Muslim women activists; instead, participants in this sample reflect their own experiences in their unique organizations, as

well as the specific relationships, policies, and systems that have shaped them. Within that singularity, the methodology deployed in this study celebrates each individual while documenting intersecting or overlapping experiences towards constructing a model that reflects the collective particularity of these 10 Muslim women activists in Boston and is sufficiently general to inform future research among Muslim women activists.

Trustworthiness, Credibility, and Relevance

Trustworthiness is the extent to which research can be viewed as credible and accurate (Elo et al., 2014). Feminist researchers emphasize credibility and relevance as critical to establishing the rigor of qualitative research. Specifically, feminist researchers conceptualize credibility as the degree to which the description of participants' experiences would be recognized by them "as their own" (Hall & Stevens, 1991). Relevance, a concept that emerges in PAR models as well (Green & Glasgow, 2006), refers to the degree to which the research can serve women's interests and improve the conditions of women's lives. While this is a lofty goal for any single study, the principles of credibility and relevance were enhanced through specific techniques. For example, I engaged in source triangulation, also sometimes known as "member-checking" (Thomas, 2006). Consistent with general inductive qualitative methods (Thomas, 2006), and arts-based inquiry methods (Leavy, 2015) I employed "member-checking" in three ways: (1) confirming themes at the completion of an interview summarizing content by the creation and sharing of art expressions, as an opportunity to correct for fact errors and misinterpretations (Thomas, 2006); (2) throughout the research process by asking interviewees about specific themes and ideas as they emerged (e.g. "Some people said this, what do you think?"); and (3) a participant feedback session, where all participants were invited to give feedback on preliminary findings.

Regarding relevance, Prilleltensky (2003) describes a need for interventions to have "psychopolitical validity," meaning:

> the extent to which studies and interventions in the community integrate (a) knowledge with respect to the multidisciplinary and multilevel sources, experiences, and consequences of oppression, and (b) effective strategies for promoting psychological and political liberation in the personal, relational, and collective domains. (p. 9)

To increase relevance and take social liberation into account, I developed and discussed research questions with a small group of members from the Muslim Justice League Health Justice Team. Specifically, I asked them how they would like to see these findings utilized, and how they might be helpful to participants or the community of Muslim organizers. Additionally, after the preliminary coding was complete, I invited all participants to an optional feedback session. I aimed to elicit from them feedback on my analyses as well as ideas for thinking about the possible implications of the findings for them as members of the Muslim community of greater Boston, mental health professionals, and other activists working alongside their communities. Oral and written commentary was solicited (Thomas, 2006) and participants who did not attend the meeting were invited to discuss findings over the phone or email. The participants who attended the feedback session shared that the process of learning about the findings facilitated conversations which were not currently taking place among organizers, which was useful in reflecting on issues raised in the interviews (i.e., a desire to talk about internal issues in the Muslim community, different goals and theories of social change). A few participants expressed a desire to attend the dissertation defense and to continue talking about ways to use the findings.

Reflexivity

As a psychologist engaging in exploring Muslim women's journeys of resistance, I have to responsibly engage my power and role in the process of research as social action. (Lykes, 2001) and Burstow (2003) help position and define the role of psychologists interfacing with

traumatic oppression from feminist perspectives, "one must reposition oneself as a knower within the historical, cultural, and political contexts of that which one seeks to know, situating one's work within an interdisciplinary framework, and drawing on alternative psychological practices with survivors" (Lykes, 2001, p.96). Burstow (2003) states:

> Insofar as regaining power is central to what so much traumatized coping is about, an absolutely critical direction for radical trauma praxis is redirecting some of the focus off controlling self and onto acquiring real power in the larger world. […] Given the enormous significance of group trauma, community trauma, and historical trauma, and given the disconnection from community and others that is inherent in trauma, more emphasis on community, group work, and witnessing is in order. (Burstow, 2003; p. 1311)

In my approach to this project, I saw myself as someone who chose to witness others' stories and stand in partnership with them, recognizing our shared histories as well as stark differences due to varied identities and positionalities in relationship to anti-Muslim violence.

Hindu Identity but Racialized as Muslim.

Informed by the Feminist PAR literatures (see, e.g., Lykes & Coquillon, 2009), this research embraced the critically important assumption that researchers' positionality be transparent and critically reflected on in knowledge construction processes within qualitative interpretive data analysis. I identify as an educated, documented, South Asian, cis-gendered woman of Hindu-descent. At times I have been read and racialized by others as Muslim, however, I do not understand the unique experience of being Muslim in the current Islamophobic political climate. That said, I see myself as a partner in the struggle to end anti-Muslim violence. I have been involved in and committed to this fight in multiple ways: I am a part of the No Islamophobia Boston coalition, a member of the Muslim Justice League Health Justice Strategy Team, a member of an Asian-American fighting anti-Muslim violence working group, and I have co-facilitated two local anti-Islamophobia workshops. Additionally, I am considered a campus-based student organizer for the issue of Islamophobia with the Don't Meet Hurt with Hate

campaign, which I helped organize after the Boston marathon bombing. These experiences have helped me to build trust and a collaborative relationship with multiple Boston-based Muslim communities fighting anti-Muslim violence.

Joining Fighting Anti-Muslim Violence Working Group

A space for South Asian non-Muslim allies, the Fighting Anti-Muslim Violence working group met monthly to process our identities, our power, and our experiences in how to show up for Muslim communities. It served as the playground and workspace for my reflexivity; it was a space in which I attended closely to histories of violence between Hindus and Muslims and explored the U.S. government's relationship with Hindu-Indian leaders. In this group we explored the divide between Hindus and Muslims being furthered by many Hindu-Americans' striving toward proximity to whiteness, and deeply embedded Islamophobia within our own families. We explored narratives we heard growing up (e.g., "Muslims stole our land and killed our people in their homes") and discussed our roles in fighting back against Muslim hate in Hindu communities. I was able to interrogate my identity among peers, which directly shaped my perspective in coding the data (i.e., I was able to recognize biases I may not have caught previously). For example, one idea we discussed in the group is Muslim women feeling tokenized by Hindu, Brahmin, researchers in the academy (all identities which I embody). When I was coding the data, I noticed sometimes my interest in focusing on concepts which felt novel to me – including, for example, one participant navigating her relationship with her hair through her Muslim and Black identities. I noticed that this narrative was particularly captivating to me, a researcher who is neither Black nor Muslim, and has not had my own journey with making decisions about revealing my hair in such ways. Because of the discussions in the Fighting Anti-Muslim Violence group, I reflected on this desire to "fetishize" this participant's experience

rather than pay closer attention to what was important to her during my coding of her interview (this is discussed more in Chapter Four's reflexivity section later). When issues of particular interest to me came up in my coding of the data, my experiences in this and other groups contributed to enhanced self-understanding of my own positionality and encouraged me to re-read transcripts multiple times to be sure I was highlighting participants' narratives as they had been co-constructed in our dialogic in-depth interview, instead of over-focusing on what may have been my projections.

Creating Art "Echo" Reflection Images During Interviews

The images I made during each participants' interviews served as a method for engaging in reflexive practice during the interview and beyond. The images I created were "echos" – my reflection back to them –and for myself– of the story or primary narrative thread in what they had shared with me. The reflective "echoes" facilitated my reflexive practice –as they were summaries of the salient things *I* heard as I both listened deeply and led through follow up questions during the interviews; meaning, they captured a more personal, immediate, and direct reflection of my thoughts, and interpretations as I was positioned at their side. I was able to share these with participants at the time, in part to "check and see" if I "had gotten it right" – did I hear their narratives as they wished to share them? Was "my version" of their story that was being co-constructed in our conversation the one they were hoping to share? What differences did they see or hear as they looked at and listened to my narratives of my representation of the interview? As I worked on my images concurrently, some elements of participants' illustrations influenced mine. This process may have contributed to my encoding participants' subconscious expressions into my embodied experience of their narratives. In other words, when a participant used the color yellow or the shape of a bridge to depict their experiences, I too, would use that imagery if

it resonated as I made my illustration, suggesting to me that it resonated with what I had experienced and/or listened to in their narratives and subsequently helped shape my internal, embodied experience of their story and my future interpretation of the data. Thus, creating and sharing reflective "echo" illustrations informed my interpretations of the data. Findings from the interviews with Muslim women activists' who participated in this study, as analyzed through the processes described above, are summarized in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with participants resulted in the identification of eight "clusters," including: (1) living in a post 9/11 sociopolitical context; (2) navigating the Muslim community context; (3) internal experiences of being a Muslim woman; (4) guiding ideals toward activism journey; (5) development of political analyses; (6) resistance actions toward social change; (7) burdens and benefits of engagement in resistance; and (8) supportive forces in the process of resistance. In this chapter, I will first describe the sample in this study, then provide an overview of the constructivist theoretical model I generated to represent my interpretations of the participants' narratives, and outline the findings within each of the clusters briefly identified above. Within each cluster, I will describe the codes and then categories that were developed from analyzing participants' accounts, noting the frequency of such descriptions, as well as variations within each category. Specific codes in each category will be indicated with italicized text. Variations existed among participants' and within their accounts. After composites from the clusters are reviewed, the model is illustrated through two participants narratives. Finally, participants' images created during the art inquiry as well as my reflective 'echo' image summarizing key themes in their interviews, are shared.

Participants

The participants in this study include 10 self-identified Muslim women who reported being involved in responding to anti-Muslim policies, practices, attitudes, and behaviors in the Boston area at the time of the interview. All participants had lived in the United States for more than ten years, to assure the context of resistance that they were describing were in response to a similar anti-Muslim climate. I conducted and recorded all ten interviews in English. Participants

are identified by a pseudonym, in some cases of their choosing, in order to maximize the possibility of protecting their highly sensitive information and preserve their anonymity.

Participants were an ethnically diverse group of women whose ages ranged from 21 to 72. One participant chose not to disclose her age but based on her interview I assume that she fell within that age range. Participants described their ethnic backgrounds as African-American (1), Bengali-American (2), Egyptian-American (1), Pakistani-American (2), Indian-American (1), Libyan-American (1), and White-American (2). Participants varied across the following education levels: bachelors-level (4), masters-level (4), and doctoral level (2). Seven women identified as "Muslim;" one as "Multi-faith Sufi Muslim;" one as "agnostic Muslim;" and one as "secular, non-religious Muslim." Participants were not asked to share specific information about their socio-economic status, though some participants disclosed that they were from low and middle-class backgrounds. Participants were not asked to disclose their sexual orientation, though two mentioned identifying as "queer" during their interviews. Two identified as being parents, and five mentioned being married. See Table 1 for an overview of demographic information, including excerpts from participants' response to an open-ended question about how the world would be different if Islamophobia were gone, providing a brief snapshot of the vision behind each woman's engagement in social action.

Table 1.

Overview of Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Self-described Ethnic Background	Education	Religion	Organizational Affiliation	Response to "how would the world be different if Islamophobia were gone?"
Fatima	72	South Asian Bengali	Master's Educational Counseling	Muslim	Dorchester People for Peace	"I think that's the salvation for us, that if we can understand each other, with sympathy and empathy, there is a chance we could all fight together [...] It could be wonderful, sparkly, star-like."
Pinka	38	Pakistani	Master's Mental Health Counseling	Muslim	Ummah Health	"I really wish people didn't have the misconceptions as they did. I really wish they saw Muslim women for, how I see them. Like, to me they're like, God so strong and powerful, and like these, you know, and our history, like camel riding warriors. I wish they saw them that way."
Ms. Marvel	24	Bengali	Master's in Public Health	Muslim	Center for American-Islamic Relations	"I think I wouldn't second question my faith as much. I think I would have more freedom to just be. I wouldn't have to think about how my actions or my words are or aren't impacting, the larger picture and issue. I think members of the community would feel that way too [...] having a strong

						identity as something other than Muslim and not having to worry about how the Muslim identity gets in the way."
Bold Babe	41	Pakistani	Master's in Middle Eastern Studies	Secular, non-religious Muslim	Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center	"I think what I would really idealistically like to see is a powerful Muslim community. What I see as empowerment is communities taking charge of their own issues and facing them. Not worrying about the airing of dirty laundry, talking about internalized racism, misogyny, family violence um, these types of things. Homophobia, queerphobia, transphobia these type of things are the things I want to talk about."
Rashida	30	Egyptian American	Master's in Engineering	Agnostic Muslim	Muslim Justice League	"I think that everything about how we view ourselves, our relationships with each other, the structure of like how we function in a community I think all of that would be different.[...] I currently kind of believe anarchist, communalist type of structure in a way where everything is led by the bottom up."
Nadiya	24	South Asian Indian	Bachelor's in Political Science	Sufi Muslim	International Muslim Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment	"It's hard to imagine, right? Like, but I think, I think like the moments that I see joy in a young person, I see like creativity in young people, those are the moments that, like I am able to imagine the world."

Tamara	34	African American	Doctorate in Psychology	Muslim	University of Massachusetts	"It'd feel freer, like, you don't have to think about who you are and all your complexities, all of the things that make you who you are and that make you unique would be appreciated, would be celebrated, would be valued, would be uplifted. And we would commemorate all the injustice and wrongs that have been done, so we don't forget."
Layla	37	White	Juris Doctorate	Muslim	Muslim Justice League	"I would probably go to the mosque a lot more. Because it would feel like a safe place for what it was intended for worship and community. I would not censor myself, you know I'd feel safe speaking with folks without having full view of their political awareness. I wouldn't spend so much time worrying about, best practices for security with my phone and my email. I would have so much more mental space. I would just appreciate people, spend time with people and then I would need to find a new profession which is awesome."
Nancy	undisclosed	American	Master's in Education	Muslim	Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center	"I think we all have blind spots and we all should spend a little more time questioning what we know and where we get the information that we base our opinions on. I don't think any of us do enough of that."

Amira	21	Libyan	Bachelor of Arts	Muslim	Harvard Anti-Islamophobia Network	“I actually like think that despair is like tied to hope. Like I think if I were doing this because I believe that I wouldn’t see results in my lifetime then I just wouldn’t be doing it at all.”

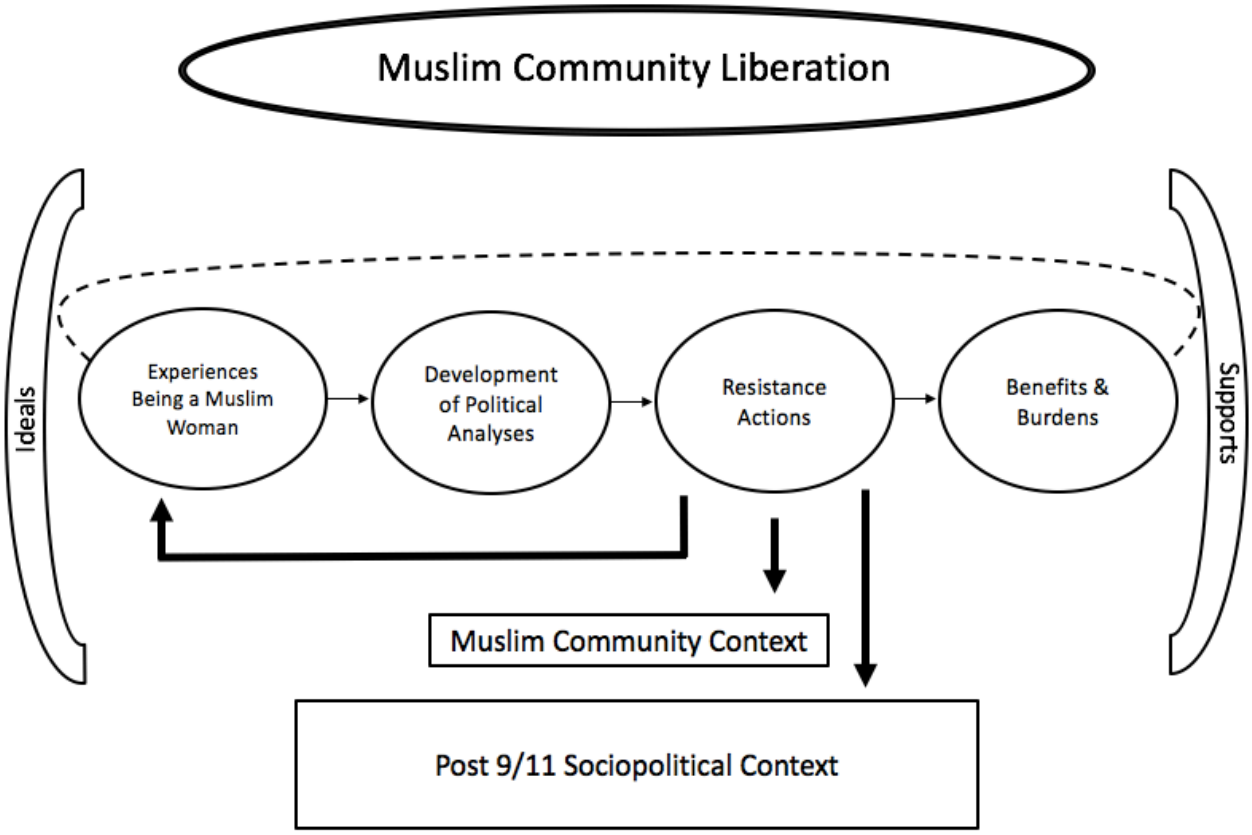
Study Findings

Constructivist Theoretical Model

The inductive thematic analyses of the in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 10 Muslim women activists are represented in the model below (Figure 1). The model was generated through clustering thematic codes that are illuminated through direct quotes from participant interviews identified through the inductive coding process described above. Themes categorizing coding across participants' illustrations also informed the model. The model summarizes the iterative interpretive processes identified in coding the interviews in which Muslim women activists described entering into and carrying on work toward community liberation. This dynamic process is represented through the stories shared in the in-depth interviews briefly described above. The theoretical model reflects both the expertise of the Muslim women activists as well as their personal journeys, the particularities of the contexts in which they live and work, and, as described above, the positionality and reflexivity of the researcher conducting the analyses.

Figure 1.

Muslim Women Activists' Processes of Resistance Toward Community Liberation



Despite multiple diversities among these Muslim women activists, they describe their identities and resistance actions as working toward Muslim community liberation, an aspiration involving an envisioned powerful, resilient community, through which Muslim's political power is realized, wherein speaking openly in the Muslim community is embraced, and the possibility of freedom world-wide is actualized. They described their resistance as situated within a post 9/11 United States sociopolitical context fraught with anti-Muslim policies, practices, attitudes, and behaviors. A secondary context within which their resistance takes place is their own Muslim community context - including their various family backgrounds, levels of

conservativism, and within-community dynamics involving oppression including patriarchy and anti-blackness. Their activism focused on shifting these contexts and was developed iteratively, comprised of their own internal emotional experiences and convictions as Muslim women, the development of their political analyses elaborating what forces are responsible for the problem and should be targeted in change strategies, all contributing to their chosen methods of resistance that target society, community, and internalized oppression. Effects of their actions included benefits such as joy and inspiring change as well as burdens, including tolls on mental health, loneliness, and being targeted by law enforcement – all of which feed back into their internal sense of themselves. Supports (i.e., connection, encouragement, compensation) and ideals (i.e., sense of responsibility, protecting the future for our children) help maintain this process fueling Muslim women's aspirations for community liberation. Importantly, women activists described their own personal identities as a central mechanism fueling their resistance; for example, claiming being Muslim or wearing a hijab in the political context is a critical action. Walking out of the door as a Muslim woman was narrated as harnessing inner power that facilitates their combatting internalized oppression and resisting systemic silencing that is reinforced by both the Muslim and the wider communities. Thus, this model is deeply particular to the formation of Muslim women activists in the United States and in Boston yet sufficiently abstract to inform future research and application in other similar, but equally unique, contexts.

Each component of the model is elaborated upon below through descriptions of the thematic clusters summarized above and including sub-themes in italics, frequencies, quotes from participants' interviews, and participants' illustrations. As mentioned above, participants were asked to create two visual representations: (1) their journey into becoming an activist and (2) a salient emotional experience during their activism work. Their images and descriptive

quotes are embedded in relevant thematic clusters below. After the description of the model's clusters, two narrative examples reflective of two of the 10 *Muslim Women Activists' Processes of Resistance Toward Community Liberation* are shared. Finally, data from my reflexive "echo" images and a summary of participants' experiences and feedback about engaging in this project are discussed.

Cluster 1: Living in a Post 9/11 Sociopolitical Context

This first cluster describes the sociopolitical context as these Muslim women activists experience it. All participants situated their experiences as occurring in a post 9/11 political context. For example, Bold Babe noted being questioned post-9/11: "I woke up in a world after 9/11 where suddenly my allegiances to this country where I was born and raised were questioned." Specifically, participants described: (1) being a political enemy; (2) feeling stigma against Muslim women; and (3) experiencing profiling and targeting. Participants' political analyses of the problem reflected in this cluster directly connected to their resistance strategies (Cluster 6) and targeted ideals (Cluster 4) they strive toward in their organizing work.

Being a Political Enemy

All ten participants described anti-Muslim policies, practices, attitudes, and behavior portraying Muslims as a political enemy in the United States. Five participants identified *structures powered by Islamophobia* (e.g., corporations, the Trump election, white supremacy, Israel, and the media), for example, Fatima narrated how she perceived the Muslim world as being besieged for corporate oil benefits:

> I lived in Iraq in 1950 when there was a coup and a CIA led counter coup. This man [Saddam Hussein] suddenly became an enemy. I think he was planning to nationalize oil. And possibly there was some loose talk of currency change on the dollar. Somewhere they decided who was the enemy. So, for 10 years before 9/11 that country was bombarded on a daily basis, all of which the American public don't know. So even though I wasn't really doing anything about it, I knew about it. I could feel the Muslim

> world getting besieged...and it was always about oil. I knew that. Always about resources. It's always been...US foreign policy, has always been for the benefit of the corporate. –*Fatima*

Six participants identified *government policies promoting Islamophobia* (e.g., Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and the Muslim Ban). Layla explained Boston's uptake of CVE:

> [It was] announced that Boston would be the site of a pilot program on Countering Violent Extremism. And uh, we knew from the broader context what had happened to the UK and their CVE program called PREVENT and just the preceding steps that federal law enforcement really, the US Attorney's Office and FBI had been... grooming, there's really no better word for it, grooming, creating "leaders" to act as, um, you know really informants on the community. Folks keeping check on political activism and reporting back [to the government] what community members were doing. –*Layla*

Eight participants described a systematic profiling and surveillance, "*we're the boogie man now."* Many participants discussed how they felt Muslims became branded as terrorists because of the actions of a few and therefore live in a context of profiling and surveillance. Pinka explained that the United States has always had a group it singles out and targets:

> We're the boogieman for now. You know, American history is rife with, whoever was sort of umm boogie man du jour of the time and the day, and you know it was everyone. It was Italians, Irishmen, it was Catholics, it was, you know it was Jews, it was Japanese people ... Black people continue to be. So, we've had lots, and lots, and lots of groups sort of targeted for whatever reason so that's sort of like, you know as old as time, that tale kind of a thing. –*Pinka*

The experiences of being a political enemy took multiple forms for participants.

Stigma Against Muslim women

Eight participants talked about living in a context of stigma against Muslim women. Five discussed experiences where automatically their identities as *Muslim women are viewed as oppressed* (by others). For example, Fatima explained that other feminists dictate the oppression she experiences:

> I've had feminists come up to me and say no, you don't really know… that you're not oppressed, you are oppressed. So, it's like, you know. What are the words I would use: It takes away my decision making, or my ability to be the one in charge of my life. Because they are telling me the reality of my life and what I'm supposed to feel. -*Fatima*

Six of the women talked about the *controversy surrounding hijab* including experiences of it being pulled off, discussions by non-Muslims about it representing oppression, and being interrogated by others about the decision to wear it. Layla described street harassment for wearing her hijab:

> When I presented visually as Muslim, um through wearing hijab, you know I've gotten the stereotypical little bit of street harassment here or there. –*Layla*

Profiling and Targeting

Five participants spoke about increased profiling and targeting they and their loved ones experienced post 9/11. Bold Babe talked about her mother being a target of harassment and discrimination in their family neighborhood; she described how painful it was for her to see her mom targeted:

> One of the things that is really painful for me and it will make me cry is thinking of my mom as a target. She was targeted a few times after 9/11, that is something that I find beyond tolerable. –*Bold Babe*

Seven participants talked about *being seen as a terrorist after 9/11.* They described how their skin color and religious practices were suddenly synonymous with terrorism. Ms. Marvel talked about the double standard surrounding skin tone regarding terrorism:

> Being seen a certain way, ya know the fact that when people say terrorist they think of a Brown person. Ya know that's kind of just like how it is now. Ya know, that's why there is a term like White terrorist. –*Ms. Marvel*

Three participants referenced experienced of *surveillance of Muslims* post 9/11. They described surveillance experience in healthcare offices, on their phones, and witnessing the grooming of Muslim leaders to act as informants on the community. Layla relayed an experience of her phone being surveilled by Sting Ray technology when she was providing legal representation to Muslims:

> After MJL [Muslim Justice League] had been established a local incident, heavily involving various law enforcement happened. And on that day, I was contacted for help, and my phone was consequently non-operational, it wouldn't accept or make calls, it was odd. But it wouldn't accept or make calls or accept or make texts, for several hours of that day. And uh, never happened before and never happened since. This happened to other people who we have reason to believe were connected to this incident. And actually, [it] follows a pattern of using Sting Ray technology of law enforcement, or similar. We're not sure that it was specifically Sting Ray, but something like that. –*Layla*

Layla's image (see Figure 2) about her journey into social action was particularly illustrative of her experiences of the post 9/11 sociopolitical context. Her image includes a sketch of a police officer holding a gun, foregrounded by figures standing in a circle holding hands.

Figure 2. *Layla's Journey.*

When describing her journey image, she talked about the state of violence Muslims are living in domestically and although people try, they are never fully able to protect one another:

> I wanted to do some sort of international human rights law, working with refugees, something related to the War on Terror, but I didn't realize how much there was to domestically. […] Other folks who have like guns pointed at them because they are under far more threat than I am. […] You just can't break through with the power of the state and the violence that's there and surrounding it. I love in this work [that] we are all coming together and trying to support each other and um, and trying, even with this

> flimsily little veil, guard protection, trying to obstruct the power of the police to harm [us]. The knowledge that people are there and we're glad that people are here for one another but ultimately [we're] never fully able to protect one another. –*Layla*

Cluster 2: Navigating the Muslim Community Context

This second cluster describes the complex Muslim community context participants are both a part of and see as a source of frustration. Specifically, participants described: (1) community oppression; (2) politically inactive Muslims; and (3) their family histories as rooted in this context. The Muslim community context was also discussed in Cluster 6 (resistance actions toward social change) as a site of action and Cluster 8 (supportive forces in the process of resistance) as a source of desire for more within-community support.

Community Oppression

Nine participants described experiencing oppression inside their community including gendered discrimination, patriarchy, anti-blackness, homophobia, and silencing of issues such as domestic violence. Four participants explained *gendered discrimination and patriarchy*; Bold Babe elaborated on the multiple ways she experienced this at work:

> My bosses would request that I go get them coffee like I was their maid. I actually stopped sitting at my desk. As an organizer it didn't really matter. Is that all you see in me is someone that to be of service to men, not to the community. I've done my time, I'm supposed to be on a leadership track. ... I should have been able to add to the narrative perspective. I should have been able to help with steering um, directing; I think that was part of the problem that I do see myself as a leader. I should help steer and direct how we do this stuff and I get blocked by men who are younger than me, less experienced than me, less qualified than me, because they are whatever. They get all the legitimacy because they're men ...It's a very common experience I've had unfortunately working within Muslim NGO's, not NGOs but Muslim nonprofits and stuff. Um, that my bosses tend to be men. –*Bold Babe*

Four participants discussed *anti-blackness* and ethnic hierarchies in the community. Tamara described her father, an African-American man, as not being taken seriously within the mosque:

> Like my dad has had a leadership position at that mosque for as long as I can remember and like is not respected enough to be able to lead prayer because he, he's not like a person that is viewed as speaking enough Arabic to be able to do that. Even though he is

> the one who taught me all the things, all the verses and surahs, chapters from the Quran, that I know. –*Tamara*

Another unique set of experiences within the Muslim community include *reactions to those who converted to Islam*. Three participants discussed their own experiences of conversion or their families experiences a generation earlier. Layla explained curious reactions toward her as well as exclusion from other Muslims:

> It's interesting, within the Muslim community folks will often ask you [about] your conversion story and they'll say and I believe this, "Oh we wanna hear that because, you know we are born Muslim and sometimes we're like we have no choice it was just the way we were raised and it brought a perspective and it can be very inspiring for us to hear that." Which is very touching; so, I don't want to be like, stingy about sharing that even though it feels very like, you feel very vulnerable and exposed sharing that with someone you don't know well. But at the same time, sometimes that can be sort of used and wielded as a club against you in terms of you know, "You don't really understand what it's like because you're not, X, Y, Z, you're not really official." –*Layla*

Ms. Marvel's emotional experience image (see Figure 3) was particularly illustrative of her experiences within the Muslim community context. Her image includes an "emotional compass" at the center, depicting a heart and plus and minus signs with arrows pointed to symbols she sketched. Surrounding the center are symbols of a mosque, money, friends, and a home.

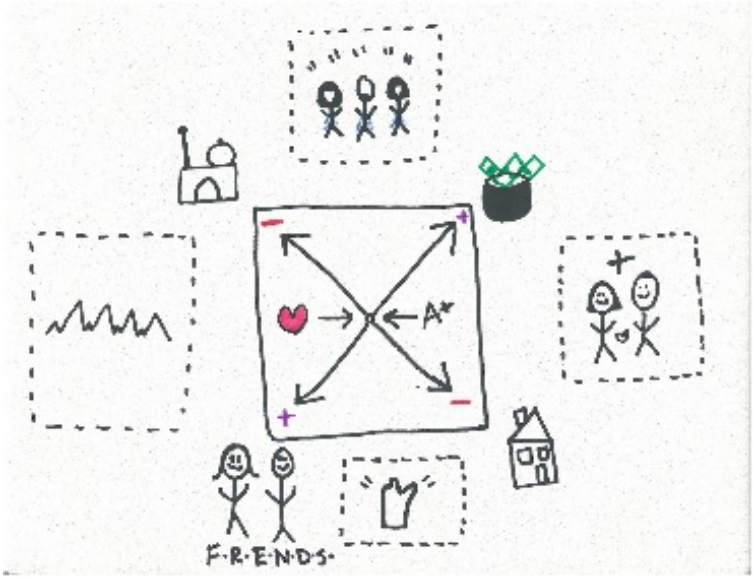


Figure 3. *Ms. Marvel's Emotional Experience Illustration.*

She pointed to different parts of her image as she described the illustrative depiction of her experiences at the mosque as a woman, her parents' perceptions of her choice to engage in activism, and her wishes for others within the Muslim community to see the value of her work:

> The [anonymous] mosque and all the different feelings that were going through my head during that. There were some positive reinforcements from that but also negative ones. Positive being we get a good amount of dollar support from that mosque. … And then negative ones, the general [un]comfortability of speaking at a mosque and being seen as a leader when I felt like the exact opposite growing up. Also, negative thinking about [being] at home with my parents. This isn't where they saw me ending up [an activist] … [they have] uncomfortability and insecurities about it. Wanting to feel appreciated and loved by the people close to me even if the work I'm doing is not something that they understand. […] This is supposed to be like the Muslim community being excited and like being engaged and active. They're still your parents there is always like a part of you that wants them to like be proud of you and like feel like all their sacrifices and everything they've done for you are worth it. … wanting the people back home that I grew up with, the Bengali community, also seeing the value of this work. *–Ms. Marvel*

Cluster 3: Internal Experiences Being a Muslim Woman

The third cluster describes participants' inner emotional experiences of living in the above contexts. Specifically, participants discuss (1) living under a microscope, (2) carrying emotional burdens, and (3) feeling personal power. This cluster was interestingly both a tool in the process of engaging in Muslim liberation as well as a site of action. As is elaborated on in discussing Cluster 6, Muslim women felt that the politicization of their identities was a mechanism of resistance. Participants also described feeling that their personal power and the process of undoing internalized oppression were ongoing sources that mobilized action.

Living Under a Microscope

Eight participants described a general experience of *hypervisibility*, including a politicized identity and living in fear. They spoke of being perceived differently after 9/11, including being targeted, ignored, and their religious attire (hijab) suddenly becoming a source of

Muslim identification and controversy. For example, Nancy explained how 9/11 shifted how others perceived her:

> Up until 9/11 that's when it became really scary to be a recognizable Muslim. And I think that was the first time that I ever really felt that. –*Nancy*

One participant, Tamara, discussed her *blackness as a protection* and after 9/11. She described that people knew her as Muslim before 9/11 but noted that they categorized her as Black afterwards.

> I was a senior in high school when 9/11 happened. I had already kind of gone through several years of school with my peers. They already knew me, everybody knew I was Muslim. People knew my parents, so I feel like I was really fortunate that I didn't receive a lot of…Like people for the most part didn't treat me differently. Or ya know, people that I already knew, I guess people that I cared about didn't treat me differently or look at me differently. And I think that a lot of that has to do with my particular intersection being Black and also being Muslim. I, as somebody who was African- American, that people who knew me knew that I was African-American saw, like saw those two things together and so didn't categorize me as being part of this group of people [of Muslims]. –*Tamara*

During her interview she elaborated on navigating the intersection of her Muslimness and blackness in how she wore her hair, if she wore hijab, and her experiences of marginalization within the Muslim community.

Carrying Emotional Burdens

All ten participants described emotional burdens they carry as related to their identities as Muslim women. Anger, burden, trauma, depression, powerlessness, performance pressures, and instincts to hide were expressed. Nine experienced an *instinct to hide* encompassing feelings of shame, not belonging and loneliness. Some described this experience as being heightened after the Trump election. Nancy explained her vulnerability after the 2015 San Bernardino, California attacks carried out by Muslims:

> I was feeling you know, horrified and frightened and sickened about what had happened to my country by who knows who and at the same time, you know, there's stories about women in the park wearing hijab with their children getting attacked or taxi drivers being

> pulled out of their cabs. And you know, a lot of really, really ugly things happening and so you're sort of doubly vulnerable, and when all of this, you know, attention started being shed on this school and on me to step into that space, my first instinct, I think was to just want to go hide somewhere. Like, why would I want to put myself into that? – *Nancy*

In the midst of trying to shield oneself from judgements and projections from the public, four reported feeling a *pressure to perform.* They spoke of being asked to speak on the behalf of their entire religion to non-Muslims and experiencing a pressure to perform strength and devise actions from within the community. Bold Babe explained the burdens Muslim women face to perform others' expectations:

> There are all sorts of cultural pressures as a female that I face. That I have to be a certain way that I have to uphold certain values or standards. Particularly, because we happen to be, ya know, immigrant backgrounds, people tend to clutch on to their cultures harder. Women are often times given the expectations, the burden, carrying the burden of like, ya know, community expression or, ya know, setting down the boundaries of one's culture or community. These expectations are often times placed on women. Um and then externally the way society views Muslim women as only oppressed as being without agency. As something that those two things together make it really difficult for Muslim women to navigate their own world and their own lives. –*Bold Babe*

While not asked directly about *trauma*, two participants shared emotional wounds that they carry, noting that these are not necessarily spoken of regularly, but are common among many Muslim women. Nadiya shared how her trauma gets triggered while engaging in organizing work:

> I was sexually assaulted when I was in high school by a Muslim man. And so, there's you know, the initial sort of challenges of organizing and activism within the Muslim community generally, um and then, linking like my trauma to that, is its own sort of experience. And so, like, you know, like there's that general reaction that you have when a Muslim man disagrees with me too, and then like when its trauma informed almost, that reaction changes and it feels personal. Because it is personal. And, so, that's sort of one of the first things that comes up because I'm doing the organizing around that issue. – *Nadiya*

She shared her traumas in her journey illustration (see Figure 4). Her image includes a collage of a flower, stem, and grass. She painted an eye with teardrops falling from it onto the grass, symbolizing a visual representation of her pain contributing to her growth and survival.

Figure 4. *Nadiya's Journey Illustration.*

Nadiya discussed her visual depiction of how her trauma shaped her and where she is now in life:

> I just think that I am growing right now. I think that I've taken what's happened to me and really found ways to push forward. I drew three tear drops, I have three major traumatic experiences that I think about as like the central three big things that have happened. There was my first sexual assault by like a much older Muslim man in the community. There was Israel, so, like, sort of, like, coming face to face with Zionist occupation and returning that experience. There was my two-year relationship with my fiancé, who is Arab, the way it ended, how he behaved afterwards, being a brown woman in that relationship and existing throughout it. Those three things were really, really, hard for me. I think I could've gone in a totally different direction after them, but I'm here, I facilitate healing spaces for women, I'm open to whatever happens and how it happens. Because if I can survive this, I'm welcoming the future. –*Nadiya*

Feeling Personal Power

Despite the difficult context in which Muslim women live, eight participants spoke about feeling personal power. A few spoke of feeling privileges or traits as constitutive of their Muslim identities, while others spoke of feeling respected and embraced by people outside their community. Four participants spoke about their *anti-authoritarian* nature, including, for example, Ms. Marvel who described her desire to be independent of her parents, the norm, and the status quo:

> I think part of it is just our own personalities. And, also, I think some of us felt the need to break away from something. Whether it be our parents or something else we experienced. We felt the need to break away from the norm, or the status quo. –*Ms. Marvel*

Four participants spoke about experiences growing up where they felt *embraced* and felt a sense of personal power because of the interest others took in them or the power they felt in the community. One participant talked about feeling powerful being part of the Black Muslim legacy, the Nation of Islam, and connected to Malcom X. Another, Rashida, described feeling embraced when others found her Egyptian Muslim culture cool and exciting:

> I was the Muslim girl, especially like with friendships, with relationships, I mean it was everything about being a child of immigrants and being Muslim. Like both of those threads. Ya know, people coming over and being like oh, what is this food your family is eating? At different points I did embrace it, when I could see that people were interested in it and found it cool and exciting. –*Rashida*

Four participants spoke about their *faith in Islam* as a source of strength and power. Fatima described it as the good energy that supports and protects all of us:

> I am a big practicing Muslim. So, for me, the nature of God, is good. It's a platform of good. And we're connected to it but we don't all tap into it. [...] So tapping into that supports me a lot. It is a drift, tapping into your protector energy. It is the energy of all of us. –*Fatima*

Cluster 4: Guiding Ideals Toward Activism Journey

The fourth cluster describes ideals articulated by participants which they noted had guided them to pursue activism and also served as guiding principles for their activism. Specifically, participants discussed: (1) Muslim liberation; (2) protecting our children's future; (3) democracy and progress; (4) fighting together because our oppression is related; (5) responsibility to women and community; and (6) promoting understanding. Cluster 4 encapsulates one of the key forces narrated in participants' stories about what they perceived to be driving the iterative process of engagement in Muslim Liberation described in the above model. Cluster 4 is also where considerable commonality was found among participants.

Muslim Liberation

Six participants discussed the goal of Muslim liberation guiding their work and vision. Muslim liberation as they described it encompasses realizing Muslims political power, actualizing freedom, finding self-understanding beyond internalized Islamophobia, wanting to talk openly in the Muslim community, and seeing a powerful, resilient Muslim community. Bold Babe described her goal of wanting to see empowered communities:

> I'm really interested in community resilience and building ourselves up and empowering ourselves. In the midst of these negative narratives about us ... I think the goal, a personal goal, is I want to see empowered communities. –*Bold Babe*

Pinka's image (see Figure 5) about her journey was particularly illustrative of the ideal and process of Muslim liberation, which was central in the model presented above. Her image includes sketches of women moving toward a painted sun, walking on top of a ground made out of collage paper including the words "peace on earth".

Figure 5. *Pinka's Journey.*

She shared how she made her image about women being a part of a legacy of engaging in social change, and that they'll get there together:

> Hope. It's moving towards the light, and this idea that it's a long stream of women just continuing to go towards the light. And we'll get there, you know, maybe we're there in some ways, but in many ways we're not. But we also follow in the footsteps of incredible women who laid down that path and have showed us the path and the journey. And we all add that next little pavement to continue on that path. And we'll get to there, we'll get to the mountain top. –*Pinka*

Protecting Our Children's Future

Three participants made clear their motivation to protect the future for their children and all children. Pinka described her wanting to be remembered by her daughter and the next generation as not giving up the fight. She cited her daughter as her source of inspiration for participating in the Women's March:

> The whole reason I sort of wanted to [march] was for my daughter, right? And, umm, the whole march thing started for her and when I sort of wrote this thing to me, to the close group of women, which I then changed because I felt way too vulnerable to sort of put it up for everybody. Umm, I talked about my daughter, and I talked about like being able to look into her eyes and, and, and be able to stand in front of her with some dignity and be like 'I tried', maybe I didn't get it all the way, maybe, but at least I didn't give up the fight … it really feels like it's for the next generation. –*Pinka*

Pinka's emotional experience image (see Figure 6) related to protecting her children's future. Her image is a painted yellow figure with smaller red, purple, and green, figures held within it.

Figure 6. *Pinka's Emotional Experience Illustration.*

As she described it, she explained both wanting to protect and inspire her children to stand up for others:

> Protection. I'm mostly driven, for wanting this to be a [better] place for my kids. If I could just crawl into bed with them [and] keep them away from the world I would. But what I hope is that if I'm able to do that for them, then maybe some of it happens for other people too. I hope I'm not just being completely selfish in wanting to protect and provide for my own. Help the next person, or stand up for the next person, or speak up for the next person, or whatever that looks like for them. These three colors represent my kids' favorite colors at the moment. *–Pinka*

Democracy and Progress

Four participants discussed maintaining democracy and moving toward progress (i.e., the political left) as motivating factors. Pinka explained how fragile democracy is and the importance of protecting it:

> Democracies are very fragile and ... it's really easy to slip into sort of, you know, dictatorships, or autocracies, you know, other forms of government that are just not what we want to be; I come from a country which you know, is a fledgling for democracy and can barely keep its act together, hasn't kept its act together. And I don't follow the politics of Pakistan. Democracy is really hard, it's really hard to become prime minister and not pass the baton down to your child, right? Or not to appoint people to positions of power because, you owe them favor. It's really hard not to do that. And we've got a good, you know, democracy...it is the American experiment, and it's a good experiment that we've got going, and I feel right now that lots of things are threatening it. *–Pinka*

Rashida described her hope to empower the Muslim community to venture to the left politically:

> My dad and I don't agree on everything and I know I'm not going to radicalize him, that is not going to happen at his age. But I would still want to protect him from these ridiculous things that happen. And at the same time, I do want to like empower a lot of people who I do see as my community again even though like we don't all agree politically and they may even see my politics as too radical. Um, but to be able to empower them and hopefully some of them will venture left politically. *–Rashida*

Fighting Together Because Our Oppression is Related

Six participants explained that their struggle as Muslims is not alone, rather, it is connected to other struggles, such as those of the Black Lives Matter movement and women's movement. This idea actually arose in the creation of this study (mentioned in Chapter Three), as a small group of community members wished that research could be done across groups to not isolate struggles that would then appear to operate in silos. Nadiya described her experience of multiple groups being affected by white supremacy and desiring to combat all oppression:

> We've attached a lot of progress to our proximity to whiteness in a way as a Muslim community. A lot of it has to do with visibility and success in the media, or I guess like I don't know what the word is, performative behaviors, rather than truly sustained, um, empowered sorts of practices. I guess that's where my passion for combatting anti-blackness and empowering women comes in because I don't think we are liberated until we are all liberated. *–Nadiya*

Responsibility to Women and Community

Nine participants discussed feeling a sense of responsibility to their community and to women guiding their work and practice. They discussed a sense of obligation to protect one another and to honor their faith. In line with these guiding principles they discussed wanting to actualize these goals in the processes of organizing, such as, keeping organizing focused on grassroots, local issues and making sure women are at the front and center of all Muslim liberation organizing. Nancy shared a teaching from Islam that inspires her to continue working for her community:

> But it says, when the last day comes, you know believing that there is a final day, if you're in the process of planting a tree, or planting a tree, continue planting it. So even if it's the end, and you're in the mist of planting seeds, finish that thought. And so again, the line with the hopefulness and that positive aspiration, just keep planting those seeds. *–Nancy*

Pinka shared that she struggles for all women, but more so due to misperceptions of Muslim women, that is, the latter is why she fights:

> It's more been for me the fight for women in general, but then Muslim women in particular. Mostly because of how we're misunderstood and how we have lots placed on us from lots of different angles. *–Pinka*

Promoting Understanding

Eight participants spoke of helping others understand Muslims, as opposed to hating them and viewing them as terrorists, as the main goal of their work. Breaking down stereotypes and helping others understand their faith and identity motivates them. They desired to promote communication and build relationships across groups. Ms. Marvel explains her motivation to help others understand faith and identity through her eyes:

> When I was an undergrad I was part of the MSA [Muslim Student Association], like helped restart it, all of that. I remember when I wanted to start it, it was because I saw that Islam, Islam Muslims have this really bad image problem. And I wanted to fix it. By the time I graduated I realized that it was unfair to think that it was our problem to solve, that it was our image to save. ...and that, ya know, really it's about just being the person

> that you are and helping, I guess like helping others, ya know, understand the faith or identity through your eyes and not what they like see ya know, in other places. Like coming to that realization, I guess maybe trying to figure well then ya know, if it's not our responsibility than whose is it? –*Ms. Marvel*

Cluster 5: Development of Political Analyses

The fifth cluster encompasses the influences and ideas which contributed to the political analyses participants developed through their work. Participants shared various influences that contributed to their understanding of the root of the problem and what mechanisms they perceived to be responsible for maintaining anti-Muslim policies, practices, attitudes, and behaviors. The development of their political analyses constituted: (1) influences supporting their development of critical consciousness; (2) understanding anti-Muslim history pre 9/11; (3) witnessing age old tactics to manufacture an enemy; (4) seeing white supremacy in action; (5) knowing racism keeps people alienated and divided; (6) perceiving skewed branding of all Muslims based on some terrorists; and, (7) recognizing a scarcity mentality. This cluster is an important source of information for some of the women who see their role as supporting and sustaining the movement as it points towards important resources and ideological perspectives for the recruitment of other activists.

Influences Fostering Critical Consciousness

All 10 participants cited different influences on their political analyses. Eight participants pointed to *activities* when discussing how they became involved in organizing. These activities consisted of: organizing in the Muslim Student Association (MSA), going to demonstrations, having jobs as advocates, studying and taking classes, engaging in activism about other issues, living in Muslim countries, and having critical dialogues and speaking out against injustice. Bold Babe described how influential joining the MSA was for her:

> I became president of the Muslim Student's Association. As a result of 9/11, we revived the Muslim Student's Association, the MSA. It had existed prior to that but it was in

> non-operational form by the time I got onto campus. I was a little bit of non-traditional student. I went to UMass Boston so people were in different phases of their life. It's how I ended up being involved in Islamophobia work. I eventually became president of the MSA and it was funny because I used to say to myself as president of the MSA, I just enjoyed organizing and I used to say "if I could get a job where I got paid to do this for work that would be amazing."–*Bold Babe*

All 10 participants shared *resources* which influenced their activism and thinking. Three participants shared *leftist books* which shifted their thinking. Rashida described a Zapatista book which provided her an analysis of oppression:

> I studied this book a little bit, like a really cool seminar, not like a typical university seminar of Zapatista thought analysis. And they call it the capitalist hydra in this image. Of this monster with all of these different heads has been really helpful for me. To vocalize and visualize the way that I see what I'm doing. Which is yeah, that like many of the heads are racism, or capitalism or whatever, but like it's all, yeah the same monster. –*Rashida*

The *culture of college* was discussed by four participants as another influential source. For example, Fatima described an influential college professor:

> Arthur Bishop, who was my hero from the moment I met him, because he was so radical, so political, so passionate, so Chomsky- I mean this is 1964 Syria, and he was making us read Chomsky, you may not even know this because its long gone, the IF Stone Weekly, very radical, back then everything was paper - and this came out weekly with just amazing commentary… you have to just see things the right way. We read a book by Chomsky called 'Why We are in Vietnam' so he was talking about Vietnam and no one was talking about that. I just happened to fall into a milieu that was exciting and familiar to me. –*Fatima*

Seven women spoke about their parents or historic activists as sources of inspiration. Six discussed *inheriting a spirit of resistance* from their parents. Nadiya explained her mother's role in inspiring her to engage in women's empowerment:

> My mom specifically has been central to sort of my like draw towards women's empowerment. And, understanding it better and practicing it in my everyday life. My mother came to this country with her brother and worked here, and then met my dad here. And they are from two totally different worlds. They are from two different religions, two different, languages, two different parts of India, and, um, two different skin colors. Which, unfortunately matters a lot. And so, my mother's very, very light, my father is very, very dark, um, they fell in love and everyone said no, and she sort of ran away with him. Yeah, and so I feel like I've inherited that sort of, same spirit of resilience and

> resistance, um, to structures that seek to control women. And so, that's the story I grew up on. That's the first story that I knew how to tell, was how my parents met. Um, and I moved forward like in so many parts of my life with that same sense of self and self-worth, um the decisions that I make and, the people I choose to surround myself with are people that truly, like, want to empower me and other women. *–Nadiya*

Three women spoke about being *influenced by historic activists*, such as Dr. Martin Luther King. Amira drew inspiration from his work with white liberals:

> My friend reminded me that Dr. King worked with more white liberals than we will ever work with in our entire life. And that he, made a point to force himself into those places and my friend also said, imagine how many times Dr. King must have whispered under his breath or said to himself "you're being an annoying white person." You know? Like because he was in that space more than any of us, he was in it. And at a time when it must have been like so hard to be around white organizers, but he was there. But that is like the epitome of like character to me. Like that to me is good character. It's perfection. It's damn near perfection for me in terms of organizing around race. *–Amira*

Nadiya's emotional experience image (see Figure 7) was illustrative of external influences like learning about activism and inspiration from historic activists. Her image includes painted road with two eyes and teardrops on each side of it, leading toward a collage of Martin Luther King in a bright yellow background.

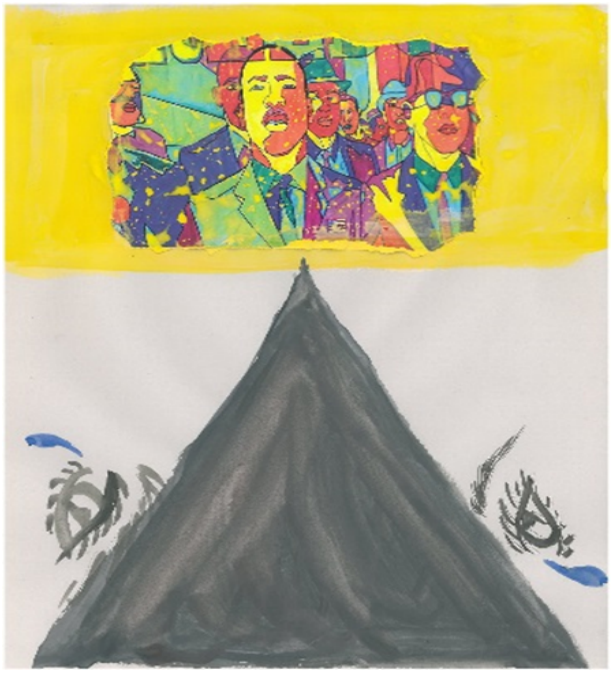


Figure 7. *Nadiya's Emotional Experience Illustration.*

When describing it, she stated:

> I've been thinking about [Dr. King] a lot lately. Dr. King, Malcom X, learning about the Black Panthers, learning about organizing, and self-sufficiency. It also like reminds of what's possible. –*Nadiya*

Understanding Anti-Muslim History Pre 9/11

Four participants shared their understanding of why Islamophobia exists as pre-dating 9/11. A couple referenced Islamophobia starting when slaves were stripped of their Muslim faith and forced to convert to Christianity, where others referenced conflicts from the last few decades in the Middle East including oil embargos in 70's U.S. invasion of Iraq. Fatima stated how it is bogus to link 9/11 to the beginning of Islamophobia:

> 2001 appears to be the beginning, and for a lot of Americans there is no history before that. Which is completely and totally bogus. But there is a lot of history in the 1990's with the Kuwait invasion, with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and America's response to that...after which for 10 years, 10 full years, Iraq was bombarded. –*Fatima*

Witnessing Age Old Tactics to Manufacture an Enemy

Seven participants discussed common tactics governments and cultures use to manufacture an enemy. Participants discussed the demonization of a certain group as something they've witnessed repeatedly, including narratives about migrants taking jobs or Black people being perceived as lazy to protect the interests of the dominant. Tamara described the importance of understanding these tactics:

> I think that the more that non-Black Muslims can see that [these are] the same tactics that have been used against Black people in the US since Black people have been in the US. Essentially like those tactics are the same and they all work to um, to keep all people of color down. Like the more that they can see that, the more that I think people can work together to change it. –*Tamara*

Related, Pinka described feeling like there is a puppeteering from the top of society to promote hatred of a group by manipulating the population's fears and anxieties:

> It sort of feels like puppeteering from the top, sort of manipulating people who already are vulnerable, and then sort of latching onto their fears and anxieties and anger and hatred and resentment, and whatever else. –*Pinka*

Seeing White Supremacy in Action

Five women discussed anti-Muslim sentiment as linked to white supremacy. They shared that whiteness maintains its dominance by creating an enemy of another race. Tamara shared her perspective on the racist roots of Islamophobia:

> I see all of it as, um, connected and as really serving to just uplift and uphold the structures of White supremacy in this country and White dominance in this country. –*Tamara*

Knowing Racism Keeps People Alienated and Divided

Related to the above theme, four women shared that they believe Islamophobia exists because disliking a group of people keeps the population alienated and divided. Nancy shared that Muslims are experiencing this now, but keeping people divided through racism has happened throughout history:

> There is, sort of, this long, unfortunate pattern of um, discrimination and racism and denying certain rights to the people because of what they look like and what part of the world they come from or their accent or how they dress or whatever. To me, it's all melted into that one big pot of racism, and we can just look at American history and we can see how many groups have gone through this, and I think that is a lot of it. –*Nancy*

Perceiving Branding of All Muslims Based on Some Terrorists

Four participants relayed branding of all Muslims as terrorists because of the actions of a few as their understanding of why Islamophobia exists. Fatima shared her frustration with this phenomenon:

> The very thing that is most crucially wrong right now. That every Muslim is targeted, branded, and labeled and that we're all terrorists because we're all Muslims and even if we haven't done something, if we don't jump to critique the behavior somewhere of a Muslim in the world, then somehow we're responsible for doing that. –*Fatima*

Recognizing Scarcity Mentality

Six participants discussed unfortunate human patterns permeating the anti-Muslim context. All of these patterns were connected with scarcity –lacking something – whether it be information, power and resources, or time spent communicating. Three women mentioned *ignorance* as a way to ignore the problems of Islamophobia. For example, Ms. Marvel explained pretending the problems are not there:

> People like to tuck things under the shadows and pretend it's not really there. Ya know, it's not as bad as it could be so it's not really a problem. –*Ms. Marvel*

Four participants elaborated on *craving power* – the idea that it is human nature to seek and maintain power. Bold Babe reflected on this as hoarding power in a world that is perceived as lacking resources:

> We have trained ourselves to look at our world as a space that is lacking. As opposed to a space that is full of bounty that is for everybody and that is meant to be shared. Um, people like to hoard resources, people like to hoard power. People don't like to share it. I mean that sets a very bad, power is something that trickles down. –*Bold Babe*

Bold Babe's emotional experience image was also illustrative of some of her political analysis about the scarcity mentality among organizers, and how it perpetuates injustice (see Figure 8). Her image includes sketches of a large purple and black cloud above multi-colored people figures; on top of the cloud are purple people figures standing on a green paper collage platform.

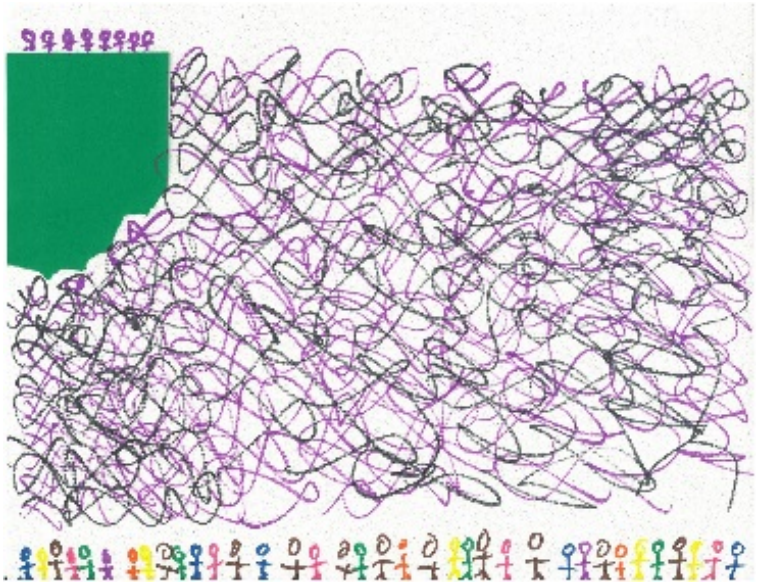


Figure 8. *Bold Babe's Emotional Experience Illustration.*

In describing her drawing, she pointed at different parts of it and stated:

> Seeking justice and doing the right thing are two different things. These are justice organizers [at bottom] and these [at top] are obviously in purple because they're wealthy. They are men and women and they are people of color. Organizers who perpetuate injustices in the name of getting justice for themselves [at top]. So, they will create injustices for people down here. – *Bold Babe*

Three participants discussed a *lack of communication* as why Islamophobia exists in society.

Bold Babe stated that assumptions and fear drive the lack of communication:

> People don't talk. People don't talk. Um, people literally, walk around with assumptions in their head. I would say the same thing about myself. Yeah, I mean I think that that's, yeah, I mean people are afraid to communicate with each other. Muslims and non-Muslims don't like to communicate...they are too afraid of each other. -*Bold Babe*

Cluster 6: Resistance Actions Toward Social Change

The sixth cluster showcases the myriad of actions and social change processes the women activists described in talking about their efforts to "make change". They include: (1) walking out the door as a Muslim woman; (2) speaking up at demonstrations and rallies, (3) teaching to raise awareness; and (4) providing legal protection. Perspectives identified in Cluster 1 regarding participants' understanding of problems identified or encountered, ideals from Cluster 4 that

include aspirations and motivations of participants, and political analyses from Cluster 5 were associated with resistance actions in participants' descriptions. For example, if a participant thought lack of communication was a concern, they were more likely to describe an ideal of fostering understanding, and then engagement in resistance actions which raised awareness and built dialogue across groups.

Walking Out the Door as a Muslim Woman.

Four women discussed the act of simply "being themselves" in society as an act of resistance in the current political climate. They described claiming their Muslim identity publicly (and not trying to hide or blend in) as an action. Many described wearing their hijab as an act of resistance. Pinka expressed her identity as a political statement:

> 90% of it is putting on a hijab and walking out the door...every time I step out of my house, it's, I am making a political statement, I am somehow making, I am taking a stand of resistance, I am you know, representing an entire community. *–Pinka*

Another aspect of Muslim women's representing their mere existence as a political act was what some participants described as "self-care." Bold Babe described taking care of herself and her family as "resistance and resilience, in the face of this ugliness."

Speaking at Demonstrations and Rallies

Five participants described events, meetings, court hearings, rallies, and demonstrations in which they spoke up about their experiences as Muslim women. They all mentioned speaking against the status quo, and sharing uncommon or unpalatable perspectives from every day public opinion. For example, Fatima shared that she utilized her platform as an invited speaker at the Women's March to talk about the Muslim woman's experience. She stated, "I was a speaker at the Women's March this year. As a Muslim actually. That was amazing."

Teaching to Raise Awareness

Eight participants described different forms of teaching to raise awareness about Muslim issues. Some described creating and facilitating workshops and programs for Muslims and non-Muslims; others described specifically incorporating political consciousness raising strategies into their teaching. Tamara described her teaching as "planting seeds that can grow at some point." She also explained how she frames teaching as a form of resistance:

> I see teaching as a form of resistance or educating people as a form of resistance. I feel like that's been, as least now, that's been my kind of main pathway or main channel, I guess. [...] I think part of that has been like because my education was so critical and shaped my experiences [...] I don't feel like I mean, I don't have…I didn't take or, like, they weren't offered, classes that really um, yeah that ever really talked about oppression in the ways that I think about it now. I didn't take those classes when I was in college. They certainly were not offered in grad school. –*Tamara*

Nancy's emotional experience image (see Figure 10) was illustrative of the social actions she engages by building bridges between different groups through teaching, as she articulates. Her image is a sketch depicting a bridge with feet on each side and a heart in the center. Under the bridge are the words "sea of misunderstanding, fear, misconceptions, suspicion". On the left side of the bridge reads "America, cultured, soil, family roots" and the right side of the bridge reads "Islam, spiritual soil, family connections". On top of the bridge are grey arrows forming an infinity symbol.

Figure 10. *Nancy's Emotional Experience Illustration.*

When she described her drawing, she stated:

> What my role is, that I am trying to be a bridge that I have one foot on either side of the bridge, my American side and my Muslim side. Both feet are firmly planted in those two camps, I guess you could call it. And that it is bridging over all of the misunderstanding and fear and suspicion and attempting to sort of find a way past that or over it. There is this ongoing exchange of ideas. –*Nancy*

Providing Legal Protection

One participant, Layla, spoke about her role as an attorney and the legal protections she provided to folks who were being targeted after the marathon bombing. She described setting up a hotline that Muslims could call for legal support:

> [After the] Boston Marathon Bombing, because community leaders, I keep using that term, for lack of a better word, people who are prominent in various community institutions, were aware of my being involved in MBA [Massachusetts Bar Association] and Bridges and other groups, they reached out when they were facing targeting after the Marathon Bombing. Um, targeting just because they were Muslim from the federal law enforcement, and so, we worked with, I worked with MBA and with ACLU and with CAIR [Center for American Islamic Relations] primarily to put on, like CAIR National didn't have an office in Massachusetts yet, to start to represent people who were approached by the FBI, so we set up a hotline for that. –*Layla*

Additionally, she described founding an organization to dismantle structural violence more broadly, called The Muslim Justice League. She explained:

> What I'm fighting against is abuses of state power, state violence, criminalization, especially under the pretext of protecting national security. [...] We founded an organization to do that, Muslim Justice League, in 2014 after, federal officials, Alyssa Monaco who was a representative of the National Security Council at the time, under Obama, came to Harvard Kennedy School and announced that Boston would be the site of a pilot program on Countering Violent Extremism. –*Layla*

Cluster 7: Benefits and Burdens of Engagement in Resistance.

The seventh cluster represents the burdens, challenges, and adverse effects participants endured while or subsequent to engaging in resistance, as well as the joys, benefits, and values experienced by participants when engaging in resistance. Specifically, participants described: (1) dangers of speaking out; (2) inescapability of identity; (3) tolls on mental health; (4) conflicts about goals and process; (5) feeling hope and joy; (6) feeling connected; (7) experiencing affirmation from others; (8) self-appreciation; and (9) thrill of inciting change. This cluster illustrates many of the hardships organizers endure, as well as the ongoing battles they overcome to stay involved in resistance. On the other end of the spectrum, it highlights the benefits organizers feel. These joys are important for understanding the power organizing has in these women's lives in a context of sociopolitical attacks and violence.

Dangers of Speaking Out

Eight participants shared dangers of speaking out. They described intimidation and targeting, being censored, facing criticism, and fears of confiding in others due to an environment of mistrust. Layla relayed targeting by the FBI:

> The experience that has impacted me has been through my organizing. Um, and sort of the dynamics both within Muslim communities and from law enforcement. I've experienced those. Especially, you know, from law enforcement due to the fact that I am an attorney and represent people who are approached by law enforcement for questioning so I've become a target through that of the FBI, in particular, but also the US Attorney's Office, I do not particularly appreciate that. –*Layla*

Identity Inescapable

Seven women expressed an inability to escape their hyper-politicized identities as Muslim women and organizers. They described times of resenting their identities while organizing, feeling invisible, vulnerable, and rejected, or, standing out - and wanting to feel simply human and not to be expected to be a certain way as a Muslim and an organizer. Amira described the pressures she feels as a Muslim woman and an organizer:

> So, in one of my relationships, people, this person, especially this person, and people in general, expect me to like be radical or like political in ways that they can't access. Almost like, wow, you're too whatever. Um, but then, that like denies me the ability to like struggle with things and be a human maybe and have feelings. *–Amira*

Many also described feeling alone or having some of the multiple intersections of their identities sidelined while organizing, such as being the only Arab Muslim in an organizing space, or the only Muslim in the room affected by the Muslim Ban. Some also described feeling very tired of identity dictating everything they did or were expected to do and be.

Tolls on Mental Health

Nine participants described how organizing took tolls on their mental health. They described exhaustion, depression, anger, frustration, forgoing self-care, feeling pressures, and compromising their identities. Pinka expressed the exhaustion from the everchanging, non-stop political climate:

> A lot of it is just exhausting, is just the pure exhaustion of putting out the fires like a whack-a-mole, what's the topic *de jour* today? *–Pinka*

Nancy expressed the lack of time, energy, and stamina to keep going in the face of obstacles and burn out:

> I think that there's so many obstacles, internally it's just energy and time and you know, stamina to keep going and all of that *–Nancy*

Rashida's emotional experience image (see Figure 11) was illustrative of some of the burdens she experiences while organizing, including feeling an uphill struggle, frequently exhausted, with high moments that all too often feel unsustainable. Her image includes a sketch of a red line moving up and down from the left side of the page to the right. On the peaks are symbols of fire, a blue lake, and flowers. In the dips grey dark shadows are depicted.

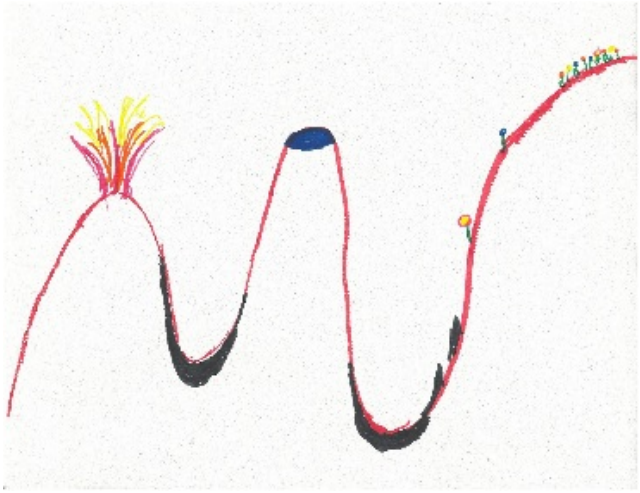


Figure 11. *Rashida's Emotional Experience Illustration.*

She described her image, stating:

> But [there] is often actually an uphill struggle especially, if I'm organizing towards a specific event. It's going fine and I'm heading up this hill and then I get towards a place where it feels like fire of celebrating that I've reached. I get there it's exciting but it's not sustainable. Then, I think it is very up and down for me and when it is down, it can feel like, I am looking into like a pretty deep hole that I could just sink into. And knowing that I could probably be fine and take care of my immediate family and keep them ok within this shitty system. Sometimes it's just so exhausting and I question everything so much that it's like these deep holes that I can sink into. –*Rashida*

Conflicts about Goals and Process

Eight participants expressed concerns and critiques of others' styles and goals of organizing toward Muslim liberation. Some areas of disagreement included leaving out the community, legitimating whiteness, coming from different backgrounds and generations, and maintaining privilege and access. Amira described feeling like many people most affected by

issues were missing at a community meeting she attended, leading to the feeling of *leaving out community:*

> I like BosCops a lot, but um, two days ago I was at this meeting with a bunch of people and like, [someone] said, I love this space it's like so much more radical than all these other spaces. But it feels so disconnected from the people; what I really care about, is like, building political consciousness in Muslim young people which I think is happening more, but like not. Like if you come in and you're like, we need to abolish the police. *–Amira*

This perspective was shared by three people. Nadiya described being the only non-white person on a committee and having limited commonality with others. Four described issues like this as *legitimating whiteness:*

> I think that that is a problem that a lot of different communities face with white liberals and white liberalism. Like, specifically when I talk about white liberalism, I work with a lot of white women. And, while there's some commonality in terms of like, there's a little, there's very little commonality. There might be some commonality in terms of the direction that we want to head in, but not the extent or the means of getting there. But we're still expected to work within those spaces and we still should work within those spaces to decolonize effectively. But um, it's just really hard. […] And I can't leave, because, [they'd] be a committee of all white people. How can you justify that? *–Nadiya*

Two women shared perspectives on why it's been difficult to get people on the same page. They discussed organizer's *different backgrounds and generations*. Rashida explained the difficulties of getting various factions of Muslims on the same page:

> It actually has been more difficult for Muslims to get organized because that can mean so many different things. Even if you're just looking at subsets of Muslims. Like if you were trying to organize like Bengali, Pakistani, and Indian Muslims; like that, by itself, is so hard. So, to think, in the US like, really organizing within the Muslim community, is so complex and so I think that Muslims as a whole haven't been as organized. Haven't had necessarily the kind of critical education other communities have; except for Black Muslims typically do have that and also, organize like on their own. Which makes sense so, yeah for me because of the sort of spot light that is happening on the Muslim community right now in ways that our struggles are sort of co-opted by like White liberals organizing in particular. *–Rashida*

Being Uncompensated and Funding Challenges

Eight participants spoke about difficulties in getting paid to do organizing work. Some spoke of difficulties in receiving funding from just sources (e.g. not government sources using funds as a means of surveillance and not organizations they politically disagreed with) while others spoke of not being paid for individual labor. Nadiya described putting together a sex education curriculum which was adopted by her organization yet she received no compensation:

> They wanted to brand our sex ed work, something that was hard for us was the labor that we had put into, um, creating the curriculum and the labor we had put into just pooling our resources and our time; like spending ten hours a week on an organization for no money is really like… the assumption of ["you] just work" and we'll brand it, and we're not going to ask you, was really hard. –*Nadiya*

Feeling Hope and Joy

Six participants expressed feeling hope and joy when organizing. Fatima relayed feeling joyful because she is an activist:

> I think is that one of the reasons I am joyful is because I am an activist. And I really am joyful. I feel that. -*Fatima*

Fatima's journey illustration (see Figure 12) also illustrates her experience of engaging in activism as positive, bright, and joyful. Her is a sketch of a grey figure with multi-colored swirls emerging from its hands. At the tips of the swirls are yellow and silver stars.

Figure 12. *Fatima's Journey Illustration.*

She described her image, sharing that through activism she gets to emit star-like wonderful experiences:

> Colorful lines of thought, and speech, which end up in wonderfully sparkly, light, lighted, star like experiences… very star like and positive. Good and bright and silvery. -*Fatima*

Ms. Marvel shared that she feels hopeful as she engages in developing the work, "getting to build has been exciting and motivating me through the work."

Feeling Connected

Six participants relayed feeling a sense of community or feeling united through organizing. Bold Babe shared the valuable connections she's made while organizing:

> I feel like there are so few places for me to make friends and meet people. Sounds really depressing and like "poor me." But I feel like the connections that I make there are connections in the different places where I've worked. The connections that I've made are lifelong connections. They are the most genuine people, that I organized with when I was at UMASS until even like now. Yeah, the unity stuff that comes up is incredible. Human beings are human beings and there will be no denying that. When I get to do anti-anti-Muslim stuff. –Bold Babe

Amira shared how organizing has facilitated a stronger connection with her father:

> I think that's one of the things that I've appreciated over the last few years is like being able to think about this stuff intergenerationally with my dad. –*Amira*

Experiencing Affirmation from Others

Seven shared experiencing affirmation from others because of their organizing work. They described experiences of feeling special and appreciated, getting hugs while canvassing at doors, and reactions of support from the public at marches. They described feeling good and touched by the ways they impacted others.

Self-appreciation

Eight participants described parts of themselves that they appreciate and that get activated in their social change roles. Pinka shared how marching enabled her to speak up when she normally does not do so, "It was a great moment for me...to be able to; I don't necessarily speak up very much."

Thrill of Inciting Change

Seven described a central benefit is being able to generate change through their work by seeing the public be moved, seeing others benefit, and helping generate discussions. Pinka described the reactions at the Women's March:

> We were walking to Boston Commons, it was literally like the Red Sea parting, it was so packed, and I do not understand how we got as far as we did, and the little clip of the video I showed you was just such a tiny clip, and it was like minutes, and it seemed like an eternity that we walked through and it took me like well over a minute to realize they were clapping for us, umm, and it was this bizarre moment because I would look into the crowd, and, even in that chaos, I would make eye contact with people, umm, and they would be, they would make eye contact with me, and they were crying, and they were like mouthing things, and they were holding up you know, the iconic sort of Hijab sign, and then, the one with the American flag, that Shepherd Fairey put out, they were holding out the sign and pointing to it. –*Pinka*

Rashida shared the high she felt after an action and how it generated discussions in her community:

> [Speaking about Direct Action] Um, after that, it was such a high, I know that for days, we were all, watching the videos. I wrote up something about it a month ago. I went to a conference, an immigration conference, and I was going to talk about like nationalism there and weirdly enough like my friend who, um, is a Mennonite minister? Pastor? Something like that, who had been there, and he is like super radical. He had written something about the experience and it had gotten published and it was just months later. It was a weird coincidence that he messaged like, 'hey I wrote this thing about how it really helped my congregation who came to understand and really network with the Muslim folks who were there.' –*Rashida*

Cluster 8: Supportive Forces in the Process of Muslim Liberation

The eighth cluster outlines the supports which help sustain the process of Muslim liberation. Some supports were experienced by participants and others were expressed as wishes. Supports included: (1) therapy; (2) self-care; (3) allyship; and (4) encouragement. Many shared that without these supports they would not be able to sustain involvement.

Therapy

Four relayed the power of therapy as being a place to talk and receive support for their organizing and activism. Bold Babe shared, "It's been transformative, in terms of learning [about] myself." Participants spoke of receiving therapy for free or low-cost, making it accessible, as many live on limited incomes.

Self-care

Five participants shared exercise, relaxation, and positive self-talk as valuable self-care supports. Amira shared: "Sometimes I just like lay there and read poetry and watch TV and just lay there. It's always, like, my time by myself."

Four participants shared *coming to peace with personal limits* as part of self-care. Bold Babe shared, "Come to peace within my Islamophobia work is [like, for example, that] I'm not going to change the minds of racists."

Allyship

Seven participants discussed some form of allyship as a source of support. Allyship felt to those who described it, as if their voices were being put in front or that they were being given access to platforms, receiving compensation, and that others who were not Muslim were taking on the struggles they experienced. Fatima shared how she understands allyship:

> So, to put it in a nutshell, the way you be an ally is to behave in such a way that you facilitate the affected group to act. So, you do what needs to be done so they can act as fully as they can...which means anything, cook food for them, do the grunt work, do security. All sorts of work. –*Fatima*

Nadiya shared a desire to receive compensation for labor as a way to mitigate the trauma of generating work surrounding emotionally charged, personal, topics:

> I think something that could have been different, was compensation for that labor. At the very least, um, that's like a very specific thing; but that's something I think of for organizations in general. I think that there's even the emotional labor that we exert as people who are victims of the same trauma that we're fighting, like within, and as a part of that organization, is like, there's no like monetary cost that can be attached to that. But I think that there are ways to, there are ways to work with that and to give back. –*Nadiya*

Encouragement

Six participants shared how important it is to receive encouragement. Many stressed that despite the support from outside their communities, they felt that receiving encouragement from the Muslim community itself was doubly valuable. Ms. Marvel expressed how encouragement is tied to the value of the work:

> I think generally, like words of encouragement from Muslim communities in general. It is really nice, ya know, when you get the sweet old White lady coming up to you and saying like, 'I love your work; it's so great,', then knowing that like it's not impacting her, I'm not doing this for you. Like, I appreciate the fact that like, you know, you think it's great and you love our events. But you're not who I'm doing this for. I guess general encouragement in that sense. ...what else, yeah and then I guess like I mentioned that like, we get money from them, and like obviously we're a small non-profit and donations are a big deal. Also, not feeling like our work has to be, that the value of our work isn't tied to the amount of donations we get or that you know, when it comes to like what we really need from Muslim communities, that its donations. –*Ms. Marvel*

Tamara's journey image (see Figure 13) was illustrative of supports that help her maintain engagement in social action. She described her parents, friends, and community as people who help spark her fire and continuously add fuel to it. Her image includes a sketch of a fire with multiple people figures next to logs.

Figure 13. *Tamara's Journey Illustration.*

When describing her illustration, she stated:

> It is a big fire that's been kindled by other people. Those are all the little ones that are pieces of kindle. It started with my parent's kindling… friends, and community. As I was growing up and this would be friends and people I work with and organizations and at work. [They] help to add fuel to the fire. I guess if we wanted to take the metaphor more literally, there is a spark somewhere that started it. I feel like since then the fans keep getting flamed and I hope it doesn't die out. –*Tamara*

For a summary of all clusters, themes, and frequencies in the findings, see Table 3.

Table 3.

Clusters, Themes, Frequencies

Cluster 1: Living in a Post 9/11 Sociopolitical Context	
Being a political enemy	10
Structures powered by Islamophobia	5
Government Policies Promoting Islamophobia	6
"We're the Boogie Man Now"	8
Feeling stigma against Muslim women	8
Muslim women are viewed by others as oppressed	5
Controversy surrounding hijab	6
Profiling and targeting	5
Being seen as a terrorist after 911	7
Surveillance of Muslims	3
Cluster 2: Navigating the Muslim Community Context	
Community Oppression	9
Gendered Discrimination and Patriarchy	4
Anti-Blackness	4
Politically Inactive Muslims	8
Danger as Detracting Others' from Organizing	4
Maintaining Privilege	5
Family Histories	10
Cultural Intersections	3
Messages They Received from Their Families	3
Reactions to Those who Converted to Islam	3
Cluster 3: Internal Experiences Being a Muslim Woman	
Living Under a Microscope	8
Hypervisibility	8
Blackness as a Protection	1
Carrying Emotional Burdens	10
Instinct to Hide	9
Pressure to Perform	4
Trauma	2
Feeling Personal Power	8
Anti-authoritarian Nature	4
Embraced	4
Faith in Islam	4

Cluster 4: Guiding Ideals Toward Activism Journey	
Muslim Liberation	6
Protecting Our Children's Future	3
Democracy and Progress	4
Fighting Together Because Our Oppression is Related	6
Responsibility to Women and Community	9
Promoting Understanding	8
Cluster 5: Development of Political Analyses	
Influences Fostering Critical Consciousness	10
Activities	8
Leftist Books	3
Culture of College	4
Inheriting a Spirit of Resistance	6
Influenced by Historic Activists	3
Understanding Anti-Muslim history Pre 9/11	4
Witnessing Age Old Tactics to Manufacture an Enemy	7
Seeing White Supremacy in Action	5
Knowing Racism Keeps People Alienated and Divided	4
Perceiving Branding of All Based on Some Terrorists	4
Recognizing Scarcity Mentality	6
Ignorance	3
Craving Power	4
Lack of Communication	3
Cluster 6: Resistance Toward Social Change	
Walking Out the Door as a Muslim Woman	4
Speaking at Demonstrations and Rallies	5
Teaching to Raise Awareness	8
Providing Legal Protection	1

Cluster 7: Benefits & Burdens of Engagement in Resistance	
Dangers of Speaking Out	8
Inescapability of Identity	7
Tolls on Mental Health	9
Conflicts about Goals and Process	8
Leaving Out Community	3
Legitimating Whiteness	4
Different Backgrounds and Generations	2
Being Uncompensated and Funding Challenges	8
Feeling Hope and Joy	6
Feeling Connected	6
Experiencing Affirmation from Others	7
Self-appreciation	8
Thrill of Inciting Change	7
Cluster 8: Supportive Forces in the Process of Muslim Liberation	
Therapy	4
Self-Care	5
Coming to Peace with Personal Limits	4
Allyship	7
Encouragement	6

Profiles of Two Participants' Journeys

The above eight clusters were organized to generate a model that reflects my interpretations of the 10 participants' lived experienced as shared through in-depth interviews. To further illuminate the model of *Muslim Women Activists' Processes of Resistance Toward Community Liberation* (Figure 1) I share two participants' journeys as they recounted them,

thereby illuminating their individual trajectories into and experiences of social action. Rashida's and Nancy's journeys were chosen because they reflect multiple diversities as well as continuities among the ten participants.

Rashida

Rashida is an Egyptian-American Muslim activist who grew up in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina. At present, she aims to build Muslim community and works to resist government surveillance of Muslims. She identifies as secular and non-religious, but grew up as Muslim. Prior to her current activism, she identified as someone who was "a-political" and was not consciously socialized in political thinking until college, where she studied engineering. Her journey as an activist as she narrated it is summarized below.

Rashida Living in a Post 9/11 Sociopolitical Context

Rashida was in 9th grade when 9/11 happened. She described how it changed the way her family was viewed in their community and shared how she was suddenly racialized differently and perceived as a terrorist:

> I was racialized as like Black essentially, or was viewed through that lens prior to 9/11 and then 9/11 really changed the way that we were viewed. The way that I was racialized as Muslim had a huge impact on me … even the first day of it happening somebody on the bus was like, "Oh, are you going to hijack the bus?" That was such a big thing for me.

She described experiencing overt racism and profiling where she lived, and discussed wearing her hijab in a less traditional style after 9/11 to be less obvious about her faith:

> It was really obvious that after 9/11 then I was seen as Muslim. I had been wearing my Hijab since I was in the 5th grade. 9/11 happened in 9th grade and I wasn't wearing it in a traditional way so some people might see me and not realize that it's the hijab because I like had it pulled back behind my neck. Definitely after 9/11 people who knew our family and knew that we were Muslim knew that it was thing, like that was the lighting rod from that point on.

Rashida's Internal Experiences as a Muslim Woman

Growing up, Rashida described times when she felt embraced as a Muslim and other times she felt the need to hide her Muslim identity. She experienced her neighbors as loving her but also as being confused about her:

> My parents came from Egypt; my dad was really poor and we lived in Appalachia. Kids in my neighborhood, neighbors, through all of our interactions I started witnessing this odd thing where like people loved our family. They would meet us and they would love us but they were also confused about everything about us. Like where were we coming from? The fact that we were Egyptian, the fact that we were Muslim, all of that. Being immigrants in a place like that in particular was just so bizzare. There were so few of anybody that wasn't White.

She tried to not call much attention to herself as a Muslim in her friendships:

> Being Muslim was something I sort of, something I tried to push in the background so I wouldn't have to call as much attention to myself. Even though that was really like not possible, at some point everyone knew that about me. I was the Muslim girl, but yeah, especially like with friendships, with relationships, everything was about being like a child of immigrants and being Muslim. Like both of those threads. Ya know, people coming over and being like oh what it is this food that your family is eating?

Rashida embraced her Muslim identity when she found her peers found it exciting, but generally felt afraid to identify as Muslim growing up:

> At different points I did embrace it, when I could see that people were interested it really cool and exciting. But most of the time I was just afraid of like, how people were going to react and particularly like after 9/11 event it was just something I didn't want to talk about.

Rashida's Development of Political Analyses

Rashida described first organizing in college with the Muslim Student Association, but felt it was mainly focused on building Muslim community and was not political:

> I started organizing in college. Because I became MSA president because I was just all about building community. It was clear through all of the stuff I did with MSA that I was trying to connect people. I was not as political at that point or like tried to hide my political activity because I thought that within that space especially, as MSA president, I shouldn't be bringing my own politics into things. Like I would hide that I was going to a protest about Palestine.

Rashida described becoming political through self-study online:

> The way I started to become political was actually very organic in a way. Slowly I was like building all of this rage about political issues. But I didn't have the vocabulary around it but then I started like ya know, using the internet really to look into things to start following conversations and things would just click. Like I would read about something or see a concept and be like oh yeah, that makes sense.

She described being particularly influenced by a Zapatista thought analysis book, which informed her thinking about the root of the problem of Islamophobia:

> I studied this book a little bit, like a really cool seminar, of Zapatista thought analysis. And they call it the capitalist hydra; in this image.to me there is like one monster that is racism, capitalism, misogyny, like transphobia all of these things are not in our, like they're not like their own system that are just slightly connected. It is the same thing that has like many different arms.

Family and historic activists also influenced her, including her father and Malcom X:

> [My father] started doing something really cool which is, he was the chaplain of a prison. Which was really fascinating because it brought together a number of different things for me. Malcolm X is one of the few people that I really like looked up to that I really like found inspiration in, I don't put them on a pedestal. But I was really amazed by him, that I had someone that was Muslim to look up too. It was really helpful in processing … he went to prison and that was where he actually found Islam. And then seeing my dad do that for people too.

Rashida shared her political analysis about Islamophobia, violence, and the terminology she used to discuss the problem:

> The term Islamophobia has always been odd– because of that aspect racialization of Muslims and yeah– how do you even know that someone is Muslim? You don't. When I got deeper into it on a structural level, it's not like necessarily that you're racialized as Muslim. It's like your Muslim and like the ways Islamophobia works or like anti Muslim systems work is a little different than interpersonal violence. What I see its one monster with different faces the term has never made sense because I think that a lot of interpersonal violence rather is at a personal or structural level is a few different faces of the monster and so naming that is really complex.

Rashida's Guiding Ideals

At multiple points in Rashida's interview, she discussed the sense of responsibility she felt toward her Muslim community:

> As much weirdness as I feel about my Muslim identity and sort of a disconnect from the religious aspect of it. I'm like I'm good at [building community] and people need me and this can be really valuable to my community that drives me crazy but is also still my community.

Rashida's Resistance Actions

Rashida's background experiences, coupled with her political analysis and ideals inspired the resistance she engages in:

> I see myself, as ya know, trying to organize the Muslim community which is actually seeing many different heads of the monster. And, trying to be strategic in how we, attack and how we understand it. I think I see myself as ya know, doing work to try to mitigate and eliminate certain systemic structures that are in place to try to protect people specifically from those structures. But simultaneously trying to like do some like real community organizing of like building community. I am organizing against um, racism and capitalism but within the Muslim community.

One resistance action she described was organizing a counter-protest at a fascist rally in North Carolina. She discussed her thinking and decisions, reflecting her ideals to build and protect Muslim community, which informed this action:

> [I thought] we can do a rally because a lot of people seem to be interested in that but for the folks who are like we have to confront these fascists– let's make sure they're also taking Muslim leadership. Because in the rally we're going to have Muslim speakers, Muslim women in particular. I was like I don't want to see a bunch of White people dressed in all black going over there. And what we don't want is for people of color to feel afraid. They showed up with guns, that is terrifying. So we said let's make it a noise demonstration. We went out and bought colorful kazoos and noisemakers and stuff from party city. People had all these great signs and so people just poured out of the rally into the street.

Rashida Navigating the Muslim Community Context

As Rashida's work is so focused on building Muslim community, she had pertinent insights on dynamics within the Muslim community, particularly about what can be challenging in engaging others in activism:

> Muslims are just a microcosm of the diversity of the world like here in the US in particular. It actually has been more difficult for Muslims to get organized because that can mean so many different things. Even if you're just looking at subsets of Muslims. Like if you were trying to organize like Bengali, Pakistani and Indian Muslims, like that

> by itself is so hard. So, to think in the US like really organizing within the Muslim community is so complex and so I think that Muslims as a whole haven't been as organized.

She described generational gaps in how Muslims handle the violent context:

> I think a lot of Muslim women that I know are my mom or aunty level - that generation. I think that what is going on for them is so, complex and hard for me to handle because I sometimes feel so incredibly frustrated with how distant they feel and also sometimes wanting to pull them closer and appreciate what they have gone through and how far they have all come - especially those in America. Whether they immigrated or whether they are Black Muslim or White Muslim converts or whatever, there is so much to that. And so that generational gap - like not all of them are going to develop the same politics and that's ok. But for some of them what is happening right now is really the first time that they are being challenged by the system in a very overt way.

Benefits & Burdens Rashida has Experienced

When describing the counter-protest Rashida organized, she illuminated some of the burdens she experiences organizing as well as benefits. She discussed feeling fearful about putting people at risk:

> I actually started panicking. I was like I don't know if I actually verbalized the risk enough for people to understand that like there is no permit for what we are doing. Ya know, there is no legal thing around this. Ya know, just like anytime you have a bunch of people going out into the street and like shutting down a sidewalk or whatever, like all of that is really risky. Leading up to it I was definitely feeling some anxiety about security. Because I was like all it takes is one awful person from their side to come over and hurt somebody.

She also shared the incredible excitement she felt bringing people together, and the friendships she cultivated:

> Once we had taken over the street, then I was just super excited. I still watch videos from it, like to get like excited because there is nothing quite like watching a bunch of people really coming into their own power and confronting something like that. I really bonded with those people. Like I became friends with the people who organized it with me through that experience.

Rashida's Supports

Rashida shared how it is difficult to take care of herself as an activist at times, recognizing her need to have a therapist, engage in escape and try to do fun things:

> I'm, not doing a great job of sustaining myself right now but, I think I am slowly figuring out ways to do that like, I'm trying to find a therapist because I realize that that is something I probably should have done a long time ago but never really something that was presented to me as an option. So that is something that I am looking to do and I think currently I sustain myself um, by sort of retreating when I need to retreat. Just taking the time off to escape either to visit people or um escaping within my own apartment and just sort of cocooning for a little bit and then trying to find time to incorporate fun things in to my life.

She discussed that she can feel stuck but feels encouraged by happy and healthy community:

> Something will remind me of like what I'm working towards in the end. Which is like happy, healthy community and sometimes it, takes like one happy healthy thing or person, to remind me that that's the goal and I can come back to it.

In sum, Rashida narrated her activist engagements as primarily focused on building community and attacking the "capitalist hydra." She engages in group-based community action to fight back against structures of anti-Muslim oppression; Islam is not necessarily what guides her or what she is aiming to protect. When activism gets tough, she is fueled by that which guided her into the work– building connection and healthy community.

Nancy

Nancy is a Caucasian-American Muslim educator-activist who converted to Islam long before 9/11. At present, she works as an educator helping non-Muslims break negative perceptions by inviting them on tours of the mosque and speaking openly about her experience converting to Islam. In constrast to Rashida, Nancy's Muslim identity and faith are central to her work. Nancy also documents experiences of Muslim youth to highlight their resilience and the unique discrimination they face. She described herself as a "bridge" between non-Muslim Americans and Islam, based on her own personal journey undoing her biases about Islam through her conversion experience. Unlike Rashida, much of Nancy's work is focused on changing perceptions of non-Muslims about Islam. Her journey into becoming an activist is illustrated through the components of the model below.

Nancy Living in a Post 9/11 Sociopolitical Context

Nancy described how people responded to her as a Muslim woman, sometimes assuming she was foreign and asking her lots of questions prior to 9/11. After 9/11, she felt it was scary to be recognizable as a Muslim:

> I would get a lot of questions or statements like "Oh, you speak English so well," "Well I was born here," "But yeah, where are you really from?" So a lot of assuming that I was foreign. I guess because I am open to people with questions and recognize that there was a lot of misinformation, I was willing to go into those conversations without like being judgmental or frustrated or being like, why are you asking me that? I actually welcomed it. Fast forward a little bit, up until 9/11, that's when it became really scary to be a recognizable Muslim. And I think that was the first time that I ever really felt that.

Nancy converted to Islam prior to 9/11 and many people in her life felt betrayed by her. She described the negative portrayal of Muslims by Hollywood fueling this disdain, and her trying to keep her faith to herself because of it:

> I think there is a sense of because of how Muslims are portrayed and have been way before 9/11, I mean go back to the movies in the early part of the previous century, it's always so negative and barbaric and uncivilized, it's just really bad. And there was a sense in a part of some people that what I had done [converting to Islam] was a betrayal. Like how could you? And that again, I sort of expected, at least to some extent, but that was a part of why that I did not go out and broadcast to the world.

Nancy shared a how others respond to Muslim women with disdain or a desire to save them, because of their presumed oppression:

> There is a wide held assumption that Muslim women are disadvantaged, that they're oppressed, that they don't' have rights or the same rights that men do, that somehow it's not a fair deal for Muslim women. And in some cases, that causes sort of a disdainful reaction toward them, in other cases it might be "let me save you from this oppression, I know better, let me help you." And I think both of those are kind of misguided.

Nancy Navigating the Muslim Community Context

Nancy's experiences navigating within the Muslim community context, reflected her feelings of being admired as well as of being asked to speak about Islam to non-Muslims because of her identity as a convert. She said she did not feel rejected by other Muslims, rather, she felt a

need to learn about Islam and a sense of admiration from other Muslims for her decision to convert:

> There's a belief among Muslims that if a person accepts Islam, that their previous sins are erased and it's like coming in totally clear. So there was this sort of admiration on the part of you know, "you're better than us by having done this." There was that. I never felt like rejected as not being authentic or anything like that, but I certainly did need to learn a lot.

She shared experiences of being asked by other Muslims at the Islamic school where she used to speak to the media after 9/11, highlighting the value of her experience as a convert to other Muslims:

> The administrators of the school, I don't know what their thought process was, but they turned to me and said, you need to be the one to do this. The only thing that I could come up with was because I was the most, I was a native born English speaker and I am American, I was American and maybe they felt less comfortable doing it. So, I was just sort of put in this position because it was a scary time. I'm not a religious scholar, I mean, I still considered myself a student of Islam. Okay, I wasn't even born and raised a Muslim. And so there was that little bit of disconnect but at the same time, a lot of times, religious leaders don't exactly understand how to connect with the questions and I do feel, I'm going to talk in a way that is going to help you understand andI know what other religions teach and I know the connections with Islam and those other faiths and so to be able to pull those things out in sort of lay man's language without talking like a theologian, it can sometimes actually be a powerful experience.

Nancy's Internal Experiences as a Muslim Woman

Nancy narrated multiple internal emotions and described decisions she made as she navigated being a Muslim woman, including complex decisions about whether or not to wear hijab:

> I was not born and raised as a Muslim. And so, there was sort of this demarcation line when I became Muslim, you know, several decades ago. And at the time, I guess you could say I was sort of underground. I was not wearing a hijab so I was not visibly Muslim and so my experience at that time was very different from the way it is now and of course the cultural and political context was totally different at that time as well…. it wasn't until about ten years after I became Muslim that I decided to start wearing a head scarf. And again, I went through this long deliberation process knowing that if I did that, it was going to change my interactions with the world, right? Because I'm no longer going to be anonymous, I'm no longer going to be able to blend in anywhere. I'm going to be seen and assumed to be something that I wasn't necessarily. So again, I thought

> about that really long and hard and I worried about it, because I feel like I enjoy engaging with people and I did not want people to become suspicious of me or fearful of me. And I was afraid that this was going to happen.

She noted that after making the decision to wear hijab and particularly after the 9/11 discrimination toward Muslims, she felt vulnerable, experienced suspicion towards her, and sometimes felt like she just wanted to go and hide from all the attention:

> So I was feeling you know, horrified and frightened and sickened about what had happened to my country by who knows who and at the same time, you know, there's stories about women in the park wearing hijab with their children getting attacked or taxi drivers being pulled out of their cabs. And you know, a lot of really really ugly things happening and so you're sort of doubly vulnerable, and when all of this you know attention started being shed on [my] school and on me to step into that space, my first instinct, I think was to just want to go hide somewhere.

Nancy's Guiding Ideals

Nancy spoke about the multiple ways in which her faith guides her actions to step up as an educator and activist:

> I believe something, I should be acting on it, and my actions should reinforce my faith and my faith should reinforce my actions, and should be this sort of back and forth process […] I officially took jihada, that's that profession of faith of entering into Islam.

Nancy noted her deep commitment to developing relationships, welcoming differences, and widening community, reflective of her ideals as a Muslim woman:

> I think it's about um, like developing relationships and um, making the circle wider to allow all different kinds of people to be in our like community, whatever level you want to look at community, but you know, to welcome members that have things to contribute.

Nancy's Development of Political Analyses

Nancy described coming to her revised perceptions about Islam after she spent time living in Morocco:

> I actually went on this extended one-year adventure after college is what it really was, you know, sort of open ended you know. I was not planning to move to Morocco, I ended up there by God's plan. I would hear the call to prayer five times a day and I just became curious about what's this all about. You know, I would see people stopping what they were doing, take these few minutes out for prayer. And I would have conversations with

> people on the street or listen to other people's conversations and I would always hear the word "Inshallah". It would be like "We'll meet you at the café at 3:00, inshallah" and I was like what does that word mean? I finally found out it means God willing. And I remember thinking, isn't that interesting, that people are putting God into their everyday conversations, their most mundane discussions and God is a part of it. And again, I just became curious, I just wanted to know what this was all about.

Her understanding of why anti-Muslim perceptions have persisted included an analysis of the media portrayal of Muslims, the political oil embargos, fear, and a lack of religious literacy on the part of the majority population:

> To me, it's all melted into that one big pot of racism, and we can just look at American history and we can see how many groups have gone through this, and I think that is a lot of it. I think, in terms of Muslims and Islam in particular, it's been reinforced for me, you know, through the movies that portray Arab men as villains, Arab women as you know, just objects, no agency. And it's almost a kind of brainwashing. It's a very ingrained type of stereotyping that has been going on for a very long time. And it's gotten worse because of political situations. I don't know if you would have been around for the oil embargo back in the 70s, um, you know, there's lots of things that have contributed to it. and I think it's a problem of perception, and a problem of religious literacy. There's also a problem of fearing the other.

Nancy's Resistance Actions

Being an educator is how Nancy positioned herself as combatting anti-Muslim sentiment, particularly because of her unique experience understanding what some non-Muslims think about Islam:

> I see myself as an educator. I'm not a preacher, I see myself as an educator. I see that there is a lack of knowledge, and a lack of understanding and on the other side a whole set of ingrained assumptions that are taken to be fact and so, to me, the way to shift those, assumptions as well as to fill in the void of understanding is through educational approaches. I do have a certain insight because of my personal experiences on both sides and, it's just natural for me to be that because I myself had a lot of those misunderstandings and I went through that questioning process and I know people, I care about people on both sides.

Teaching and doing interfaith outreach constituted her organizing as a Muslim:

> Schools were consciously trying to teach their students to be open to others who were different and whether they were learning about religion and came as part of that or whether they were learning about difference and they came for that reason, they scheduled in a visit every year to this Islamic School and they would spend the day and I

> was one of the people that was organizing, And so, I sort of used that same idea and model here [at the mosque], when I joined the outreach team. Because there would be requests from schools, there would be requests from colleges, you know, interfaith groups, Sunday schools, adults from various groups would come, and it is the same idea.

Benefits & Burdens Nancy has Experienced

Engagement in this work has taken its toll on Nancy at times. Some obstacles she's experienced include feeling drained, not always being given platform to speak about what is happening in conversations about Muslims, and feeling like others do not actually care to listen:

> I think that there's so many obstacles, internally it's just energy and time and you know, stamina to keep going and all of that. But externally there are obstacles because you know, we aren't always given a microphone, we're often not given microphones. And then people will say how come we never hear from the Muslims about this. When I was getting into this work, there weren't a lot of people who wanted to step into that space. It's a scary space. And it's a tricky space. Because just as much as there are people who are genuinely curious, there are also people who are genuinely angry and don't want to hear what you have to say. They already have the information that they need and they don't want anymore.

Nancy shared what she loves about her work, including seeing the power of learning and transformation:

> I began to see through that, the power of engagement. I would see what would happen to these kids, young kids, who came and it, at first they would be really awkward and uncomfortable as anybody would be entering into another's space. And gradually as they were engaging with their peers you could just see that sort of anxiety melting away and something else coming and replacing it. It was beautiful powerful thing to watch.

Nancy's Supports

One form of support Nancy described as valuable to her was allyship. She shared a story about thousands of allies coming to support the Muslim community after the 2016 presidential election:

> I can remember, after the 2016 election, there was a lot of distress among many people, not just myself. And there was an event that was held here, I saw hundreds of people walking across the street walking here, and walking with a purpose. Like, you could just tell, they weren't just causally out walking, they weren't just going home after work, you could see how purposeful it was and honestly it gave me chills. It really did bring me to tears to see that kind of visible support and solidarity. There were over 2,500 people and

> most of them were not Muslims. And you know, they had people sitting out in the lobby area because there wasn't enough room inside. It was really amazing. And you know, just to say, to see people being there what a presence. And you know, they didn't have to say anything, they were here, with us. Yeah, that kind of a thing was very, very powerful.

In sum, Nancy's work as an educator and her desire to bridge differences between those who are and are not Muslims as well as to correct misconceptions about Islam are the basis of her activism. She invites non-Muslims into Islamic spaces to "unveil" Islam– and feels moved by witnessing peoples' perceptions changing. Her faith guides her work. When she faces difficulties of feeling drained or that others sometimes are angry and do not care to learn more about Islam, she feels supported by allies who show up and stand in solidarity with Muslims.

Rashida and Nancy are only two of the 10 participants in this study, but showcase two diverse trajectories of engagement in social action toward Muslim liberation. Each narrative provides a description of how a participant might move through and embody the above model on her journey of becoming an activist, enhancing the composite analyses shared in the clusters reported above. Narratives illuminate the model as an integrated whole, suggesting how it might be drawn on to make meanings of the lived experiences of other Muslim women beyond the participants in this study.

Research Reflexivity and Member Checking Through Illustration

In addition to the findings generated from participants' interviews and images discussed in the above model and clusters, my own process of listening and creating illustrations in parallel facilitated valuable insights and information pertinent to this study. While participants created their journey and emotional experience images, I created a reflective "echo" image to return to them some of my initial understandings of what I had heard in their interviews and had found most salient. As mentioned above, I did this in part to facilitate their being more at ease in the drawing process and in part as a preliminary member check to confirm my comprehension of

some of what seemed most salient in their interview and the meanings that we were co-constructing through this dialogical process. I shared my images with participants at the end of their interviews, to summarize what stood out to me in these narratives. These images also increased my reflexivity, helping me see what I had tended to focus on in each interview, and to learn more about myself as a researcher. Below I will share my images, including: (a) images which informed my analysis and the creation of the model; (b) an image that a participant felt accurately captured themes in her interview (i.e., that I "got right"); and (c) an image that helped me see I was attuned to different themes than the participant was (i.e., where I "missed the mark").

My Reflective "Echo" Illustrations Which Informed the Analysis and Model

Two of the illustrations I created during participants' interviews showcased my early analytic insights about the *process of Muslim Liberation* which eventually became the central theme in my analytic model.

One image was in response to Nadiya; I shared with her that I heard themes of resistance in her interview, including her performances of resistance in multiple places including as a Muslim woman, in her family, and in the wider community. These multiple sites of resistance are reflected in the model as arrows coming from the resistance circle pointed at the post 9/11 sociopolitical context, Muslim community context, and experiences being a Muslim woman. They are also reflected in my drawing below (see Figure 14). My image is a sketch of a large sun at the top, a path moving toward the sun with people on it, a woman saying "resist" with two voices on either side of her telling her to take her hijab on or off and a thought bubble with the question, "where do I belong?" Other words written on my image include: "don't put me in a box, I will tell my story and build, and my future will be full of liberation."

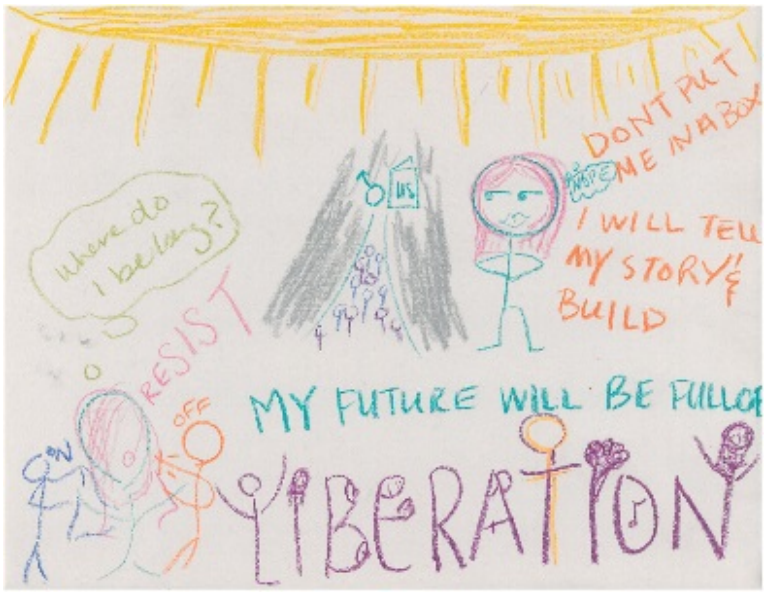


Figure 14. *My Reflective Echo Illustration for Nadiya.*

Describing my reflective "echo", I shared with Nadiya:

> You were [saying] through all of it, I'm going to resist all kinds of things. […] resisting these two different directions I'm being pulled […] either place I am I'm sort of pushing up against what the dominant norm is and I don't really feel like I'm here or there but either way I feel like [I heard] "I'm resisting in all the spaces that I'm in, in some way." […] From what your story has said. It comes up in work, it comes up in family, it comes up in community, it comes up and it's really frustrating. And that it feels like your future will be full of liberation, so this was just all different types of liberation, you know, people dancing, like boobs, sex ed, people reading books, self-defense training, women empowerment, black power, music, different forms of language and stuff like that so it feels like that. That's what it is. I kind of pulled this from your last piece, feeling like a guiding goal is this kind of like light that you've seen from some people that you look up to… that kind of being sort of shining down on all of it in some way. –*Sriya*

I knew my analysis resonated with the participant because of her feedback after I shared my image:

> I love it. This is so awesome. Did you do this for everyone? This is really cool. That's so awesome. It's so like, I don't' even know how you are able to listen to someone's story and pull so much. That's really great. –*Nadiya*

A second image reflects what I illustrated in response to the in-depth interview with Ms. Marvel and further informed my analytic model. My image includes a sketch of Ms. Marvel wearing a cape handing a megaphone to human figures also wearing capes, a mosque in the

background, and watercolor of a heart and the words: “love, pleasure, voice, generation”. I shared with her that I heard themes in her story that reflected contextual issues, resistance strategies, external influences, and ideals, all of which were core components in the model. She discussed patriarchy, holding teaching sessions to help the community engage with the government, being influenced by the women’s movement, and having an ideal or motivation that engaging in social action is her duty to her generation.

Figure 15. *My Reflective Echo Illustration for Ms. Marvel.*

Describing my reflective “echo” (see Figure 15), I shared with Ms. Marvel:

> I see you as standing on top of, and smashing patriarchy. And, you are wearing a purple cape with a women’s symbol on it. And, this is the community over here and this is the government over here. I see that you’re saying like we’re actually all living in the same place and there isn’t that much of a distance between us. And, let me…help you find your inner megaphone and capes to be able to sort of speak up here and similarly, help these folks that are working in the government like, come over here and listen. … like being an intermediary. [...]what you are standing on as part of some of the strength you described, a big heart going into it and a lot of, love and care about the world and your community. Also, this sense coming out of woman’s movement, and like a sense of like pleasure being tied up in it and a sense of voice and a sense of like, this is like the duty of your generation. –*Sriya*

After I shared this with Ms. Marvel, she responded by saying, “Beautiful, thank you!”, a comment that confirmed for me that my visual representation or drawing of our in-depth interview had captured or reflected much of what she had been communicating.

Example of an Image that a Participant Experienced as Accurate

Rashida found the image that I created while she was drawing to accurately synthesize what she had spoken about during her interview. My image was made with watercolors and depicted a “hydra” multi-headed monster in the middle, megaphones and confetti, mountains, a figure of two faces forming a heart, and a figure of a person holding out their arms in an embrace of multiple human figures (see Figure 16). She asked to keep the image I made during her interview, a response that I interpreted to reflect that she felt “heard.” My reflection included the ideals I heard her share about love, her political analysis of the problem involving capitalism and poverty working together as a “hydra” to oppress, some of the actions she’s taken that reflect her resistance, and her motivations to protect her family.

Figure 16. *My Reflective Echo Illustration for Rashida.*

Describing my reflective “echo”, I shared with Rashida:

> I think part of what I see is you coming out of there [mountains]. And having these two intertwined parts of yourself that loosely make a heart, cause love is in it. But there is a part that feels like it is pulled towards like the fight, if you will, the political education that is a part that's humbled and feels connected and rooted in love. Sometimes what I heard was that [those parts], didn't always feel like they could reconcile, I don't know if I got that or heard that accurately. This is the multi-headed hydra that you were talking about. That is not one thing you're fighting but some of the things are even from here [home] are a part of this thing. Poverty, capitalism, how all of it works together to continually oppress. Where I see you coming back again is over here as this holding, maternal figure. What these symbols represent is that action you described that involve noisemakers. It really stood out to me as like this thing that you were trying to put in place to combat [the hydra] and to keep a barrier and boundary to keep the people that you love and care about safe. This is people from the community, both from the community when you were describing that noise make action and from the Somali youth organizing. Another piece that was completely present and felt somehow like it was connected between community and home, it was this sense of protecting your family …the image that came up that stood out for me was when you talked about protecting your father and he is part of what inspires you. And that he might not be here but that part of what you're doing here is to hold him and protect him in a different way. So those are just some of the pieces that I heard you talk about when we talked about your journey and what you do. -*Sriya*

Rashida's response after I shared my image was:

> That is really cool. Yeah! That was like weirdly spot on. I don't think I had realized I said certain things multiple times like protecting until you brought that up, but yeah, that is really cool. I kinda want to keep the original of what you did more than my own. –*Rashida*

Example of an Image that Missed the Mark

The image that I created in my reflections on Tamara's interview revealed to me that at times I may have "missed the mark" when reflecting back to the participant through my images while listening to them. In other words, what was salient to me, and what was relevant to the participant, were sometimes different or "out of synch". In this reflective image, I illustrated an aspect of the participant's racial identity conflict about her hair as I had heard it – a navigation between her black identity (e.g., wearing dreadlocks) and her Muslim identity (wearing hijab). My image includes a purple sketch of a woman's head with two parts; one wearing dreadlocks

and the other an afro, with fire emerging from her mouth towards human figures holding logs and books (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. *My Reflective Echo Illustration for Tamara.*

Describing my reflective "echo", I shared with Tamara:

> A big thing that I heard you talking about was this part of your history and part of your being that has held these two different, but super interconnected, parts. But [it's] super hard to simultaneously express parts of your identity like wearing hijab and [wearing dread-] locks. What I was trying to depict was like this blending. Like the hijab being made out of [dread] locks and non-hijab still has this Muslim eye in it, which was that depiction. So, it's this history of holding these two identities and how that informed your experience in the world. –*Sriya*

While she did speak about her hijab and locks in her interview, I realized after re-listening to her interview that it was not what she emphasized or spoke about as central to her story. Her response to the image once I shared it back with her was non-verbal, so it was not captured on the interview recording, but as I remember it she shrugged and nodded encouragingly communicating to me, "you kind of got it, but not really." I think I focused on what I perceived to be a racial identity conflict because it was new and interesting to me, not necessarily because it was most important to her. Looking back, I realize I may have inadvertently participated in fetishizing this black woman – by focusing on her hair, as many non-black women do. Because

of the insight generated from reviewing my reflective "echo" image, I took extra time while coding her transcript, to be sure my interpretations were driven by her experiences, and noting she emphasized experiences her father had in their mosque as a Black man and her experiences teaching as a form of social change.

In many images, including hers, I found myself focusing on what motivated participants as I heard them describe multiple contexts in which they lived and worked, and moments they described in terms of strength and celebration. I noticed I included struggles, but minimized them in comparison to representing their strengths and the motivations that facilitated resistance. In discussions with my chair, I realize this served as a form of emotional containment and may have prevented further elicitation of alternative emotions from them. However, after I reviewed all of my images, I realized that my reflections through these drawings aimed to honor and celebrate the strengths of the interviewee while or after they had risked their vulnerability and shared so much of themselves with me.

Participants' Experiences of Being Interviewed

Finally, conducting research with communities who have and are continuing to experience surveillance and chronic misrepresentation is delicate. The process of engaging in the research is as important as the results or outcomes themselves. Table 2 includes some quotes from participants when I asked them, at the end of the interview process, to reflect on their experiences of being interviewed and being asked to engage in art for this research process.

Overall, participants enjoyed being interviewed and were surprised that their illustrations or visual representations elicited as much depth and content as they perceived them to reflect. A few participants shared their initial hesitation with engaging in the research process in general, and with creating art as a part of it. A couple of participants also shared how emotional the

process was for them; one sharing that it was emotional in a helpful way, and another that it was novel to be so emotional in front of another person. I learned from this feedback that the process of the interview was intimidating, and was reminded that "making art" in particular, could be anxiety provoking. I also learned that it is important to explain how emotional an interview process can be, particularly for those who I will continue to be in community with after the interview process. Finally, I learned that the interview and art creation processes felt and connecting and joyful.

Table 2.

Participants' Reflections on their Experiences of Art Inquiry Process and Interview

Participant	Experiences of Doing Art & Interview
#1	"I'd like to share that it's a new experience, because I didn't ever think of this before. This is a completely, this just occurred to me through the crayons, I didn't really picture it until I thought about it. I'm glad to see a visual thing of probably what I'm wanting, and I didn't really know it. That's what art does? [...] didn't approach it with that much enthusiasm, I was just like this is something I'm really happy to do it for you. I did not realize it would be so much fun for me."
#2	"It was really fascinating to me that you, because I would have assumed that you would ask about problems Muslim women face. So, the, you're asking about the next step, about the resistance, [...]I love it. I have to say that even you asking the question of what are Muslim women doing to, for the resistance, against Islamophobia. It seems that they are doing something, which people don't assume. It's not, it's not a common assumption that people make."
#3	"It was interesting, it was nice like doing that kind of like reflection, and, ya know, really putting words to pictures; it really helps like, understand things and just like talking about it too, really helps like, just like get thoughts out there , have it not just circle around in your head."
#4	"This is very emotional for me, for sure. And helpful, really helpful."
#5	"This also didn't feel like… work. I think you are able to understand so much and see so much; both from what I vocalized and also from, like knowing me, that made it feel like I was learning a bit about myself going through this process. It didn't feel like oh! this person is analyzing me but it felt like you were processing

	with me. It can feel scary going into this, like this person is going to interview me, and then like pull whatever they want out of it."
#6	"I loved it. I thought it was really awesome. Um, like aside from therapy, I'm not usually used to people like asking me about like my story or what's happening so, it felt good. It's so like, I don't even know how you are able to listen to someone's story and pull so much. That's really great."
#7	"It wasn't as bad as I thought it was going be. I'm glad something came to me."
#8	"That was awesome, that was easier than I thought it was going to be.
#9	"It was fun and I think in large part just because of you and your attitude and your approach, it's just very lovely, and I know it's for research, but I do believe that as educators, education can be activism, research can be activism as well and I sort of feel like that's where you're coming from. Um, but the way you framed it, I found it so respectful but also um, really helpful for me too to reflect back on my long journey, and why I started and why I continue and all of that. So, thank you too, for that chance to reflect."
#10	"I feel like I'm just going to go home and cry. Because usually I just don't go to that place. [...] This is like great and I like talked about a lot of these things but I still, I think part of what is difficult for me is that, is like, I don't know. The like, really feeling the thing in front of other people, that's the hard thing."

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

As evidenced in the literature discussed in Chapter Two, many Muslim women engage in social actions to challenge or resist multiple effects of the hostile political contexts in which they live. However, little research has focused on their trajectories into social action or their psychological experiences of engaging in it. Prior scholarship has contributed important insights on the mental health tolls of living in an anti-Muslim political climate (e.g., Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009; Awaad, 2017; Bonet, 2011; Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Nadal et al., 2012; O'Connor & Jahan, 2014; Perry, 2014; Rippy & Newman, 2006; Saedi, 2012; Samari, 2016; Shirazi & Mishra, 2010; Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013) and the psychological experiences of resisting social oppression in general (e.g., Dutt & Grabe, 2014; Fine et al., 2018; Frederick & Stewart, 2018; Ginwright, 2009; Grabe, 2018; Herman, 1997; Moane, 2006; Moghaddam & Lvina, 2002; Morris, 2000; Prilleltensky, 2008; Vindhya, 2012). Limited research has focused on factors that contribute to people generally engaging in social action (e.g., Brodsky et al., 2012; Drury & Reicher, 2005; Dutt & Grabe, 2014; Hammack, 2010; Moane, 2010; White & Rastogi, 2009; Wiley et al., 2012), however, research has not focused on the psychosocial experiences of Muslim women resisting social oppression and their trajectories into social change work.

This inductive qualitative study of 10 Muslim women activists' trajectories into and experiences of engaging in social action moves the field forward in several ways: First, because activists, let alone Muslim women activists, are rarely studied, this study contributes to the field of scholarship on the psychology of activists, and the psychology of Muslim women. Second, the arts-based inquiry techniques complemented qualitative inductive analytic methods, deploying novel strategies of eliciting participants' experiences and perspectives. Specifically, exploring the illustrative reflective "echos" that I created during participants' interviews complemented the

participants' visual contributions to their stories, contributing both to my analyses of the data and illustrating how a previously unexplored visual strategy contributed to engaging my researcher reflexivity. These creative processes also contributed to the dialogic relationships that I as researcher and the participants were creating, underscoring the co-constructive processes within this dissertation process and the Muslim women's ways of engaging herein described. Finally, this study was grounded in and extends the scholarship of liberation psychology and feminist participatory research and action.

This chapter reviews study findings in light of existing theory and research, describing how Muslim women activists protect against the political climates in which they live, how they come into social action work, and their psychosocial experiences of engaging in social change. The first section briefly summarizes the main findings (the model and clusters 1-8). The second section describes how life in a multiply traumatizing context (e.g., Burstow, 2003; Martín-Baró, 1994; Prilleltensky, 2003) shapes Muslim women activists' experiences precluding and during their engagement in social change work. The third section draws upon psychologies of resistance (e.g., Afuape, 2011; Dutt & Grabe, 2014; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016; Wade, 1997) to illuminate the role of critical consciousness in these processes and highlights the importance of sustaining one's ideals in trajectories of engagement in social change work. The fourth and fifth sections respectively, build on the benefits (e.g., Dutt & Grabe, 2014; Fine et al., 2018; Frederick & Stewart, 2018; Ginwright, 2009; Grabe, 2018; Herman, 1997; Moane, 2006; Prilleltensky, 2008; Vindhya, 2012) and burdens (Hernández-Wolfe, 2011; Moghaddam & Lvina, 2002; Morris, 2000; Rugh, 2015) of social change work, discussing the thrill and fun of engaging in activism as well as the costs to relationships and conflicts inherent in the work. The sixth section illuminates the contribution of "encouragement" as an external source of support to Muslim

women activists. The seventh section details the contributions of arts-based methodology used in this. Finally, following a review of the study's limitations, the final section presents select practices grounded in these findings as well as their implications for future research.

Summary of Findings

A constructivist theoretical model, eight clusters that constitute the model, and supporting narratives exemplifying two participants' journeys as well as visual illustrations were presented and discussed in Chapter Four. The model summarizes Muslim women activists' iterative process of engaging in Muslim community liberation in a post 9/11 sociopolitical context– including personal experiences, external influences, political analyses, resistance actions, benefits and burdens, all taking place within the dynamics emerging in a Muslim community context. Participants' ideals and the support they perceived that kept them engaging in their respective forms of social action are also presented. The eight clusters illuminate various components of the model and, taken together, constitute the model.

Living in a post 9/11 sociopolitical context posed many challenges, as described in the first cluster. Participants faced many struggles – being a political enemy and feeling stigmatized as Muslim women. They detailed structures powered by Islamophobia and government policies promoting Islamophobia – leaving many participants feeling as if "we're the boogie man now." Stigma they experienced was fueled by the common public opinion that Muslim women are oppressed, as well as targeting surrounding their hijabs. They attributed these problems to common human habits – lack of communication, people craving power, and the government engaging in age old tactics to manufacture an enemy.

A smaller context which Muslim women activists navigate was illuminated in the second cluster – the local Muslim community context. Within that context, participants described having

to navigate additional oppressions. Gender discrimination and anti-blackness were two forms of marginalization some participants experienced; both were attributed to internalized oppression within the Muslim community. Participants described living amongst many other Muslims who choose not to engage politically, and some shared their interpretations of other community members' decisions as steering clear of danger and trying to maintain whatever privileges they have. Each participant also recounted family histories, including diverse cultural backgrounds, conversion stories, and messages they have received from within their families about society and dissent.

Participants' internal experiences being Muslim women was detailed in the third cluster. Emotionally, they described feeling like they live under a microscope – their identities are hypervisible and scrutinized. After 9/11, one participant spoke of her black identity as a protection from her Muslim identity; in essence, participants' intersecting identities that are often associated with additive oppression, served as protection against the discrimination they felt as Muslim. All participants shared the emotional burdens they carry as Muslim women, including an instinct to hide, pressure to perform, and traumas they've endured. Not all of their internal experiences were regarding pain; many described experiencing strength and feeling their personal power. Some described their anti-authoritarian nature or their faith in Islam as protective against the detrimental mental health effects of the everyday anti-Muslim contexts; others described moments they've felt embraced by others as positive internal experiences.

Amidst their differences, what united these women? Their guiding ideals leading them toward social action, as detailed in the fourth cluster. The core goal participants shared in their work was achieving Muslim liberation – a process they described as realizing Muslim political power, actualizing freedom, finding self-understanding beyond internalized Islamophobia,

wanting to talk openly in the Muslim community, and seeing a powerful, resilient Muslim community. These Muslim women spoke of a sense of responsibility they felt to protect other Muslim women and their communities at large. Included in that, they expressed protecting their children's future and protecting democracy and progress as motivations for their activism. Participants' did not just speak of caring for their own communities – they described the importance of fighting alongside other social movements and oppressed peoples as 'all oppression is related.' Finally, a shared commitment to promote understanding bound these women – many cared to change the public misconceptions about Islam and end hate.

Participants' political analyses and the development of their political positions were shared in the fifth cluster. Influences fostering critical consciousness development and promoting their journeys into and engagement with activism included activities (such as engaging in the Muslim Student Association), exposure to resources (e.g., leftist books, college culture), and inspirations. Some participants found inspiration from their parents and felt as if they inherited their parents' spirit of resistance, while others felt influence from historic activists. The ways participants thought about who and what was to blame for Islamophobia were also discussed in this cluster. Citing the roots of Islamophobia prior to 9/11 was part of some participants' analysis, they focused on ongoing wars in the Middle East and capitalist interests fueling terrorism. Relatedly, some participants expressed their perspectives that governments use age old tactics to manufacture an enemy, including demonizing and scapegoating Muslims, and utilizing racism to keep people alienated and divided. Many participants understood anti-Muslim sentiment to be an extension of white supremacy, and others thought that terrorists fueled the branding of all Muslims. Where participants placed responsibility is often where they focused the attention of their social action. Finally, many participants thought a scarcity mentality, including

lack of communication, ignorance, and craving power, were responsible for the anti-Muslim context.

Diverse modalities of resistance participants engage in their activism and social change work were shared in cluster six. Common among some participants was the experience that "just walking out the door as a Muslim woman" was resistance; (i.e., actively claiming one's Muslim identity in this political climate is a political action). Many utilize teaching (in classrooms, workshops, and community programs) to raise awareness about Islam and structures that promote violence toward Muslims. Participants also described what many of us think of when we think of activism – participating in protests, demonstrations, and rallies often as organizers of or speakers at the events. Finally, one participant shared her notable role as a legal advocate – providing legal protection to Muslims targeted, profiled, and surveilled by the police. Though these concrete "actions" were shared, many women spoke of other tireless aspects of their work – attending meetings, raising funds, and the countless hours that take place behind the scenes to prepare for each of these forms of social action.

Emotional and psychological burdens and benefits of engaging in these diverse forms of social action were shared in cluster seven. Participants were quick to tell how difficult organizing is – explaining the dangers of speaking out, how their identities feel inescapable at times, and the tolls on activists' mental health. Within-community dynamics pose challenges too, as conflicts about goals and process come up, including some organizers feeling others leave out the community in their actions and others feel that whiteness is legitimated through organizing – meaning, some may view the end goal of their actions as that of "being accepted by white people" or making white people comfortable around Muslims rather than as working with and for their community. The Muslim women in this study came from different backgrounds and

generations, some attributed differences in perspective to this identity diversity within Muslim women who resist. Many of the women also shared the lack of recognition in social action work; many are uncompensated for the labor they do and experience challenges in funding their work. But amidst the burdens, what keeps Muslim women resisting? When they talked about the benefits of engaging in resistance, they described how thrilling it can feel to participate in inciting social change. By being a part of this process they experience a sense of appreciation for themselves, and see their own bravery in action. They also shared the importance of social connection with others and affirmation from others that their resistance work facilitates. They described feeling joy and cultivating a sense of hope through engaging in social action. Some of the women had an easier time than others speaking about what they enjoy about engaging in social action, perhaps because the opportunity to confide and vent about the process is rare.

Participants shared that which supports them in their organizing work in the eighth cluster. On a personal level, coming to peace with their personal limits of what they as an individual are capable of changing was notable. Related, some women spoke about the importance of self-care when engaging in social action, and not forgetting to sustain oneself as one fights for larger social causes. Some also noted external supports including attending therapy. Two participants shared that their therapists saw them for free, which made it possible for them to attend, as neither had a paid organizing job or worked for a traditional company that provided health insurance. Many spoke of these concrete forms of allyship that non-Muslim people can engage in, to support, stand alongside, and enable their work as activists. Finally, participants spoke about the value of encouragement: being encouraged both by other Muslims and non-Muslim allies about the value and importance of their resistance.

Life in a Traumatizing Context

Though researchers have yet to fully explore Muslim women activists' experiences living in an anti-Muslim context of marginalization and threat, many have explored the rise in hate crimes, anti-Muslim policies, targeting and profiling experienced by Muslims in general (e.g., Bodley & Chronicle, 2017; Bonet, 2011; Branigin, 2017; Buehler, 2011; Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2015; Garrison, 2017; Hauser, 2017, 2017; Hernández-Wolfe, 2011; Human Rights Watch Report, 2002; IRDPUCB, 2016; Kirschenheuter, 2015; Kundnani, 2014; Marusak, 2017; NBC Washington, 2017; Rizzo et al., 2017; Rocha, 2017; Schwartz, 2017; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017; Wang, 2017; Wires, 2017; Worthington, 2017). In particular, scholars have emphasized the spike in discrimination after 9/11, and after the Trump presidential election in 2016 (e.g., Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2015). As discussed above, throughout the duration of this study, the political climate in greater Boston and beyond became ever more repressive, with increased anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric circulating news streams (e.g., Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017). A political climate like this is taxing, and induces what some scholars have termed psychosocial trauma (Martín-Baró, 1994; Prilleltensky, 2003). Other scholars have documented the psychological experiences of Muslims in the U.S. (e.g., Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009; Awaad, 2017; Bonet, 2011; Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Nadal et al., 2012; O'Connor & Jahan, 2014; Perry, 2014; Rippy & Newman, 2006; Saedi, 2012; Samari, 2016; Shirazi & Mishra, 2010; Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013) and the particular challenges Muslim women in the U.S. face (e.g., Abu-Lughod, 2013; Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009; Al-Hejin, 2015; Alimahomed-Wilson, 2017; Gidaris & University, 2018; Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017; Perry, 2014). However, this research is one of the first efforts to document the unique effects of an anti-Muslim climate through a lens that draws explicitly on psychosocial trauma, including

within-community dynamics contributing to this climate. Additionally, it sought to document Muslim women's strengths as an aspect of Muslim mental health. What follows frames this work through the lens of psychosocial trauma, drawing on the findings of the current study to add unique perspectives of within Muslim community dynamics and Muslim women's strengths to the existing literature.

Psychosocial Trauma of Anti-Muslim Climate

Psychosocial trauma is the consequence of a social system based on dehumanizing oppression (Martín-Baró, 1994). According to Burstow (2003), "Oppression is the primary traumatizing condition and one to which all [humans] are subject," that is, one that affects all living in affected communities. The Muslim women activists in this study detailed what Martín-Baró (1994) calls the "traumatogenic structures and conditions" that Muslims face in the current political climate, including: the structures of war, the media, and businesses powered by Islamophobia, and social and legal policies such as the Muslim Ban (Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2015) and Countering Violence Extremism (ACLU, 2016). Laws, often framed as "securitization" strategies are constructed around problematic, discriminatory ideologies that lie beneath dominant and mainstream discourses around Islam (Bonet, 2011).

Chavez-Diaz & Lee (2015), discuss two key effects of these systemic and institutional barriers on oppressed communities: (a) structural inequality, that is, barriers that establish and perpetuate a society in which certain groups reap benefits and privileges as a result of other groups marginalization and exclusion; and (b) social trauma. Participants in this study spoke of both – regarding marginalization and exclusion they described being perceived as the "boogie man," as their Muslim-ness has become instantaneously equated with terrorism. They discussed some of the effects of social trauma including feeling a perpetual instinct to hide and feeling

simultaneously as if they're living under a microscope. As I write this dissertation, the political climate continues to grow even more repressive for Muslims as the U.S. instigates wars with Iran, India passes an anti-Muslim immigration bill, and more Muslims face additional barriers preventing their entry to the United States.

Additive Trauma of Within-Community Dynamics

One aspect of psychosocial trauma that has not been discussed extensively in previous scholarship is the additive trauma Muslims may experience within their own communities, dynamics that emerge and intersect with the above socio-political contexts. Some scholars theorize (e.g., Smith, 2012) that when living within a white supremacist nation state, communities divide rather than unite – with some individuals or groups aiming to enhance their proximity to whiteness, while others try to maintain and build communal power and defend their intersectional identities. This could be a reflection of a state of internalized subordination (e.g., Williams, 2012). Although some scholars have documented that Muslim women lack agency in such contexts (Al-Hejin, 2015; Alimahomed-Wilson, 2017), researchers have not directly explored other Muslim women activists' personal perceptions of these dynamics.

This study sought to fill this vacuum by asking participants to talk about how they see and experience differences and divisions within their community. They shared their perceptions of gender discrimination and patriarchy within the community, including male dominance in conversations and experiences of men sidelining women's leadership in mosques, and black Muslims and converts both being treated as outsiders. Relatedly, they detailed why they think other Muslims do not engage in social actions or activism, illuminating interesting potential differences between their socialization and critical consciousness development and that of those who are less inclined to resist experiences of marginalization within the community. During a

feedback session after the interviews, participants noted different perspectives about the root causes of Islamophobia and occupied different positions on a "spectrum" of Muslims' responses to Islamophobia. Some relayed frustration and anger towards other Muslims who are not engaged in activism, while others expressed understanding of Muslims' differential levels of risk depending on immigration status and other factors. Messages participants received from their families often varied, including many with protective parents who preferred they not engage in activism, or relatives who felt it would be better to "keep one's head down" and submit to the oppression (i.e., internalized subordination) than risk one's well-being fighting against it. Overall, these internal community dynamics added to their levels of stress and challenge in an already tense political climate.

The Power of Strengths

Though the majority of literature on Muslim mental health has focused on deficits and damage, including microaggressions (e.g., Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Nadal et al., 2012), stress reactivity (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009, p.; Rippy & Newman, 2006), and identity development (Nadal et al., 2012; Saedi, 2012; Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013) and socialization challenges (Harper, 2015; Perry, 2014; Samari, 2016), this study sought to also explore strengths and feelings of embrace that Muslim women might also experience. Some participants shared how proud they were of their faith in Islam, while others took pride in their anti-authoritarian natures, and named how both of these areas of personal power have protected them from the negative impacts of the anti-Muslim climate. Participants shared the effects of the power they experience while engaging in social action on their self-perceptions: witnessing their own bravery, feeling connected, and experiencing the hope and joy of being engaged in social change amidst a horrifying social reality. Documenting these counternarratives that highlight Muslim women's

strengths is essential to balance the literature focused solely on mental health challenges attendant to marginalization and threat.

Social Action Promoted by Critical Consciousness and Guided by Ideals

Some existing research has explored factors which promote engagement in social activism (Dutt & Grabe, 2014). This study built upon such work and research about critical consciousness (e.g., Dutt & Grabe, 2014; Freire, 2005), honing in on participants' political analysis of the anti-Muslim context as it informed their chosen resistance strategies. Additionally, participants' ideals informed specific social change tactics. This section will put previously mentioned literature on critical consciousness into conversation with the findings of this study.

Political Analysis Developed Through Critical Consciousness

Freire's (2005) description of stages of critical consciousness – including magical, naïve, and critical stages – map directly onto findings from this study. Participants and other members of the Muslim community about whom they spoke occupied different stages of consciousness, as reflected in the political analyses of issues that they shared. For example, those in the critical stage see oppression as a normal function of an unjust system and that groups are collectively responsible for challenging it. Participants who discussed structures of white supremacy and tactics that governments employed to create an enemy embodied the critical stage – showcasing their understanding of the anti-Muslim climate as reflective of a normal, unjust system. Participants who reflected this stage also engaged in actions aimed to change the structures of oppression, including providing legal protection against surveillance from the government, or standing up against government policies at protests and demonstrations. In contrast, Freire describes those in the naïve stage see individual level problems (like interpersonal racism or

discrimination) but do not see them as connected to structures and systems. Participants whose political analysis of anti-Muslim context was that there was a lack of communication, ignorance, or misunderstanding of Islam reflected his understanding of the naïve stage. These participants saw interpersonal problems as misunderstandings, rather than linked to patterns of structural violence. Finally, in the magical stage of critical consciousness development, people see oppression as a "fact of life" and feel powerless to change it. While participants in this study themselves did not embody this perspective, they spoke of other Muslims in their community who are not engaged in social action as reflecting this stage of consciousness – they "see there are problems but do nothing." Thus, Freire's understanding of critical consciousness development is helpful for interpreting some of the findings from this research and for thinking about possible applications or implications for this work (see below).

Ideals Informed Strategies of Action

Existing scholarship outlines different forms of resistance (e.g., Afuape, 2011) including Muslim's interpersonal resistance (e.g., Bilge, 2010; Shirazi & Mishra, 2010), their local community organizing (e.g., Pennock, 2017; Petri, 2019; Reem, 2014), and multi-local social movements in which they engage (e.g., Take On Hate, 2019). However, what guides Muslim women activists to choose one form of social action over another is not well documented. This study contributes to existing research through its exploration of factors that precluded engagement in activism for some of the participants (see also, e.g., Dutt & Grabe, 2014) and by adding to that literature the contributions of Muslim women's *ideals* as an additional factor that some of the participants perceived to have promoted engagement and informed their choices of how to resist.

As shown in Chapter Four, the majority of participants were drawn toward a shared ideal of promoting Muslim liberation. Participants' identities as Muslim women likely guided them toward engaging in social action about Muslim issues, versus engaging in social action about climate issues or animal rights. Within participants' shared commitment to Muslim liberation, participants engaged different strategies for action. These different strategies also related to different stages of critical consciousness, described above. For example, some participants expressed having an ideal to promote understanding between different groups. These same participants engaged in social actions that involved teaching or hosting workshops for non-Muslims to learn about and challenge their negative perceptions of Muslims, reflecting the naïve stage of consciousness. Other participants expressed an ideal to protect democracy and promote progress; these participants often engaged in public protest and advocacy within the government, reflecting the stage of critical consciousness. Finally, most participants shared an ideal that they feel responsible to other women and to their communities. Those who articulated this ideal also engaged in strategies of action to support other women and Muslims around them – including organizing groups of Muslim women to march at the Women's March, creating legal support systems for those harmed by surveillance and profiling in their communities, or promoting Muslim youth leadership. This may not reflect a stage of critical consciousness, but may reflect a propensity toward collectivism in an otherwise individualistic society.

The Thrill and Fun of Social Change Work

Existing research suggests there are many psychosocial benefits of engaging in activism: well-being (e.g., Alimahomed-Wilson, 2017; Moane, 2006; Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007), reduced suicidal ideation (e.g., Fine et al., 2018), cultivating strengths (e.g., Frederick & Stewart, 2018), belonging (Grabe, 2018), healing (e.g., Ginwright, 2009; Herman, 1997; Vindhya, 2012),

and community (e.g. Dutta & Grabe, 2018; Stewart, 2018). Findings from this study build on this existing research through documenting participants' shared feelings of self-appreciation of their strengths and feelings of being connected to and through community. Participants also shared the thrills they felt engaging in social change work, explaining that it was a source of fun for them. For example, participants noted that engaging in direct actions gave them a "high" and that being activists brought them "joy". This joy and fun is not small in a context of degrading violence. In activist adrienne marie brown's (2019) book *Pleasure Activism*, she states, "Pleasure activism is the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy," (p.13), "Pleasure is the point. Feeling good is not frivolous, it is freedom," (p.441).

Strained Relationships and Conflicts

Scholarship has documented harms and burdens endured while engaging in social change work, including: imprisonment, job loss, re-traumatization (e.g., Rugh, 2015), burnout, political exile, and exposure to sexism (e.g., Hernández-Wolfe, 2011) This study confirmed these findings as reflected in participants' stories about the dangers of speaking up or out and the tolls activism has taken on their mental health.

In addition, as discussed in Chapter Four, participants shared that engaging in activism sometimes led to conflicts and strained relationships within their families and among other activists. Specifically, they spoke about conflicts arising among other activists about the goals and process of social change work, with criticisms arising about strategies and tactics other activists engaged. Some participants expressed frustration at other activists who left out the larger Muslim community in decisions that would affect their lives, such as choosing to resist local policies that led to backlash from the police against community members. Other

participants felt frustrated that some activists used tactics they felt legitimized whiteness, essentially that catered to the comfort of white people rather than the freedom and liberation of Muslims. These conflicts were also heightened by a sense that some participants felt of not ever being able to escape their identities, and the pressures that were at times felt to perform and take on responsibilities from other activists.

Encouragement Keeps Activists Going

Despite the multiple psychological burdens discussed above, activists who participated in this study sustained their social change work. Although there is limited scholarship on what allies can do to support Muslim women activists who are engaging in social change work, this study contributed to this absence by focusing on how participants described what they had found to be supportive and what they wished others would do. Most notably, many participants discussed the importance of receiving encouragement from others within and outside their community. Engaging in social change contributes to one experiencing vulnerability as it goes against the grain of what mainstream society tells us we should do. Participants stated that receiving encouragement was powerful and helped them keep going. Such encouragement took multiple forms including cheering them on at protests, financial support, or personal words of encouragement. Encouragement from within the Muslim community was noted as even more important than encouragement from allies outside the community. Many participants shared that they highly valued knowing that their work felt helpful to those most directly impacted by anti-Muslim policies and practices. They expressed words of encouragement and financial support similarly would be useful from members of the Muslim community.

Contributions of Visual Representations to Knowledge Construction

There is a growing body of literature focused on multiple contributions of arts-based inquiry techniques (e.g., Gerber et al., 2012; Leavy, 2015) to the social sciences. In this study, arts-based inquiry complemented qualitative inductive analytic methods, deploying novel strategies of eliciting participants' experiences and perspectives. Illustrations gave another way participants could visually narrate their stories. I learned how participants understand themselves in a more abstract sense – for example, when Bold Babe shared her image about within-community oppression illustrated by a giant cloud hovering over the community with men standing above it, it showed me the salience of this emotional experience for her. This process was collaborative, participants shared their images and after describing them often asked me what I saw or what was salient to me. This dialogue deepened our exploration of their journeys into social action work and their emotional experiences, in a way that we might not have otherwise delved into as deeply exclusively through words.

A novel, previously unexplored visual research strategy was my creation of reflective "echo" images. These served to collaboratively explore my interpretations of key issues in participants' narratives, summarize and share back with participants some of the strengths I experienced as they shared in their stories, and provided an opportunity for deepening my researcher reflexivity through sharing my experiences with them and listening to their feedback. I learned that at times my interpretation of their stories resonated, and at other times, it did not – but my visual representations offered me a concrete tool and process through which to recognize and share this process. Also, after "taking" so much from participants asking them to share their stories, creating an image that allowed me to mirror, validate, and "play back" their stories to them felt like giving something back in return, and represented in a concrete form the experience

of being heard and seen through a dialogic relationship. Finally, exploring my images, I was able to learn about myself as a researcher – what I tuned into and did not, and initial themes and interpretations I made that informed my eventual analysis and study findings.

Limitations

This study's findings should be considered in light of a number of limitations. This section will review such limitations, including those related to the study design, sample recruitment and composition, and data analysis.

Given that this was a qualitative study, with a small group of activists, findings should not be generalized to all Muslim women activists, or to all Muslim communities. Rather, findings offer a lens for understanding Muslim women's varied experiences of engaging in social action and a theoretical model that is sufficiently abstract to be explored with other Muslim women. Further, activism in different cities across the United States may vary due to the very different local contexts of repression and engagement in social change work, despite some similarities across contexts due to national and global policies and practices.

The resources and strategies gleaned from participatory and action research that informed this study presented strengths and limitations. For example, my engagement with Muslim community organizations such as the Muslim Justice League may have served to enhance but also to detract from the in-depth interviews and the information shared. Throughout the study there was evidence of both. For example, participants who were connected to this organization expressed that their familiarity with me was important in their decision to participate in the research. At the same time, my familiarity could have inhibited their ability to share information either because they thought I already knew it or because it was "private" or "too personal" and they may have hesitated to share it. Similarly, my involvement with Muslim Justice League may

have influenced other participants' sharing as they may have associated me with the positive or negative perceptions they have with that organization, despite my efforts to present as open and neutral and to reassure them that their participation in the study and their interview was confidential.

It is also important to consider limitations of the study in terms of interviews taking place over the span of six months, in which the political climate was shifting and changing. I interviewed participants from December 2017 through May 2018, during which time Trump withheld military aid from Pakistan, declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel, and continue to implement harsh immigration policies heightening anti-Muslim sentiment across the United States. Given this, it is important to consider that narratives responded to the political moment in which they took place. The member feedback session took place approximately one year after the interviews concluded, at which time tensions had risen within the national political context and participants' responses and social actions had also evolved as well.

In regards to demographic characteristics, although the sample was racially and ethnically diverse, there were few participants who identified as Black, convert, LGBTQ or above the age of 40 Muslim women activists, who may be thus underrepresented among those groups in the broader U.S. population. Of the 11 Muslim women activists asked to participate, only one said no; she was a Muslim woman who identified as queer. There are likely community dynamics and interpersonal barriers to explain this. For example, participants in the study shared that Black, convert, and LGBTQ Muslims are discriminated against within the community, perhaps heightening their mistrust of others, and preventing their participation in efforts to engage in activism related to their Muslim identity. Additionally, my "outsider" status as a non-Muslim, South Asian, with a Hindu name and background, may have limited trust from those who did not

have personal familiarity with me and contributed to their decision not to participate in the study. Similarly, participants who came from South Asian Muslim backgrounds may have withheld or filtered their sharing because of long standing conflicts in South Asia between Hindus and Muslims. Further, one participant told me in private, that many Muslims are reluctant to participate in research because: (a) it is often unpaid; and (b) there is limited trust in a context of surveillance and misrepresentation of Muslims.

In terms of the group feedback session, there was limited participation (only 30% of participants). Though this is common in optional member checking and feedback processes, it may have limited the accuracy of some of my interpretations that were honed during this session and may have failed to capture all issues across the sample. However, as discussed above, I did engage in an individual member checking process with each participant at the end of their interview, which did ensure I was able to confirm my initial interpretations and understandings of their narratives with each participant.

Finally, as discussed above my own lenses and positionality, shaped by my identities, life experiences, academic study, and activisms informed the interviews, data analysis, and interpretation. As is true for all qualitative, constructivist research, they shaped how I asked questions, when I chose to follow up or not, what I missed, what I heard most clearly, how I analyzed and organized the data, what I shared with participants in our conversations about their interviews, and the final reporting contained herein. Although I continuously reflected on these processes with my dissertation chair and research team, and shared my initial interpretations with participants through my reflective illustration, I surely missed opportunities for more comprehensive understandings.

Implications for Practice and Research

Implications for Practice: Sustaining Muslim Women's Activism

Despite these limitations, these findings suggest several implications for the community of Muslim women activists and those allied to support them. This research centered a better understanding of how Muslim women become activists, how they sustain themselves through activism, and how they support their activism. Throughout this research study, multiple strategies through which these Muslim women sustained their activism became clear: (1) engaging in healing-centered organizing; (2) offering ways to engage across political understandings; (3) celebrating together and engaging joy; and (4) calling on and receiving support from allies and mental health professional advocates. Implications of each to support further social action and activism are discussed below.

Engage in Healing Centered Organizing

As the political climate continues to be hostile toward Muslims, the psychosocial trauma Muslim women experience risks intensification. Findings in this study indicate that Muslim women feel stigmatized and burdened in such contexts, and those who engage in activism bare the added burdens resulting from their social change work, including tolls on their mental health. Organizing efforts can incorporate healing into their central mission to account for and respond creatively to these effects. Ginwright (2009) suggests that bridging justice and healing is a necessity, rather than viewing healing as simply an individual act of self-care. Focusing on healing and justice simultaneously views the practice of healing as a political act that makes communities more whole while empowering people to bring about changes in the system. Relatedly, a recent conceptual model was proposed by Chavez-Diaz & Lee (2015) which outlines modalities and practices for "Healing Centered Organizing" across four domains: (1)

healing is in response to the needs of the community; (2) healing is political; (3) healing and organizing intersect; and (4) healing is found in culture and spirituality. For Muslim women activists, healing could potentially include incorporation of contemplative practices, restorative justice, faith-based practices, cultural and spiritual practices, and arts, music, and movement into social actions and community meeting spaces. The Healing Centered Organizing model centralizes the suffering of oppressed communities in its design, striving for both individual and collective healing and liberation.

Collective healing is an important buffer for communities who are stigmatized. Identity-affirming networks can buffer adverse effects of discrimination on health (Samari, 2016); feeling a sense of connection to others who are similarly affected by the issues may support one's desire and willingness to remain committed in the face of obstacles (Drury & Reicher, 2005; Tajfel, 1978; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Collective healing practices can foster a sense of community cohesion – influencing ways individuals perceive their affiliation to a collective (Levy et al., 2012). One avenue to promote such healing is through the use of art. Participants' experiences utilizing art in this research study was positive, and since participating in the study, one local Boston organization has incorporated art into their community meeting spaces and fundraisers. Additionally, Burstow (2003) suggests that the: "Use of public art … is a particularly promising direction, for it at once facilitates witnessing; generates new meaning out of old; integrates mind, body, feeling, and spirit; and creates community," (p. 1312). However, as Herman (1997) notes, "It is never safe to assume that a group of people will be able to rally and cohere simply because all of its members have suffered from the same terrible event" (p. 219). For example, Arab Muslims who associate with identity-affirming networks (i.e., other Muslims) have been found to experience more psychological distress (Samari, 2016).

Offer Ways to Engage Across Political Understandings

In addition to the need for healing centered organizing, findings revealed that within the Muslim women activists interviewed and in the Muslim community at large as participants perceived it, there are differences in opinions about and ways of responding to the tense political climate. Participants shared that some Muslim community members do not engage in social action, presumably because they are afraid of dangers. As discussed in Chapter Four, I documented engagement in different parts of social change among the participants, involving different levels of risk. Some taught non-Muslims about Islam while others led demonstrations and rallies protesting government policies. These differences suggest that offering diverse ways to engage across political understandings can invite more communal engagement in the fight toward Muslim liberation. One tool that supports differential forms of engagement is the Social Barometer, developed by Shields (1993) in her book *In the Tiger's Mouth: An Empowerment Guide for Social Action*. The Social Barometer is a movement organizing tool that discusses the spectrum of allies and opponents in every social movement, indicating that there are leading activists, active allies, passive allies, passive opponents, active opponents, and leading opponents. To build a movement, it is suggested that leading activists assess if their strategies are invitational for people at different stages along this spectrum to move toward their goals – in this case, the goal of promoting Muslim liberation.

Findings in this study suggest that Muslim women's activism is not monolithic; participants embodied different political understandings and strategies, though some of their ideals and goals may be the same. For example, a few of the women interviewed shared in the goal of fighting Islamophobia to protect their children's future; however, one chose to run workshops to help parents support their kids facing discrimination in schools, while another

developed an organization to fight FBI surveillance programming from infiltrating mosques and community centers. Differences in process and strategy have led to conflicts within the community, according to participants. In this example, one activist engaged in activism fighting the interpersonal level of discrimination, while the other activist fought larger structures and institutions. Each took on different parts of the puzzle, or the 'hydra' (see Figure 16) as one participant called it, toward the shared ideal of protecting their children's future. Connecting over shared ideals may be helpful when there is in-fighting about strategy, as engaging anywhere along the Social Barometer can bring more Muslims and allies into the movement to fight for Muslim liberation.

Celebrate Together and Engage Joy

As previously described, findings relayed that activists experience burn out while engaging in activism, and sometimes feel pressures to perform or always be "on." Additionally, findings suggest that activists experience multiple connections and joys in their organizing work. To sustain and support Muslim women activists, furthering connection by engaging in celebration together is essential. As Audrey Lorde writes in her 1978 essay *Uses of the Erotic*, joy is "energy for change," "The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic or intellectual, forms a bridge among the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared among them, and lessens the threat of their difference" (Lorde, 1978, p. 56). In an otherwise bleak context, celebration and joy also encourage hope for a better future.

Call to Allies and Mental Health Professional Advocates

As a non-Muslim, allied activist, recognizing what Muslim women activists are asking of their allies or what I understand to be their accomplices[2] (see e.g., Indigenous Action, 2014) is

[2] Within the broader activist community there is a dialogue taking place about the best way to stand in solidarity with others facing oppression. The utilization of the term ally has been interrogated and critiqued for commodifying

essential to sustain their movements. In this study, participants asked for supports from allies of their work, and described ways that mental health professionals have supported them which can be replicated (e.g., free services). Activists asked for financial support from their allies, as much of their work goes unpaid. Financial support can be given by supporting the organizations in which they work, compensating them for speaking engagements and workshops that they facilitate, paying them for costs of within community organizing (e.g., food at meetings, supplies, transportation costs, meeting space rental), or living costs (e.g., rent, bills). Participants underscored the role of encouragement, from Muslims and non-Muslims, in maintaining their morale, energy, and purpose. Encouragement can take many forms: giving awards, writing notes of thanks, taking an activist to lunch, using social media to share about causes, and giving public credit for the tireless and countless hours activists have worked. Of course, allies' can engage by using our privileges to invest in fighting against the root causes of anti-Muslim violence in which we have differential power and stake.

Mental health professionals are uniquely challenged to respond to Muslim activists. Participants in this study shared that a valuable support and resource was free mental health services. Psychologists and mental health professionals can provide a variety of practical supports to activists: free therapy, support groups, and/or offers to facilitate community healing spaces. Additionally, mental health professionals can examine their institutions for Islamophobic practices, including policies about government surveillance of Muslim clients. Psychologists in particular must take extra care to build trust with Muslim communities, in the wake of the

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oppression for professional gain and there has been a call for accompliceship (Indigenous Action, 2014): a practice fighting against oppression "with" rather than doing "for" – i.e., being complicit with communities in the fight for liberation. Most participants referenced allies in their interviews so this term was utilized in the findings, however a critical interrogation of one's positionality and intention is necessary to not cause harm.

American Psychological Association's development of torture protocols used against Muslims in Guantanamo Bay (Risen, 2015). Psychologists and mental health professionals who aim to support social justice initiatives, and further practices of feminist, liberation, and critical psychologies, are responsible to "walk the talk" and offer their time providing practical mental health support to activists- supporting activists is fighting Islamophobia.

Finally, psychologists can promote critical understandings of the mental health effects of anti-Muslim violence. Martín-Baró (1994) argued that the task of psychologists is to help individuals and communities gain critical consciousness:

> We are proposing that the task of the psychologist must be to achieve the de-alienation of groups and persons by helping them attain a critical understanding of themselves and their reality […] concientizacion supposes that persons change in the process of changing their relations with the surrounding environment and, above all, with other people. (p. 41).

As political analysis and critical consciousness promote activist trajectories (see above and e.g., Freire, 2006) psychologists should partner with Muslim communities to help promote critical understandings of the sociopolitical nature of anti-Muslim violence, to further promote and sustain the fight for Muslim liberation.

Implications for Future Research

This study points to multiple areas for possible future research: (1) exploring healing practices within community organizing; (2) examining critical consciousness development among a larger and more diverse sample of Muslim activists and within wider Muslim communities; (3) designing trauma-sensitive, culturally responsive, mental health services for Muslim activists; and (4) examining the psychology of resistance across activist communities.

Explore Healing Practices Within Community Organizing

First, little is known about activists who might be engaging in healing practices in their organizing, and if so, through what practices and with what outcomes. If community members are healing from the adverse effects of an anti-Muslim climate collectively, what do they mean by healing? What are they doing? How is it working? What are their experiences of it? Better understanding these alternative healing strategies will better help mental health practitioners support community-led practices, and this understanding could inform social activist movements more broadly.

Examine Critical Consciousness Development within Muslim Communities

Second, findings from this study indicate there may be different levels of critical consciousness (e.g., Freire, 2005) among Muslim community members. There has been extensive research about critical consciousness among youth including youth of color (e.g., Diemer et al., 2017) but much less is known about it in the Muslim community and among adult activists. Further exploration of this phenomenon is necessary. Do stages of critical consciousness in the Muslim community differ among Muslims between Muslim and non-Muslim activists? What makes them differ? How does internalized oppression (e.g., Williams, 2012) influence critical consciousness? How to different stages influences response modalities? While this study offered preliminary possibilities to answer these questions, further research could explore these connections. Better understanding how critical consciousness operates within the Muslim community could inform psychosocial interventions (e.g., Martín-Baró, 1994) and political mobilization.

Explore Trauma-sensitive, Culturally-responsive, Mental Health Services for Muslim Activists

Third, activists undergo unique stressors, and therefore likely require specialized mental health support. This study suggested that free mental health services would benefit Muslim women activists. Future research can explore what trauma-sensitive, culturally-responsive mental health practices are best suited for Muslim women activists, or, what existing service structures can be modified to support Muslim women activists. How do support groups versus individual support systems differ? What keeps Muslim women activists engaged in mental health support?

Examine Psychology of Resistance Across Activist Communities

As a community focus group suggested in the early stages of this research, Muslims activists should not be studied alone – their struggles are interconnected with other struggles effected by White supremacy, including the struggles of indigenous and Black communities. The psychology of resistance should be examined more broadly, intersectionally, and comparatively. What are the emotional experiences of working across struggles? What are the best strategies in helping people develop as activists to fight global fascism and neoliberalism and all the communities it effects?

Utilize Arts-based and Arts-Informed Inquiry Methods

Finally, as many participants shared in their feedback of the interview process and responses to my reflective "echo" images, future research should utilize the arts in qualitative interview processes to deepen inquiry and to give participants something concrete in return reflecting the witnessing of their stories.

Summary and Concluding Thoughts

Every day Muslim women in the United States wake up to a harsh political world attacking their identities, communities, and freedom. In this context, Muslim women endure

immense psychological tolls on their sense of identity, safety, and relationships. For many of them, walking out the door and claiming their Muslim identity is an act of political resistance. Despite the disempowerment they can experience, many engage in social action to resist these oppressive forces. Yet, Muslim women activists have received strikingly little attention in the psychological literature about Muslims and about activists. As discussed above, research not has explored the psychosocial experiences of Muslim women who engage in activism, nor their trajectories of resistance.

By focusing specifically on Muslim women activists, this study contributes to research and practice in multiple ways. First, participants' narratives built on existing literature about psychosocial trauma experienced by Muslim women, and highlighted the need for healing-centered community organizing practices to combat social structures responsible for anti-Muslimness while tending to the wounds they inflict upon individuals and communities. Second, complexities within the Muslim community were illuminated, calling for diverse pathways to engage in social change and further exploration of how to mobilize communities while navigating divergent perspectives and experiences. Third, cultivating joy in the practice of resistance was identified as an important resource to help sustain the movement toward Muslim liberation: the women interviewed shared the value of social connection and community brought about by their social change work. Finally, participants shared what keeps them going and what others can do to support them, including: encouragement, monetary compensation, and free mental health care. This study is one small contribution to the scholarship on Muslim women's activism. Ongoing conversations driven by Muslim women activists themselves will continue; this research will ensure that such praxis is informed by the lived experiences of some Muslim women and its implications are relevant to inform possibilities for action.

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Appendix.

Informed Consent for Individual Participation

Name of the study: From internalized oppression to active resistance: A grounded theory of psychosocial responses to anti-Muslim policies, practices, behaviors, and attitudes

Principal Investigator: Sriya Bhattacharyya, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate, Boston College Center for Human Rights and International Justice

Time of the study: 2017-2019

Introduction: Thank you for your interest in sharing your experiences and participating in this research study.

Goals of the study:

- To explore how Muslim women who are in organizations or groups describe the nature of the problem they are fighting.
- To explore how Muslim women describe their journeys toward fighting anti-Muslim policies, practices, attitudes, and behaviors.
- To explore Muslim women's feelings and experiences in their organizing work.

Why have I been asked to participate in this study?

- Because you are a Muslim woman who has lived in the US for 10+ years.
- Because you are engaged in some form of group or community action to respond to anti-Muslim policies, practices, behaviors, or attitudes.
- Because you are 18 years old or older.
- Because you are interested in sharing your experiences.

What do I do first?

- Before agreeing to participate, this consent form will be read to you.
- Please ask any questions you may have.

Who will take part in the study?

- Muslim women in the greater Boston and/or New York areas who are engaged in group or community action to respond to anti-Muslim policies, practices, behaviors, and attitudes.

If I agree to take part, what will I be asked to do?

- You will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview conducted by Sriya. In the interview, Sriya will ask questions to learn about you and your experiences as a Muslim woman and the community work you do.
- You will be asked to engage in some simple art activities guided by Sriya to facilitate discussion about your journey into organizing work.

What are the risks to being in the study?

- There is minimal risk. That is, there is an unlikely chance that you could feel uncomfortable responding to these questions or become upset because certain topics discussed in the interview could bring up feelings about your experiences. If you would like to talk to someone about these

feelings, we will refer you to services in the area. Participation in this study may also involve unknown risks.

What are the benefits to being in the study?

- There is no direct benefit to you.
- This study will contribute to understanding more about Muslim women's experiences responding to Islamophobia in the United States. It will also contribute to understanding the challenges and strengths of participating in community action and how it can be better supported.

Will I be paid?

- There will be no monetary payment for participating in this study.

How will things I say be kept private?

- The researcher, Sriya, will never use your name or personal identifying information when presenting this research.
- She will store your personal information in a place separate from your interview data.
- When you consent to participate, your name will be kept private.
- Visual data (art expressions used to facilitate discussion) will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office.
- Audio recordings will be kept in a secured digital storage space.
- Sriya will never discuss your interview specifically with anyone inside the Muslim community.
- General themes will be compiled from all interviews when sharing the findings of this study. When the research is shared, pseudonyms will be used if you are quoted or your visual expression is shared as an example.

What if I choose not to take part or to leave the study?

- Taking part in the study is voluntary.
- If you choose not to take part or not to answer any of the questions, it will not affect your present or future relations with your organization or Boston College.
- You are free to leave the study at any time.
- You will not lose any benefits for not taking part in the study.
- You will not lose any benefits if you stop taking part in the study.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you have questions about the project or about your role, please contact Sriya Bhattacharyya.

You can do so by telephone at (352) 361-1758 (cell phone number) or by e-mail. You can

contact the research supervisor Dr. Brinton Lykes by email lykes@bc.edu

- This research has been reviewed and approved by the Office for Human Research at Boston College. If you have any questions about your rights, you may contact: Director at Boston College, at +1 (617)552-4778 or irb@bc.edu

Will I get a copy of this consent form?

- Yes, you can keep it.

Statement of consent:

- I read or had read to me the contents of this consent form.
- I was encouraged to ask questions.

- I received answers to my questions.
- I give my consent to take part in this study.
- I give consent to have these interviews audio recorded.
- I give consent to store and/or photograph my art expressions.
- I understand that I do not need to give any personal identification information unless I choose to do so.
- I received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

If you agree to participate in this individual interview, I will audio record you saying your name and that you agree to participate.

Interview Protocol

1. **Section One: Anti-Muslim Policies, Practices, Attitudes, and Behaviors**
    1. Can you tell me about your experience being a Muslim women in this country?
    2. Do you think there are problems Muslims face in this country?
        a. [If they agree] How would you describe these problems, and can you give me an example?
            i. How do you understand the nature, causes, or roots of these problems?
            ii. Who/What is responsible?
            iii. What influenced you to make you understand it this way?
            iv. Have you experienced these problems?
        b. [If they disagree] Can you tell me why you don't think so?
            i. What about your life experience makes you think that?

2. **Section Two: Journeys to Resistance**

    1. We've just been talking about your experiences of being a Muslim woman in this country. I understand you're involved in (insert the language they use for fighting anti-Muslim practices, policies, attitudes, and behaviors) Can you tell me about your journey into this work?
        a. When did you begin this work?
            i. What factors led to your participation?
        b. Can you tell me a story/stories of activities (insert the language they use for fighting anti-Muslim practices, policies, attitudes, and behaviors) you've engaged in?
            i. Do you remember how you felt leading up to (X), during, and after (X) moment?
        c. Have you experienced struggles or challenges along the way?
            i. If yes, can you describe one of them/tell me a story about this experience.
            ii. [If not covered above] How have you navigated these struggles?
        d. How do you understand the personal goals of your work?
            i. Can you describe the paths/strategies you take to get to these goals?
        e. Can you tell me what is your favorite part of this work, or what feels most rewarding?
    2. [If not covered above] I understand you're involved with (insert community organization here). Can you tell me about your work with them?
        a. How did you get involved?
        b. Can you tell me about the organization's goals and the paths/strategies to achieve these goals?

c. Can you tell me a story about something you did with (insert community organization here)?
    i. Do you remember how you felt leading up to (X), during, and after (X) moment?
d. While being involved in (insert community organization here) has anything changed about the way you view and experience anti-Muslim policies, practices, behaviors, and attitudes?
    i. Can you share more details about this?

3. Sometimes we can depict our journeys visually and express things we otherwise would not verbally. Imagining your journey started on one edge of this page, and ended on the other edge of the page, can you illustrate your journey (you can draw a line from one edge to the other- it can involve dips and twists and turns and whatever you'd like, or illustrate it any other way you'd like) - it's your journey!
    a. Can you describe it to me?
    b. How do you understand what was happening for you in (X) part of your journey?

    c. Are there other parts of your journey or stories of (insert the language they use for fighting anti-Muslim practices, policies, attitudes, and behaviors)
        i. Can you tell me a story about this experience?
    d. Do you remember how you felt leading up to (X), during, and after (X) moment?

4. I imagine that you know other Muslim women who engage with you in (insert the language they use for fighting anti-Muslim practices, policies, attitudes, and behaviors) but do you know other Muslim women who don't engage (insert the language they use for fighting anti-Muslim practices, policies, attitudes, and behaviors)?
    a. How do you understand what is going on for them and why they don't engage?
        i.

3. Section Three: Socioemotional Experiences of Fighting Anti-Muslim Policies, Practices, Attitudes, and Behaviors

1. We've just been talking about your journey into (insert the language they use for fighting anti-Muslim practices, policies, attitudes, and behaviors) and your ongoing experiences in (insert the language they use for fighting anti-Muslim practices, policies, attitudes, and behaviors). I'm curious to understand your emotional experiences in this work more deeply. (You've already mentioned xyz, and I'm wondering if we can explore that more).

2. I invite you to draw an image of a time in you felt particularly strongly during your work. Sometimes art can help us express different dimensions of these experiences. While

you're drawing, I will also be drawing an image inspired by our conversation that I will share with you. You do not need to worry about the quality of the work! Stick figures, symbols, lines, colors and shapes are fine but you are also welcome to make whatever you wish. It could be an image of one of the stories you already told me, or something else. I'll check in with you after 5 minutes to see if you need more time.

   a. Can you describe the image to me.
   b. How do you understand what was happening for you?
   c. Can you tell me about any other times you felt particularly strongly?

3. What, if anything, sustains your involvement in this work?
   a. What do you do to take care of yourself?
   b. Are there things that others do that support your work?
   c. Are there things you wish others would do to support you?

4. If you were to wake up tomorrow and (insert the language they use for anti-Muslim practices, policies, attitudes, and behaviors) was gone, what would be different in your life and in your community?

4. Wrap-up

1. Is there anything else about the issues we've been discussing you'd like to tell me that I haven't asked about?
2. Do you have any other questions for me?