Institute for Clinical Social Work

The Lived Experience of Muslim Women Subjected to Islamophobia

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Abstract

This study explored the subjective experience of five Muslim women who wear or wore hijab in the past, and faced Islamophobia, using psychoanalytic case study methodology. This study's purpose is to gain an understanding of the short-term and long-term effects of prejudice against Muslim women. The women participants of this study are self-identified Muslims from different geographical locations and diverse backgrounds. The interviews were analyzed through within-and cross-case analysis. The data was interpreted through a psychodynamic lens, grounded in a hermeneutic and constructivist framework.

Geo-political differences, racism, misogyny, lack of support, and hijab were identified by the participants as the external contributing factors resulting in the perpetuation of Islamophobia. The participants' emotional response varied from feelings of dejection and despondency to anger and humiliation. A commonality among all five of the participants was their struggle with fear and annihilation anxiety. This is, as a result of being persecuted, they all endured feelings of being destroyed, fragmented, and ultimately felt their preservation of life being challenged. While the participants utilized various primary and secondary defenses to cope with Islamophobia, the defense of withdrawal was commonly used by all of the women. The derived protective factors in coping with Islamophobia are emotional support, validation, and maintaining a connection with both Muslims and non-Muslims.

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Chapter I

Introduction

General Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this case study research project is to understand the lived experience of Muslim women in the United States who wear/wore hijab and have been subjected to bigotry, hatred, and discrimination because of their faith, in other words, Muslim women who have been victims of Islamophobia. This study uses an interpretive psychoanalytic case study methodology (Tolleson, 1996) in order to explore and understand the experiences of the women participants. Islamophobia is generally defined as "unfounded hostility towards Muslims, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims" (Mehdi, 2017, p. 222). Islamophobia is a widespread phenomenon adversely impacting the lives of many Muslims around the world every day. It is perpetrated in both implicit and explicit actions and the effects on the recipients can vastly vary. My interest is how this dynamic particularly affects the lives of Muslim women in the United States and the potential negative and/or positive effects of being subjected to prejudice and bigotry.

Significance of the Study for Clinical Social Work

According to the code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), social workers have certain ethical responsibilities towards their clients. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to, challenging social injustice, cultural awareness, and social diversity. The NASW guideline (2017) states:

> Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical ability (p. 10).

Traditionally, psychoanalytically-oriented social workers may not always be as attentive to social matters since psychoanalysis has historically neglected the social and political affairs and their impact on individuals. Psychoanalysis often tends to focus more on individuality and one's subjectivity than the psychosocial effects of one's environment and the role that society can play in development (Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017; Goedert, 2015; Sadek, 2017; Tolleson, 2009). In many psychoanalytically oriented treatments, social issues are not addressed sufficiently, and the focus of treatment is placed within the individual. Therefore, the potential effects of socially discriminatory dynamics, such as Islamophobia, can go unnoticed, ignored, or minimized. Hollander and Gutwill (2006) argue that social phenomena in general are the least noted and the least analyzed areas in American psychoanalysis. Goedert (2015) makes the argument that by ignoring the role that social factors play and by placing the problem strictly within the individual, psychoanalysis has in fact aligned with the oppressive dynamics of social justice issues and social inequalities, as well as oppressive political matters.

This study aims to highlight the psychosocial effects of prejudice in the form of Islamophobia on Muslim women. In relation to the clinical social work theory and practice, the goal is to help social workers and other practitioners gain a more-informed understanding of the lived experience of Muslim women who are subjected to bigotry and hatred. My hope is that this study will give a voice to these women, highlight their subjective experience, and assist psychoanalytical social workers and psychotherapists expand their views and knowledge of psychosocial dynamics in general, and this phenomenon in particular.

Statement of the Problem

Historically, race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and religion are amongst the most common reason why individuals experience bigotry and have often been used to justify and legitimize discriminatory behaviors. Religion, in particular, has been the reason for disagreements, conflicts, and even wars throughout the centuries. For decades, the religion of Islam has been vilified and Muslims have been targeted, maltreated, and persecuted in many western countries (Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017; Hollander, 2010; Sadek, 2017). According to the Pew Research Center, there were 1.8 billion Muslims in the world and 3.45 million Muslims in the US in 2017. The vilification and disparagement of Islam and portraying all Muslims as the "enemy" is a complex and multifaceted issue. The issue becomes even more compounded when millions of Muslims are viewed as "one unit." As a result, the bigotry and hate experienced by Muslims can be indicative of larger underlying causes. The effects of Muslims being subjected to this dynamic, both individually and collectively, can have detrimental and destructive consequences.

Psychoanalytically-oriented clinicians are well aware that maltreatment and disparagement not only affects the daily life of the recipients, but it can also have major long-term psychological implications.

Although psychoanalytically trained therapists are aware of the impact of environment on one's mental health, in many treatments, neither therapists nor patients, take the social and political context of the individual's problems into consideration as regularly as they should (Goedert, 2015; Tolleson, 2009). For a profession, whose ultimate goal is to help individuals better understand themselves and their environment, the lack of attention to the social and political matters is curious. In her paper, "Anti-Muslim Prejudice and the Use of Ethnic Other," Hollander (2010) highlights the therapists' reluctance to explore the implications of social phenomena, including prejudice associated with Islamophobia. Considering the importance of the role of social reality in one's psychic life and its emergence in the intersubjective space, she suggests that therapists must recognize and address the impact of social issues more often. Ad-Dab'bagh (2017) raises this issue more specifically in the context of Muslims' experiences. He points out that Muslims constitute less than 3 percent of the population in the US and yet, they are targeted with widespread prejudice. This extensive bigotry played a critical role in the Republican Party's political platform, in particular, the villainization of Muslims was a popular and embraced component of Donald Trump's presidential campaign in 2016. Ad-Dab'bagh draws attention to the lack of psychoanalytical interest in this dynamic of exerting hate and intolerance that impacts many around the world and argues that psychoanalysis must acknowledge and address the potential impact of Islamophobia more rigorously.

As many scholars have pointed out (Ad-Dab'bagh, 2018; Davids, 2002; Davids, 2006; Hollander, 2010; Sadek, 2017, Shabankare, 2016) Islamophobia has significantly increased since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, in the US and around the world. However, the maltreatment of Muslims and vilification of Islam precede this event by centuries (Massad, 2007; Hollander, 2010; Sadek, 2017). Islamophobia is highly interwoven with anti-Arab prejudicial beliefs although not all Arabs are Muslims, and most Muslims are not Arabs (Sadek, 2017). As the result, anti-Arab rhetoric often has a religious undertone and anti-Muslim sentiments are intertwined with anti-Arab stereotypes. Nancy Hollander (2010) speaks to this dynamic and asserts that anti-Arabism is deeply seeded in many western and eastern countries. She argues that in western countries, Muslims are mistakenly viewed and identified as all Arabs despite the wide diversity within the Muslim communities. She further points out that anti-Arab rhetoric developed in the mid-19th century, influenced by the Protestant missionaries who traveled to Palestine and later depicted Arabs as savages, dirty and backward. This theme has been repetitively reinforced over the decades and Arabs have been portrayed in a pejorative way in political discourses as well as in the media and in the movies. The association of Islam with terrorism, which has significantly increased since the attacks on 9/11, has historically been used to legitimize the west, particularly the United States' Middle East policies; including the interventions to control resources like oil and natural gas. In this context, such interventions have been framed as self-defense and their exploitative nature has been justified in the name of "fighting against terrorism" and through depicting Muslims as the "enemy" (Hollander, 2010).

Since 9/11, politicians, as well as the media, have overtly and covertly raised suspicions that Muslims are behind all acts of terrorism until proven otherwise (Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017). Davids (2002) contends that despite the psychological complexities involved in all criminal and terroristic dynamics, ever since the suicide hijackers of 9/11 were known to be Arabs from the Middle East, their religion was held responsible for their actions and 9/11 has been highly racialized. The aftermath of 9/11, the political propaganda, and the security concerns have had a major influence on American views and perception of Islam and directly correlates to the prejudice that plagues Muslims in this country (Shabankare, 2016). Shabankare references the FBI annual report in support of his argument that hostility and animosity against Muslims in the US have increased since 9/11. Before 2001, the number of hate crimes against Muslims fell below 100 per year, however, after 9/11, this number increased to more than 500. In the following years, the number of hate crimes have diminished but it still remains in three digits. Hollander (2010) asserts that the policies and discourses of Bush's administration intensified and reinforced the racialization of terrorist acts and vilification of Islam and Muslims. An ABC poll found that four months after the attacks on 9/11, only 14 percent of Americans believed that Islam encourages violence. However, four years later, following Bush's "war on terror" policies and rhetoric, that number rose to 34 percent. Four in 10 Americans held an unfavorable view of Islam and 46 percent believed that Islam encourages violence amongst its believers and Muslims are more likely to commit acts of terror (Council of American-Islamic Relations Research Center, 2005 & 2006).

Hollander (2010) highlights that since the attacks on 9/11, Muslim-Americans have become vulnerable and susceptible to discriminatory and abusive behaviors from

the general population and the government. Such discriminations include, but are not limited to:

> preventive detention of thousands of men, women and families; 19,000 "voluntary" interviews with potential life-changing consequences, including deportations; a "Special Registration" program that involved interviewing, fingerprinting and photographing of more than 170,000 men from 24 Muslim majority countries and the deportation proceedings of thousands; the closing of at least five major Muslim charities with no proof of any connection to Islamist organizations; the penetration of Muslim-American communities by spies and government informants; the prolonged; indefinite incarceration of individuals without charge; and immigration hearings behind closed doors (Hollander, 2010, p. 77).

Several scholars have argued that Donald Trump's presidential campaign has been the culmination of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim rhetoric in the US (Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017; Abrahamian, 2016; Sadek, 2017; Shabankare, 2016). Shabankare contends that Donald Trump has used every opportunity to denigrate and disparage Muslims, which has amplified the existing widespread Islamophobia in the US. Abrahamian (2016) asserts that the escalation in the hate crimes against Muslims is an inevitable consequence of the hatred enforced by Donald Trump and the Republican Party and policies such as the "Muslim travel ban". In his New York Times article "when the tide of Islamophobia reached my hometown mosque", Hameed (2016) illustrates how anti-Muslim rhetoric affects the lives of Muslim-Americans:

> Armed demonstrators picketing at a mosque in Phoenix, arson at a mosque in the Coachella Valley in Southern California, a severed pig's head placed in front of a mosque in Philadelphia…. a bomb threat was called into nearby Anderson University when a Muslim woman was scheduled to speak on behalf of an interfaith group. The same weekend, three young men from a largely Muslim immigrant community were found murdered under mysterious circumstances in Fort Wayne, two and a half hours away (Hameed, 2016).

In the literature, many scholars have identified the processes of dehumanizing and othering as the underpinning dynamics involved in making an individual or a group of people the target of one's internal racism and hatred (Dalal, 2006; Davids, 2006; Holmes, 2006; Klein, 1964). Many contend that as the result of being subjected to prejudice and bigotry, Muslims feel dehumanized and excluded from the society which can be accompanied by feelings of shame, disgrace, humiliation, fear, distress, and anxiety (Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017, Davids, 2002; Kemp, 2011; Sadek, 2017). Being subject to Islamophobia can potentially result in the collapse of the Muslim identity through the internalization of shame and negative stereotypes, or it can result in disavowal of one's culture and background as ways to fight against the negative associations with Islam, in other words, the disavowal of one's identity. Furthermore, being treated with contempt and hatred can lead to externalization of hostility and aggression, which further perpetuates the stereotypes and creates further alienation (Sadek, 2017).

The short-term and long-term impacts of Islamophobia can be greater on Muslim women who choose to wear hijab than Muslim men or women who do not stand out as Muslims in the public eye due to their appearance. Ad-Dab'bagh (2017) stated that hijab

is a distinction quality for many Muslim women that can be used as means or justification for racially-motivated behaviors like verbal harassment in public places, “random” checks at the airports, and police officers pulling off hijab. He believes that the extent of exerting hatred based on such a distinctive quality depends upon the degree to which the hijab stands out. Women have historically been subject to maltreatments and misogyny because of their gender. Patriarchy, male privilege, belittling of women, and sexual objectification of women have been perpetuated for centuries. The intolerance, contempt, and hatred that Muslim women face and endure is multilayered and compounded. They are targeted because of their gender, faith and the way they choose to dress and cover themselves which is both misogynistic and Islamophobic. It is ironic that Muslim women are criticized, humiliated, and belittled for making the decision to follow the religious rule of covering their hair while they are also accused of/blamed for being passive, submissive, not having a voice and not being able to make decisions for themselves. Compounded with issues of racism, anti-Arab and anti-Middle Eastern rhetoric and in addition to general misogyny, Muslim women seem to be subject to complex forms of Islamophobia, prejudice and hatred, and this study aims to examine this reality.

Research Questions

This study examines the lived experience of Muslim women in the US, who wear or wore hijab in the past. Some questions that this study explores include:

- What are the psychological and emotional impact of being subjected to Islamophobia on Muslim women?

- What are the negative and/or positive changes in a Muslim woman's life as the result of being subjected to hatred, intolerance, and discrimination?
- What defense mechanisms do Muslim women employ in order to cope with Islamophobia?
- Do Muslim women change any aspects of their life in order to avoid or decrease the prejudiced behaviors they endure?

Theoretical and Operational Definitions of Major Concepts

Islamophobia: In many major western countries, Muslims constitute a small percentage of the population and, like so many other minorities, they are subject to different forms of prejudice and discrimination stemming from racism and xenophobia (Davids, 2006). However, the hatred for Muslims transcends racial and xenophobic dynamics. As many scholars have pointed out (Ad-Dab'bagh 2017; Davids, 2006; Hollander, 2010; Sadek, 2017; Shabankare, 2016), despite the lack of racial homogeneity within Muslim communities and their diverse cultural background and different ethnicities, Muslims are all grouped together and viewed as "one" for those who hold bigoted and prejudiced beliefs against them. What Muslims share, whether it is a Shia Muslim born in Michigan, a Sunni immigrant from Iraq or a Syrian refugee, is their faith. Therefore, Islamophobia is defined as "unfounded hostility towards Muslims, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims" (Tamdgidi, 2012). Islamophobia incorporates elements of xenophobia, in relation to refugees and immigrants for instance, and racism like anti-Arab rhetoric, but is not limited to these dynamics.

Muslim: According to the website "the religion of Islam", a Muslim should believe the Holy Quran is the literal word of God, revealed by Him; believe that the Judgment Day (Resurrection Day) is true and will come; believe in the prophets that God sent and the books he revealed; accept Islam as his/her religion, not worship anything nor anyone except God (Islamreligion.com, 2018). Islam can be passed from parents to their children, or one can convert to Islam. In this study, the women participants are self-identified Muslims.

Hijab: Hijab is a head covering worn by some Muslim women, in the presence of any male outside of their immediate family. Pervez (2015) argues, "[hijab] is an outer manifestation of an inner commitment to worship God" and it aligns with the message of modesty and humility in Islam. Whether or not hijab is mandatory in Islam has been the subject of ongoing debate, controversy, and disagreement. Despite the controversy, ideally wearing hijab should be an issue of freedom of choice. However, this has been highly politicized (Jahanhgir, 2017). Historically, the belief that hijab is an obligation in Islam has been used by Muslim men to oppress women and it has also been used by many non-Muslims to justify their anti-Muslim beliefs and prejudices. In his article "Five Muslim scholars on the permissibility of not wearing the headscarf", Jahangir (2017) provides arguments supporting the notion that wearing hijab is not an obligation in Islam; rather, it is the Muslim women's choice to wear it or not. More contemporary interpretations of Islamic laws reject the idea that hijab is mandatory and supports the women's freedom to choose whether or not they want to cover their hair (Nomani & Arafa, 2015).

Discrimination and prejudice: Merriam-Wester dictionary defines discrimination as "prejudiced, or prejudicial outlook, action or treatment." In the context of civil rights

law, discrimination or “unlawful discrimination” refers to unfair treatment, singling out and distinguishing an individual or a group based upon certain characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, race and sexual orientation. According to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, “religious discrimination involves treating a person (an applicant or employee) unfavorably because of his or her religious beliefs. The law protects not only people who belong to traditional, organized religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, but also others who have sincerely held religious, ethical or moral beliefs.” According to McLeod (2008) prejudice is “an unjustified or incorrect attitude, usually negative, towards an individual based solely on the individual’s membership of a social group”, whereas discrimination is “the behavior or actions, usually negative, towards an individual or group of people, especially on the basis of sex/race/social class, etc.”. Discriminatory behaviors can include, but are not limited to, prejudiced behaviors, persecutory behaviors, and verbal and physical harassments. Some argue that an individual does not need to be harmed in order to be considered as discriminated against. Discrimination takes place when an individual is treated worse than others arbitrarily or because of a characteristic or a belief to which they adhere (Horta, 2010).

Statement of Assumptions

The following are the assumptions made by the researcher in exploring the research questions:

1. Islamophobia is an occurring phenomenon in many societies which makes Muslims, regardless of their country of origin or racial background, subject to discrimination and prejudicial treatments.
2. The impact of islamophobia is greater on Muslim women than Muslim men as it is compounded with elements of misogyny.
3. Muslim women who wear hijab are subject to more hatred and discrimination as they stand out due to their appearance.
4. Muslim women who have been targeted and discriminated against, experience psychological consequences as the result.
5. Muslim women who volunteer to partake in this study are empowered, have self-reflection capacities and more ego-strength than those who are more severely affected by this dynamic. Therefore, the participants of this study would not accurately represent the larger group of Muslim women subjected to contempt and bigotry.

Epistemological Foundation of the Project

This study will employ an interpretive and hermeneutic psychoanalytical epistemology to ground the exploration and interpretation of the lived experience of Muslim women in the US. This approach is embedded in social constructivism. The social constructivist worldview argues that "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experience -meanings directed toward certain objects or things" (Cresswell, 2009, p. 8). The objective of this

study is not to generate generalizable information or empirical claims, rather, the goal is to explore the subjective meaning of the participants' experience. The meaning of the participants' experiences is socially constructed embedded in their cultural and familial background and socioeconomic situation as well as their psychological make-up and their conscious and unconscious psychological processes. As the researcher, I will also play an active role in the meaning-making process and the construction of reality in the context of understanding the participants and analyzing the data. As Charmaz (2006) illustrates, "a constructivist approach places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experience and relationships with participants" (p. 130).

The interview questions will be broad and open-ended in order for the participants to engage in a discussion and to capture their subjective experience. Hermeneutic approach will be used to conduct and facilitate the interaction between the participant and the researcher and their intersubjective space, as well as in analyzing data and the meaning-making process. "A hermeneutic approach (a) seeks understanding rather than explanation; (b) acknowledges the situated location of interpretation; (c) recognizes the role of language and historicity in interpretation; (d) views inquiry as conversation; and (e) is comfortable with ambiguity" (Kinsella, 2006, p. 5). In regard to psychoanalysis, I am interested in theories in which the two-person psychology and the intersubjective experience are acknowledged, recognized and accepted. I utilize theories that recognize the interpersonal effect as well as the uniqueness of the individuals and the distinctiveness of one's experiences.

Foregrounding

Growing up in a Muslim-majority country in a rather secular family, and in a patriarchal and macho country but in a family that promoted equality between sexes made me aware of social inequalities and social justice issues from a young age. More specifically, I have always been curious and interested in women's right issues. Misogyny, objectification of women and male privilege are amongst the prominent dynamics that affected my life, and the life of many women around me. Ever since I found my voice, I tried to oppose the inequality and injustice that women, like myself, endure and continue to encounter. I fought against it in my personal life and attempted to educate and empower women around me to resist and battle against sexism and misogyny. The misogyny I witnessed was compounded with Islamic laws. Many Muslim women were subjected to discrimination and maltreatment in the name of Islam. Muslim societies can be restrictive for women and some Muslim women in these communities may not have the freedom to choose how to live or how to practice their religion. In Iran, where I grew up, patriarchy and Islamic restrictions are intertwined, and they feed and reinforce each other. This creates a complex situation in which women have become subject to a widespread discrimination and maltreatment.

The struggle Muslim women face in the US may be different in many ways but still stem from a degree of misogyny. While patriarchy and subjugation of women may not be the main driving forces, Muslim women in the US are subject to oppression exerted by the majority groups, and at times, the government, because of their faith. As the oppression and intolerance for Muslims has increasingly grown, many facets of Muslim women's life are impacted by them. I have witnessed the ebb and flow of Islamophobic rhetoric based

upon the political climate and I am highly aware of the deep and consequential effects of being subject to othering, contempt, hatred, and harassment. As the result, I feel compelled to examine the experience of Muslim women and explore the intersection of Islamophobia and misogyny, embedded in the social and political context, and the potential subjugating effects of it. This research is my way of standing up against the injustice to which Muslim women are subject by shedding light and calling attention to it, and by giving the women participants of this study a voice.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review section outlines theories, concepts, and other various views relevant to Islamophobia and the experience of Muslims who have been subjected to Islamophobic acts. First, the literature review discusses the processes involved in Othering. Understanding othering from a psychoanalytical perspective provides a valuable platform in understanding the formation of a phenomenon such as Islamophobia, and those who may have a tendency to become attracted to such prejudiced and bigoted beliefs and behaviors. The subsections of othering focus on the unconscious processes involved in Splitting/Moralization, Dehumanization, and Diversity within Muslim communities.

Mintchev (2018) contends that psychoanalysis can have significant contributions to our understanding of social and political phenomena and discourses like racism, xenophobia, sexism, misogyny and so on. Mintchev looks beyond the anthropological and sociological approaches, which focus on social organizations and economic inequality, and identifies psychodynamic categories such as narcissism, projection, projective identification, splitting and omnipotent control as the underpinning

psychological dynamics of racism and other forms of othering in a social context; Robert Young (1994) adds stereotyping and scapegoating to the list of psychological mechanisms at work in racism. The othering section is followed by a section exploring the process of Projection that discusses the need to have enemies in order to fulfill the desire to discharge one's inner hatred and aggression (Parens, 2012).

The next section of literature review discusses the phenomenon of Islamophobia embedded in a social and cultural context. In exploring and understanding the psychological dynamics involved in social phenomena, one faces the challenge of sliding into reductionism which would ignores the social, historical, and cultural context and complexities that are intertwined with the psychological mechanisms in ethnically/racially driven dynamics (Mintchev, 2018). In this section, the goal is to understand the underlying psychological dynamics of Islamophobia such as splitting, dehumanizing, and projecting one's aggression, as well as its historical and cultural context. As Edward Said (1979) asserted the division between the east and west is longstanding, multi-layered, and complex, and it contains positive and negative qualities and representations of both sides. He contends this conflict goes beyond the simple binary opposition of good versus bad; rather, a sense of western superiority generated from presumed advancements is interwoven in it. The animosity is incorporated in the western identity against the orient, which has enabled the west to present the east as the "common enemy" using the signifiers of race/name/religion to draw and reinforce the division (Mintchev, 2018).

The next section is Prejudice and Discrimination followed by a section on Introjection and Projective Identification. These sections discuss how prejudice and

discrimination are formed and discharged; and explore the potential impact on the recipients through understanding the processes of introjection and/or projective identification. In this process, anger and hostility are projected onto a chosen object through prejudiced and discriminatory behaviors; the recipient may react and, at times, internalize the maltreatments through introjection. Finally, the impact of being subject to Islamophobia on Muslims, the reactions, and internalizations are discussed in sections of Fear and Annihilation Anxiety in Muslim Communities, and Shame and Humiliation. The Muslim Identity section ties all the previous sections together and discusses some aspects of contemporary Muslim identity in the face of rising Islamophobia.

Othering

Many scholars (Mintchev, 2018; Parens, 2012; Bloom, 2010; Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017; Davids, 2011) highlight that the basis of the process of othering is rooted in the primitive psychological dynamic in which an infant learns how to identify with his/her caregivers and distinguish them from strangers. Othering can be viewed as a variation of stranger anxiety. Parens (2012) proposes that stranger anxiety stems from a protective developmental process that aims to direct the infant's attachment away from a non-caregiver and toward the caregiver. In supporting the need and desire to distinguish caregivers from strangers, Bloom's research (2010) shows that infants tend to become attracted to others who physically resemble their caregivers. Evidence from infant observation and research suggests early signs of a desire to develop "we-ness" through identifying and connecting with familiar objects (Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017). Ad-Dab'bagh asserts that pre-oedipal dynamics play an important role in infants' object relating

behaviors when it comes to identifying with love-objects and forming we-ness. However, in order to have a "we", it would be necessary for infants to have an "other." It is through the processes of forming the we and separating from the other, that the infant's sense of subjectivity is formed, cohesion and integration are reached, and objects are categorized.

Parens (2012) believes that sometimes parents, along with the society and the culture as a whole, teach children to not only identify with parents and the norms and conventions that they represent, but to *hate* anything that is different from the familiar. The identification is developmentally necessary for the child and is demanded by the universe; the hatred for the other, on the other hand, is a dogmatic view taught to children which can result in the reinforcement of reality-distorting defenses that potentially rationalize and justify "malignant prejudice" (p. 178). In other words, Parens' contention is that formation of we-ness and stranger anxiety are normal developmental processes but if they are not managed well, they can become the underlying agents and organizations in formation of xenophobia and prejudice later in life.

Social scientists (Brown, 1988; Turner & Giles, 1981) have demonstrated that the mind tends to create groups and attribute similarities and commonalities that may not be reality-based to those belonging to a group, which eventually makes the gaps between different groups greater than what they actually are. According to Dalal (2006), grouping and othering are normative processes that occur in all communities and societies. Groups and categories are established in order to facilitate the formation of "us" which can generate positive feelings of unity, belongingness and togetherness for the group members. However, Dalal contends that it is the impossibility of finding the true essence of the "us" that leads into the search for the margins that would define the "not us".

Therefore, the "us" is defined partly based upon what it is *not* and what it does *not* represent, rather than what it actually is.

The differences and disparities between us and them may be illusory but it nevertheless provides an impression of cohesion and solidarity, which can be psychologically meaningful to those who endorse such mindsets. Eventually the presumed differences between us and them come to be recognized as facts and influence individuals' psychology and interpersonal interactions (Dalal, 2006). In order for the distance between us and them to be preserved, emotions and psychological mechanisms such as splitting, and denigration are utilized; the "us" gets idealized while the "them" is denigrated. The mindset of good versus bad, and virtuous versus evil, perpetuates a dichotomy that maintains the solidity of "us," upholds the vilification of "them," and creates "types." Considering that differences and similarities between individuals and groups are endless, Dalal (2006) argues that it is not the nature of differences but the function that they serve that should be in question. That is, why is it that some differences are emphasized in order for a differentiation to be created? (p. 151)

According to Moss (2001), whether one partakes in the explicit enactments or limits it to a fantasy, the process of disidentifying from a group in order to strengthen the allegiance with another is about individuals' struggles with self-definition. Qualities and personality traits, as well as physical characteristics are used for self-identification and forming groups. Race in particular has historically been one of the most commonly used means to create differentiations, grouping and othering. Many scholars (Dalal, 2006; Davids, 2011; Altman, 2000; Mintchev, 2018) have highlighted the fact that race is a social construct and mind is not intrinsically raced, rather, mind can become raced and

racist as such dynamics are integrated into social orders. Dalal (2006) asserts that racism is a way to organize people and establish a sense of togetherness by using the feelings of hatred, disgust and repulsion directed from one group to another. Similar psychological dynamics are employed in other forms of othering that are based on gender, religion, sexual orientation and so on. The common theme in these processes is identifying with the "alike" objects, while projecting the feelings of hatred, intolerance, repulsion, and aversion onto the other in order to reinforce the solidarity within the group (Moss, 2001). Volkan (2002) analogizes the belonging to a group such as ethnicity to a "large-group tent" in which safety and cohesion are provided in the tent and basic values and definitions are defined in order to differentiate us from out-groups. The othering is a perpetual process in which hatred and contempt is continuously created and maintained, mainly due to the danger that "some of them will become us" (Dalal, 2006, p. 159). Dalal further argues that there is an ongoing need to engage with the other, and estrange and vilify them, to strengthen and prolong the existence of the we.

In the realm of politics and larger societal groups and dynamics, othering has played a role in perpetuating divisiveness and furthering certain political advantages. These tendencies are noticeable and present in racist organizations in which the prevalent ideology is that "you are either with us or against us" (Davids, 2006, p. 76). After the 9/11 attacks, the "us versus them" conflict was culminated around the world. There existed a tacit pressure on Muslims and non-Muslims to take sides and to announce where one's loyalty lay; any attempts to reconcile the sides and/or gain understanding of the other side was criticized and condemned (Davids, 2002). The Muslims in the US were vilified by the majority groups and the pre-existing division between Muslims and others

was strongly reinforced. Shabankare (2016) states that when a community is ruled by the majority groups, the presumed threat of a minority group is made more pronounced. The us versus them mindset defines what dangers to be prioritized and what consequences should be set for them. As the result, "white terrorism" is minimized and disregarded at times while the terrorist acts committed by Muslims are highlighted even though statistics and actual crime rates do not currently support this agenda (Shabankare, 2016). In supporting the current othering of Muslims, Davids (2009) points out that Muslims today are not seen as "one of us;" they are under ongoing suspicion; they receive hatred and contempt and face punishment for uncommitted crimes.

Splitting/moralization.

One of the main underpinning psychological processes employed in "othering" is the defense of "splitting" in which one needs to keep good and bad dichotomous and distinguishable in order to alleviate the anxiety of tolerating complexities rose from the integration of good and bad. McWilliams (2011) explains that splitting is a powerful psychological dynamic and a defense mechanism that stems from the preverbal phase when the infant does not own the capacity to associate and attribute both good and bad qualities and experiences to the same object (the caregiver). Regardless of whether or not one has successfully progressed to more psychologically advanced stages in which both good and bad can be experienced concurrently, everyone is susceptible to regress back into using the defense of splitting in the face of trauma and complex and multifaceted circumstances, especially when one feels threatened and in danger. McWilliams further explains that this tendency manifests itself in the desire of "unhappy groups" in a society

to create an “evil enemy” against the “good insider,” which has been repeated many times throughout history in events such as church versus devil, the world wars, civil wars, the lone whistle-blower versus bureaucracy, the west against terrorism, and so on (p. 116). Post-World War II studies (Adorno et al, 1950) suggest that tendency to split and inflexibility to integrate good and bad, are seen in dynamics employed in extreme right- and left-wing beliefs, which have major negative social consequences. The defense of splitting is means to diminish and contain anxiety, while it maintains one’s self-esteem by distorting the reality in a way that is clearer, more comprehensible, and less complex (McWilliams, 2011).

According to McWilliams (2011) the more developmentally advanced form of splitting is the defense of “moralization.” Moralization is the defense used when one needs to define and set a moral duty or obligation in order to justify feelings, thoughts or courses of action. “Moralization can be used by social or political leaders to exploit their constituents’ wish to feel morally superior in order to justify their imposed divisiveness in different communities, societies and religious groups” (McWilliams, 2011, p. 134). In moralizing, it is the superego that places rigid and punitive judgements on “others” or “those people” and maintains the positive feelings of the presumed moral self, and remains contemptuous against the justified badness. McWilliams believes that in the contemporary United States, the rise of Islamophobia and the consequent violation of certain human rights is justified through the use of moralization by perpetuating the message of the moral obligation to fight against terrorism. From Hollander’s perspective (2010), in the face of trauma, US citizens regressed into the paranoid-schizoid position (Kleinian positions), in which splitting between good and bad became their prominent

defense mechanism. Consequently, they subscribed to their political leader's policies in which the west and everything that it represents is idealized, while Islam is vilified and denigrated. In this rather simplified view, Islam becomes the recipient of all the badness, stripped of any goodness, and attacks on Muslims from Baghdad to Chicago is justified and moralized (Hollander, 2010).

Dehumanization.

Along with splitting/moralization, dehumanization is another significant and powerful component present in the process of othering. Othering, whether it is employed in racism, misogyny, homophobia or Islamophobia, is essentially a "dehumanizing" process in which *an other* is transformed into *the other*, and us versus them is created. The other is placed outside the moral universe and excluded from fellow human beings, he/she becomes dehumanized and the representative of all that is "bad" in oneself and the world (Dalal, 2006). Dalal asserts that "others" are not encountered, rather, they are made. Othering is achieved through suppressing and annihilating the similarities between self and other, and stripping the other of all their human traits and qualities. Dehumanizing removes the sense of empathy and prevents remorse to emerge for those utilizing it, which facilitates the demonizing of others and making them the target of one's own aggression and contempt (Dalal, 2006). The target of such projections is often chosen from a "socially-sanctioned out-group" and various signifiers, including class, race, religion and language can be used in order to justify the dehumanization of an individual or a group (Davids, 2009, p. 179). Davids further points out that the

dehumanized group then becomes subject to a wide range of prejudiced behaviors, from arbitrary mistreatments to violent crimes.

Dalal (2006) contends that it takes a particular group dynamic to employ the phenomenon of dehumanizing another group of people and subjecting them to maltreatment. The members of larger groups who tend to dehumanize "others", like white supremacists or Jihadists, lose their individuality as they integrate into the group dynamic, internalize the group ideology and act in ways that is not necessarily aligned with their individual beliefs and values. As Moss (2001) points out, this mode of hating and dehumanizing – racistly, homophobically, misogynistically - is not isolated to the individuals but belongs to the group; "it is not in the first person singular but in the first person plural" (p. 1316). The individual becomes the representative of the group, and the group becomes the representative of the individual. Therefore, the we-ness within a large-group is further solidified, the others are further dehumanized and the disidentification from the others is reinforced. According to Shabankare (2016), despite some potential personal and social disadvantages, most individuals desire to belong to a group and make the person who belongs to a different racial, religious, and other group, target of their internal hatred.

Holmes (2006) argues that the tendency to dehumanize in the west is rooted in the Euro-American sense of superiority in which the nondominant races and religions are considered inferior. Those belonging to nondominant groups are looked down upon and believed to deserve less, which could explain US history of interfering with the internal affairs of Middle East and Asian countries. In the case of Islamophobia, despite the fact that Islam represents different and diverse aspects of Muslims and Muslim countries, the

western societies have identified Islam as a source of threat which has resulted in the creation of a massive us versus them dynamic. Muslims, regardless of their ethnicity, background, values, and beliefs are dehumanized, grouped together, and viewed as the enemy that needs to be annihilated (Davids, 2006). This is what Bollas (1992) calls radical or violent innocence which is "a psychic split in which one's own aggression is disavowed and projected onto the other, who is then experienced as the source of the threat to one's innocent victim-hood and justifiably attacked. Radical innocence requires a constant attack on the dehumanized other in order to repeatedly reconfirm one's innocence and to justify the continuation of one's behavior" (Hollander, 2010, p. 80).

Diversity within Muslim communities.

In order to facilitate, justify, and perpetuate the psychic processes of othering and dehumanizing, the perpetrators of Islamophobia tend to disregard and ignore how diverse Muslims are, and perceive them all as one despite the fact that Muslims are from different countries, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds. There are between 1.2 and 1.8 billion Muslims in the world who reside in different countries and continents; there are Muslim-majority countries in Europe such as Azerbaijan and Albania; Mali, Nigeria and Tunisia in Africa; Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iran in the Middle East; Pakistan and Bangladesh in southeast Asia; Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in central Asia; Indonesia and Malaysia in Asia Pacific; and a growing number of Muslims in China and India, as well as in different parts of North America, Europe and Australia. Muslims constitute about 24% of the world population and Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world (Lipka & Hackett, 2017). The largest Muslim majority country in the world, is currently Indonesia

where about 13% of Muslims reside; 31% of Muslims live in South-Asia and 20% live in the Middle East. Outside of Muslim-majority countries, India has the largest population of Muslims and that number is growing. Morocco has the highest number of self-identified Muslims in proportion to its total population (Lipka & Hackett, 2017).

Additionally, there are differences in the ways Islam is understood and practiced amongst Muslims. Between 75-90% of Muslims are Sunni and 10-20% are Shia. A small percentage of Muslims are affiliated with other sub-groups of Islam and there are fundamental differences between these groups, both in terms of understanding Islamic beliefs and values, and the way in which Islam is upheld and practiced. In general, there are practicing and non-practicing Muslims, there are liberal and conservative Muslims, and there are tolerant and extremist Muslims (Pew Research Center). As Esposito and Mogahed (2007) affirm, there is wide diversity amongst Muslims and they differ in their historical backgrounds, racial identity, cultural values, socio-economic conditions, political beliefs and in their norms and conventions. There are noticeable and remarkable disparities between Muslims of different countries and regions in relation to their customs, attire and food, rituals around ceremonies and daily life, festive events as well as mourning rituals, religious events, and social practices. Majority of Muslims are peaceful and live harmoniously with their neighbors, communities, and people of different religions and backgrounds. Majority of Muslims condemn the terrorist attacks committed by the extremists and do not associate or identify with it (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007).

According to the Pew Research Center, there are about 3.5 million Muslims living in America and Islam is the third largest religion in the United States, after Christianity

and Judaism. The Muslim population in America is young and racially diverse with about 30% identifying as white, 23% as Black, 21% as Asian, 6% as Hispanic and 19% as other. Similar to other monolithic and widely practiced religions, there exists different interpretations of religious texts which has resulted in the formation of different opinions and beliefs. While the extremists tend to use radical interpretations of a small number of texts, the majority of Muslims see the "big picture," and view and practice their religion as personal and peaceful. Muslims are widely diverse, but they do have their religion in common. However, it is important to note that the way Islam is understood, interpreted, and practiced varies based upon the social, cultural, political and historical context and environment.

Projection

Klein (1964) contends that individuals are mostly aware of their intrinsic selfishness, meanness, greediness, enmity, and hatred based on their personal experience; these negative feelings contribute to individuals' daily unhappiness and dissatisfaction. Klein argues that one of the safest and most accessible ways of warding off such feelings is the defense of projection. Through projection, unwanted and unpleasant feelings are repudiated, emanated from oneself and placed outside of the self, so that one would assume that they belong elsewhere (p. 11). Projection is believed to be newborns and infants' first reaction to pain and remains one of the primitive but often used defenses in adulthood. Klein believes that aggression, along with other negative feelings, is inherent in human beings which, at times, can be felt uncontrollable and too dangerous to keep in; therefore, the need to rid oneself of such feelings and project them onto others rises. As

Mintchev (2018) points out, projection is a dialectical process in which the bad and hated parts of self are split off and projected into another while the good and loved parts are preserved. This mechanism creates an illusion of a "purified self" that is wholly good while the subject of projection is perceived as all bad.

The inherent aggression, hatred and contempt need to be expelled and attributed to objects who seemed to be "safe" to receive it; the safe objects are the ones that are far away, or at a safe distance, for whom one does not feel the need to love or care, such as foreigners (Klein, 1964, p. 14). This is perceived as a safe method of discharging one's internal negative feelings and gaining pleasure by gratifying the need to discharge them without damaging the self, while making the feelings belong to a stranger. The recipient of the hatred and aggression will then become the target and be perceived as dangerous, whose aggression is threatening one's being. This object will be seen as evil which, in a circular way, further justifies the use of him/her as the recipient of one's own negative feelings (Klein, 1964).

Splitting the good and bad, and projecting the bad onto others are the underlying psychological processes employed in othering (Holmes, 2006; Davids, 2006; Ad-Dab'bagh, 2018; Mintchev, 2018; Dalal, 2006). Davids (2006) asserts that projection creates an us-them dynamic that is appealing to its perpetrators since what is projected far from the subject is less likely to return and damage the self. According to Holmes (2006), reliance on more primitive defenses stems from preoedipal conflicts which involves the primal wishes to be loved and not lose the loved objects. The unfulfillment of wishes to be loved or feeling threatened and in danger can result in regression into more primitive stages and the disintegration of good and bad. It is the inability to contain the negative

feelings in this situation that raises the desire to discharge the negative feelings onto objects that are sufficiently unlike the self and the loved objects. Therefore, this process is often utilized in racism, classism, xenophobia,… as the targets of projection may be of a different race, class, gender, religion or sexuality; their difference warrants their worthlessness and makes them deserving of destruction (Holmes, 2006).

In larger social and political realms, the marginalized groups become the target of the larger groups' hatred and aggression. A racist, homophobe, misogynist, Islamophobe subject does not view his/her own hatred for the other as an internal feeling; rather, it is viewed as a response to the others' objective qualities (Mintchev, 2018, p. 13). Those who marginalize and hate the members of another group have no desire to learn about the contingent nature of their encounters; they search for traits that they dislike in the marginalized and minority groups, such as their skin color or culture, in order to make the projection of hatred appear as a necessity and they do not search for similarities (Salecl, 1998). As Mintchev (2018) points out, this process fosters an illusion of "purity" while it solidifies the differentiation between self and other.

Moss (2001) defines racism, homophobia and misogyny as structured forms of hatred used defensively against the dangerousness of recognizing one's own wishes. The danger is perceived as so great that strong psychological dynamics are employed to constantly perpetuate the disidentification with the other and justify the hatefulness. Once a racist, homophobic, Islamophobic, misogynistic… projection is made, it is difficult to undo it; the subject has to become what the projection wants him/her to be and can no longer be perceived as "an ordinary human being" equal to the perpetrator (Davids, 2006, p. 70). Projection is an effective tool used in us-them dynamics, which transforms the

targets into a threat who must constantly be monitored and assessed. This perceived paranoia makes it very difficult to see the true nature of the targets and view them as real human beings. The mind that projects is convinced that the threats and dangers coming from others are factual and is capable of distorting the reality to make it fit into this perception (Davids, 2009).

Religion has long been used to marginalize members of different religions and subject them to prejudiced behaviors. There is a longstanding history of anti-Islam attitudes in the west which was significantly increased and intensified after 9/11 terrorist attacks (Ad-Dab'bagh, 2018). Linking the terms "terrorism" and "Islam" provided the ground to identify Islam and Muslims as the enemy instead of the group of terrorists who committed the crime. After the attacks, the primitive fear of annihilation was reified for the ordinary citizens and victims, and with the rise of primitive feelings/fears, the use of primary defenses such as splitting, and projection usually increases. Muslims as a whole were held accountable and were demonized; they were identified as the enemy and became the target of the larger group aggression, hatred and contempt (Davids, 2006). Davids (2009) asserts that even tough creating an us-them dynamic and targeting "them" with aggression diminishes the anxiety associated with tolerating one's own negative feelings and annihilation fear, it can also produce guilt about those who may be innocently subjected to prejudice and discrimination. He states that even though this method of ridding oneself of anxiety can be addictive as it relieves suffering, it can also generate fear of retaliation. This fear further reinforces the paranoia and the need to fortify the defenses which perpetuates this vicious cycle in these situations. Therefore, two decades after the 9/11 attacks, Islamophobia in the US is still real and strong.

Islamophobia

Haque (2006) contends that religious communities have historically been subject to discrimination. In different eras, Catholics and Jews suffered significantly due to their faith and presently, Muslims are undergoing the same experiences around the world, and more specifically in the US. Sethi (2018) points out that America has a longstanding history of perpetrating othering and subjecting minority groups to maltreatment and discrimination. The hate crimes against native Americans, slavery, segregation, banning the Chinese from Immigrating in 1882, incarcerating more than 100,000 Japanese during World War II are examples of perpetual xenophobia, bigotry, hatred, discrimination, and prejudice, compounded by white supremacy in this country (Sethi, 2018, p. 2). Scholars argue that the current manifestation of hatred in Islamophobia is indeed a derivative of the historical hatred for Blacks, Jews, and other minority groups, rose from a pre-existing anti-Arab ideology (though not all Muslims are Arab and not all Arabs are Muslims) (Hollander, 2010). Said (1997) highlights the fact that malicious generalizations about Islam are the most recent form of denigrating others in the west while using such language and behaviors towards other minorities are now unacceptable and condemned. Though the anti-Muslim sentiments have a long history in the west, it undoubtfully and considerably has grown after the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Hollander, 2010; Ad-Dab'agh, 2017; Sadek, 2017; Davids, 2009; Mehdi, 2017). The systematic marginalization and denigration of Muslims were intensified and a massive gap between us and them was created which laid the foundation of the birth of a new phenomenon called Islamophobia (Haque, 2006).

Islamophobia is an "intense dislike or fear of Islam, especially as a political force; [manifested by] hostility or prejudice against Muslims" (Mehdi, 2017, p. 222). Mehdi believes that it is important to refer to this phenomenon using the suffix of phobia as it emphasizes on the irrationality of the fear that is employed in this process; Islamophobia transcends being "fear of Muslims" and it should be understood as an "irrational fear of Muslims" that is not rooted in reality (p. 223). Mehdi further contends that it is this irrationality that justifies the need to explore this phenomenon through a psychoanalytical lens. Shabankare (2016), on the other hand, argues against the use of the word phobia. He points out that phobia is an involuntary psychological process which diminishes and dismisses the personal responsibility of its perpetrator and can potentially justify the phobic acts as an unintended outcome of an unwanted feeling or a mental disorder. From this perspective, the victims of Islamophobia can be viewed as the cause of fear and anxiety while the perpetrator is exonerated from assuming accountability for their acts.

Whether or not utilizing the suffix of phobia is justified and appropriate in defining this phenomenon and explaining the hostility against Muslims, the overt Islamophobia stems from the 9/11 terrorist attacks that generated a great amount of annihilation anxiety and fear in the society (Davids, 2009). As the result, Muslims as a community were considered responsible for the terrorist attacks and each Muslim became a suspect until proven otherwise (Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017). Islamophobia was further increased by the migration of many Muslims to western countries and by the subsequent terrorist attacks in Europe and the US that reinforced the existing anxieties and fears. Ad-Dab'bagh argues that Islamophobia has had a negative impact on local, national, international affairs and political discourses around the world. He believes that this

negative impact has been significantly fortified by the way that media has used its power to portray Muslims as the enemy and to magnify the fear of Muslims by spreading stereotypical anti-Muslim associations and by linking the religion of Islam to the terrorist attacks while the voices of non-extremist Muslim communities got shut down; this has partly resulted in the resurgence of nationalistic ideologies and groups like white supremacists, and the rise of extremist and far-right political movements in Europe and US. Hollander (2010) underlines the fact that Bush's administration played an influential role in the intensification of Islamophobia by spreading and expanding the anti-Islam rhetoric in the years following 9/11 through the "war on terror" campaign.

Many scholars (Davids, 2009; Shabankare, 2016; Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017; Sadek, 2017) argue that Donald Trump's charged rhetoric and his presidential campaign as a whole, exemplifies how politicians can exploit the fear that exists in a society and use it to their advantage. Donald Trump's campaign did not miss any opportunity to denigrate minorities groups, more specifically Muslims, and to justify the vilification of Islam (Shabankare, 2016). In an interview in 2016, Donald Trump stated that "Islam hates us;" this belief has shaped a new era of Islamophobia in the US during Trump's presidency (Hilal, 2017). The most paramount manifestation of Islamophobia in policies in this era was the "Muslim ban" which fulfilled Trump's campaign promise to "complete shutdown of Muslims entering United States"; this policy banned citizens of 7 Muslim majority countries from entering the US. Additionally, Trump continuously used the word "Islamist" instead of "extremist" in defining terrorist groups and attacks. He increased the use of drones and bombing citizens in Muslim majority countries; and he empowered nationalistic groups, like white supremacists, and supported their ideology (Hilal, 2017).

On a more personal level, Trump started the birtherism campaign against Barack Obama; he continuously tweeted anti-Muslim messages and videos and used a pejorative language in describing Muslims (e.g. his conflict with the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan).

The anti-Islam mindset and behaviors perpetrated by important political figures and those in charge, spills over into the society and becomes part of the culture. The FBI reports on hate crimes indicates a significant increase in the number of hate crimes committed against Muslims after 9/11; the increased aggressiveness against Muslims is influenced by the terrorist attacks, as well as the political discourses (Shabankare, 2016). Sethi (2018) reports that 63 mosques were vandalized between January and July 2017. He also highlights the palpable show of white supremacy in Charlottesville's and other "Unite the Right" movements and protests resulted in higher rates of hate crimes and murders of members of minority groups. It should be noted that many hate crimes of this nature go unreported and undocumented. Sethi lists fear of retaliation, shame, legal implications, and deportation for the undocumented, as some of the reasons why the victims of hate crimes choose not to report them. In 2016, the FBI has documented 6,121 hate crimes while the National Crime Victimization Survey suggested that the number of yearly hate crimes could be as many as 250,000 (Sethi, 2018, p. 8)

The end result of divisive and hate-ridden policies and rhetoric is a society that endorses xenophobia and tends to exclude individuals that are neither white nor Christian, targeting Muslims in particular (Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017). The religion of Islam is viewed as "the problem" and Muslims experience bigotry even when they are citizens of the nation state (Mehdi, 2017). Kalin (2011) asserts that "Islamophobia is not racially

blind" (p. 11). The Muslim community in the US is made up of African Americans, South-Asians from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, Arabs, Iranians, Indonesians, Turkish, and some from central and eastern Europe (Sadek, 2017). Davids (2009) states that despite the diversity of the Muslim-American population, the majority are not white, are not considered as one of "us" and are subject to racism and xenophobia as the result. Once it became known that the 9/11 terrorists were of Arab origin from the Middle East, the racism towards the Muslim-Americans became further legitimized in the eyes of its perpetrators and it was transformed into the fear of Muslims and their religion compounded by the existing racism (Davids, 2002). This happened in spite of many Muslims voicing their disapproval and condemnation of the terrorist attacks -As Mahdwi (2017) points out, there is a 712-page document listing the world's Muslims who condemned violence perpetrated by Islamist fanatics. Additionally, studies like the one conducted by Pape (2003) on suicide terrorism, show little connection between true religious values and terrorist attacks.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, it is important to understand the psychological dynamics involved in targeting a population that constitutes a small percentage of a society with such hostility and contempt and the social and political implications of this phenomenon. Even prior to the 9/11 attacks, Muslims were identified as "the other" due to their different race, skin color, culture, and religious views. They were viewed as dissimilar enough to the majority which made them safe objects to receive the internal and unwanted negative feelings that were split off and needed to be emanated. The 9/11 terrorist attacks further reinforced this process and intensified the dehumanization of Muslims. The Muslims' diversity, various ethnicities, backgrounds,

beliefs, and values were dismissed and ignored; instead, they were viewed as one evil entity and therefore, deserving of hatred and hostility. Hollander (2010) views Islamophobia in the West as a trauma response in which the provoked unprecedented vulnerability in the western societies, that was magnified and amplified through prejudicial political movements and biased media coverage, mobilized the projection of fear and hatred and subjected Muslims to discriminatory behaviors. Ironically, using the defenses of splitting and projection creates a vicious cycle in which the more it is used the greater the fear of retaliation gets, which further justifies the dehumanization and maltreatment of Muslims (Davids, 2006).

Akhtar (2017) draws attention to a point that is less frequently discussed in many literatures which is the role that Muslims play in perpetuating Islamophobia. He believes that Muslims were chosen to be the "new villain" and they "gladly" accepted that role as evidenced by their repeated acts of terror against innocent citizens in Europe and US (p. 198). He argues that Muslims have contributed to the prejudice against them, and they should take responsibility for the role that they have played in order to become able to change the current problematic dynamic. Whether this point is viewed as "blaming the victims" or as a valid argument, Sadek (2017) highlights the fact that it is the Muslims' diverse subjectivity that is often ignored in this process. She points out that many innocent Muslims have become victims of both the extremists' actions and the larger groups' hatred. Muslims are pressured by the extremists as well as the non-Muslims, and those who are innocently victimized, especially victims of Islamophobia, experience fear and shame, and at times, changes in their identity.

Hijab and misogyny.

Systematic sexism and misogyny have had a longstanding existence around the world. Mintchev (2018) explains that the category "man" is understood as the universal representative of "mankind" in which women are encompassed. This categorization both emphasizes the differences between genders and shows the presumed subordination of women. On a larger scale, it indicates the deep roots of misogyny and belittling of women. Dehumanizing and objectifying women, patriarchy and male privilege have been perpetuated for centuries and women of many minority groups have been particularly susceptible to harassment and abusive language and behaviors due to not only their gender but other factors that make them an "other". Muslim women are subject to a great amount of intolerance and contempt from the larger groups in different societies because of both their gender and their faith (Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017). Misogyny is interwoven in Islamophobia against Muslim women and it is, at times, amplified by elements of racism, classicism, and xenophobia.

The main signifier of Muslim women is their hijab. Ad-Dab'bagh (2017) points out that hijab is the most distinctive quality of many Muslim women which makes them subject to oppression and harassment. Davids (2006) adds that Islam has been identified as the enemy and hijab is the most visible manifestation of it. Many Muslim women are highly criticized and have been subjected to maltreatment from verbal harassments, to police brutality and even murder not only because they are Muslim but because they choose to cover their hair and parts of their body in public (Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017). Muslim women are at times subject to oppression from their own families and communities as

Islamic rules can be oppressive and misogynistic, and they are also targeted more strongly by racist and Islamophobic groups outside of their communities.

As Dakkak and Mikulka (2012) indicate, hijab is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon with social, analytical, political, and cultural implications. For many Muslim women hijab has historical and institutional importance; it is a familial, cultural, and social object in addition to its religious significance. Hijab is part of many Muslim women's identity and it is a highly normalized and accepted way of presenting oneself; it is what Muslim women have seen in their families and communities, and how women have looked like for generations in certain regions and cultures. Modesty in presentation and covering parts of the body, more specifically women's hair, has long been encouraged and promoted in different cultures and religions. However, hijab for Muslim women has been highly politicized and has become a controversial object and subject of conflicting and contradictory views and beliefs. Many consider hijab as a tool to dominate and oppress women by men, while others view it as an opportunity for women to form their own identity and become empowered to recognize their right to choose how to dress, choose who to allow into their private and intimate life (by selecting who can see their hair and body), and choose what to comply with; in other words, use hijab as a function to exercise independence and resistance (Movahedi & Homayounpour, 2012).

In their paper, "The couch and the Chador" (2012), Movahedi and Homayounpour attempt to understand and explain hijab through a psychoanalytic lens. They explore hijab's psychic functioning in relation to the theory of transitional objects and view it as an object replacing the lost maternal figure for adolescent girls. According to the Islamic laws, women are to cover and start wearing hijab at the onset of puberty

which is a psychosexually confusing phase of life for many adolescents, in which there may be an increase in maternal phantasies. On the other hand, some argue that hijab represents a strong superego and/or a paternal agency as it is prescribed by a "higher power", and it embodies patriarchy (Mernisshi, 1982; Movahedi & Homayounpour, 2012). Movahedi and Homayounpour add that many psychoanalysts view hijab as a container and as means for ego-integration, and others have examined the construction of the self and identity in relation to integration of one's familial, cultural values and religious beliefs and the process of its internalization. Ellie Ragland (2008) has explored the connection between hijab and gender in which hijab is conceptualized as the "residue of the maternal dyad", and the reinforcement of the identification with the mother.

Omar Suleiman (2017) speaks to Muslim women's need to be granted the opportunity to form their own self-identity and religious-identity, particularly, in relation to wearing hijab. Yet, due to the challenges that Muslim women face both from within and outside of their communities, the process of constructing one's own opinions and beliefs is often disrupted for Muslim women. In Suleiman's study on exploring internalized Islamophobia in young Muslims, 15 out of 19 Muslim girls who were interviewed, reported having considered taking off hijab due to fear and due to having experienced Islamophobic attacks; 8 of them reported that they had stopped wearing hijab in certain places due to feeling threatened. The politicization of hijab, as well as the conflicting views and opinions regarding hijab, has resulted in augmentation of Islamophobia against hijabi women. As the result, the natural decision-making process of whether or not to wear hijab has been negatively affected for Muslim women; wearing hijab equates becoming subject for harassment and discrimination, while not wearing it

would precipitate a negative reaction and increased pressure from the Muslim communities. The end result is that Muslim women feel oppressed and subjugated, while they ironically get blamed for being oppressed and subjugated.

Prejudice and Discrimination

McLeod (2008) defines prejudice as "an unjustified or incorrect attitude, usually negative, towards an individual based solely on the individual's membership of a social group", whereas discrimination is "the behavior or actions, usually negative, towards an individual or group of people, especially on the basis of sex/race/social class, etc.". A prejudiced person may not act out his/her negative feelings in a discriminatory manner, but prejudice does include affective, cognitive, and behavioral components while discrimination only involves behaviors. Parens (2012) argues that unresolved or poorly managed innate aggression during childhood is one of the main underlying psychological dynamics involved in prejudice and discrimination. He references his 7-year-long study, and the 19-year, 32-year and 37-year follow-ups of mothers and their newborns that show a positive correlation between the quality of child's attachment to the caregiver and his/her aggression profile.

Parens (2012) contends that when parents are psychologically informed and are attuned with their children, and with proper education, a more secure attachment can be formed, and the innate aggression can become more benign. Parens' observational research highlights the defenses employed by young children when angry with their mothers; he points out that by 12 months of age, children use displacement, inhibition

and splitting in order to contain their aggressive and violent tendencies towards their mother; by 18 months, they use projection, rationalization and denial. If the child's innate aggression is not managed well and the defenses are not understood and tolerated, by the age of 5 or 6, the "reality-distorting" defenses form the underlying organization of prejudice, manifested in tendencies like reductionism, caricaturing, depreciation and vilification (p. 176).

In addition to management of aggression, Parens (2012) believes that identification plays a critical role in development of prejudice and discriminatory behaviors. The strong need for identification in children is manifested in separation anxiety which evokes the threat of losing the attachment objects without having the internal representation of them, and in stranger anxiety -othering- which is the earliest manifestation of hostility and rejection of non-familiar objects (Parens, 2012). Identification with the caregivers and love-objects, which forces a level of disidentification with the non-caregivers and strangers, results in the internalization of familial and cultural norms and conventions which includes the familial, and ultimately cultural, prejudices against people different from "us". Combined with the child's own negative feelings towards non-familiar objects evoked by stranger anxiety, the biases of parents, relatives, neighbors, teachers… implicitly or explicitly, and consciously and unconsciously, get conveyed to the child which not only normalizes the hostility towards others but makes it an unavoidable component in reinforcing identification and disidentification (Parens, 2012).

Parens (2012) differentiates benign prejudice from malignant prejudice and believes that everyone harbors varying degrees of prejudices, but benign prejudice does

not contain a wish to harm others. He explains that the development of benign prejudice stems from primary narcissism and primary needs, and the ways in which the self engages in the processes of self-specification and object-identification. The two attachment factors of stranger anxiety and identification with the familiar objects, predisposes everyone to feel prejudiced against others; but this form of prejudice is rather benign and does not carry the desire to inflict harm. Parens further explains that what transforms the normative and benign prejudice into malignant prejudice and discrimination is the projection of one's internalized and accumulated hostility and aggression onto others, as well as the learned behaviors from one's family and environment.

Parens (2012) differentiates the personal contributing factors in development of malignant prejudice and discrimination from the societal ones: on a personal level the contributing factors are inborn dispositions, intense intrapsychic conflicts such as traumas, utilizing reality-distorting defense mechanisms such as projection and the need to revenge; on a societal level there are societal traumas, militant ethnic and/or religious education and prejudiced group mentality (p. 178). He believes that harsh and abusive child rearing induces elevated levels of anger, hatred, and hostility towards the attachment objects; however, it feels safer for the child to project such feelings onto distant strangers than the parents. In supporting this idea, Ad-Dab'bagh (2017) states that prejudiced attacks are attacks on internalized bad objects, which is the underlying process and one of the catalysts involved in the transformation of benign prejudice into malignant prejudice. However, identification with attachment objects, harsh child rearing and accumulated aggression cannot be accounted for the entirety of carrying the wish to harm

others. Parens (2012) emphasizes that environmental factors also play a critical role in the formation of malignant prejudice. Some children, more than others, are overly exposed to familial, cultural, and societal malignant prejudice and malevolent othering. These children, like adults, tend to identify and conform with the groups to which they belong and internalize the group's values and beliefs. It is Parens' contention that internalizing the group's values and beliefs, combined with unhealthy child rearing techniques, would foster the development of malignant prejudice.

The core dynamics employed in Islamophobia are exertion of malignant prejudice and inflicting harm through discrimination. Sadek (2017) questions whether the term Islamophobia accurately captures all the different facets and components involved in exerting prejudice against Muslims. She points out that the term Islamophobia implies that the prejudice is only against the religion whereas the real victims of it are human subjects whose daily life is affected negatively. The lack of addressing the human subjects in the term "Islamophobia" can be partly rooted in internalized dehumanization whereas in reality, the discrimination that Muslims suffer from stems from a combination of prejudice against their religion, race, ethnicity, culture, and in case of Muslim women, gender. Davids (2009) highlights that Muslims are not a homogenous group of people; they are diverse and what they have in common is their religion and, in many cases, darker skin color and cultural differences. To Sadek (2017), Islamophobia stems from long standing racism and prejudice against Arabs. She concludes it is interwoven with racism seen in xenophobia and it expands to larger aspects of Muslims' lifestyle and life choices. Sadek further explains that "anti-Arab sentiment has taken religious undertones just as anti-Muslim stereotypes have taken anti-Arab undertones" (p. 203). Additionally,

there is an element of prejudice against class that is present in Islamophobia as some Muslims are refugees and immigrants from underprivileged backgrounds (Sadek, 2017). Sadek concludes that Islamophobia is a complex and multifaceted form of exerting prejudice and discrimination that, at times, has even evoked Islamophobic ideology and actions amongst Muslims themselves; Muslims are prejudiced against by non-Muslims while they are also attacked internally by the extremists as well as other Muslims.

Introjection/ Projective Identification

Those who are dehumanized and become subject to an individual's or group's projection of hostility may suffer from damage to their core sense of self and impaired ego functioning as the result of introjecting the maltreatments (Holmes, 2006). Ritvo (1981) states that psychological effects of racism and classicism on the recipients are similar to those of trauma as both conditions can result in impaired ego functioning, ego disturbances and development of unhealthy defense mechanisms. Levy and Cohler (2002) study the harmful disturbances to the core identity of gays and lesbians who grow up in a heteronormative society. Holmes (2006) suggests that racial minorities and marginalized groups suffer from intrapsychic difficulties, including what she calls "success neurosis", as the result of living in a Euro-American and affluence-normative societies, and the internalization of biased and prejudiced ideologies and behaviors (p. 217). Success neurosis, according to Holmes, is the internalization of the message that one is not worthy of success due to their skin color, socio-economic situation, religion, culture, etc. Success for the systematically oppressed and marginalized is, at times, not only a taboo but a punishable act.

McWilliams (2011) contends that projection and introjection are opposite sides of the same psychological coin. In both projection and introjection, the psychological boundaries between self and the world are unclear and permeated. This is analogous to the way a child is unable to distinguish between an internally located pain and an external one. Therefore, what is inside is perceived to be coming from outside in projection, and what is outside is perceived to be coming from inside in introjection. Benign introjection accounts for primitive and psychologically necessary for the identification with important objects. However, introjection can become an unhealthy defense used in coping with increased anxiety and aggression combined with powerlessness. In its more problematic forms, introjection turns into development of "identification with the aggressor" (Freudian term), in which one tries to master their fright and pain by taking on qualities of their abuser (McWilliams, 2011). Sadek (2017) points out that identification with the aggressor is the dynamic employed in the prejudice inflicted by some Muslims against their own culture and religion. She argues that this prejudice stems from internalization of stereotypes and longstanding history of anti-Islam ideologies and treatments. Introjection can also be an agent in the formation of depressive psychology as the result of internalization of bad objects (McWilliams, 2011). Fairbairn (1943) argues that children in destructive families prefer to take on the blame than believing the terrifying fact that their caregivers, on whom they rely, are the ones inflicting pain and suffering. This dynamic can account for development of a sense of accountability and admission of guilt in Muslims, as well as depressive feelings such as shame and fear in facing anti-Islam ideologies.

McWilliams (2011) explains that when projection and introjection work together, they form the defense of projective identification. The term projective identification was first introduced by Melanie Klein (1946). Projective identification is a psychological process commonly used during the paranoid-schizoid phase of development in which unwanted and threatening parts of self are split off and projected into another person in an effort to both rid oneself of unmanageable parts and gain control and possession of the object (Ogden, 1979). Ogden explains that projective identification is composed of three parts. First, there is the fantasy of ridding oneself of unwanted parts and gaining control of the object from within. Second, the fantasy evolves into the act of projecting and exerting pressure on the recipient to internalize the projected feelings and to become congruent with what is projected into him/her. Finally, if the projected feelings are properly processed and contained by the recipient, they can be reinternalized by the subject in a healthier manner. Ogden further explains that during the second phase of this process, there is real pressure on the recipient to feel and act in a manner that the projected feelings and beliefs define and expect of him/her. The pressure is exerted through interactions between the two parties, and it psychologically affects the recipient. The pressured recipient ultimately introjects what is being projected and becomes congruent with the projector's fantasy. Additionally, a new set of feelings, different than the projected ones, towards the self and the projector may emerge as the result (Ogden, 1979, p. 360).

Many scholars have wondered about how vilification and dehumanization of Muslims impact them psychologically (Davids, 2006 & 2009; Akhtar, 2017; Sadek, 2017; Ad-Dab'bagh, 2017; Shabankare, 2016), in other words, they wonder in what ways

Muslims introject the maltreatment that they receive. Davids (2006) explains that an internal racist organization is shaped through the relationship between a subject who rid him/herself of the unwanted parts and the object who now owns them. Their interaction is bound to conform to the demands of this dynamic; they each have to play the role assigned to them in order for the organization to continue to exist, and dehumanization of the recipients is a vital component of it. As Akhtar (2017) points out, dehumanization of individuals is part of the reason why racial and religious prejudices are experienced as attacks on a group rather than the individual recipient of it. However, Ad-Dab'bagh (2017) believes that experiencing attacks as impersonal and communal may also be a protective defense mechanism. He argues that development of a "containing function", which is the degree in which separation from the "generic other" is occurred and psychological cohesion and integrity is reached, shapes the subjective versus communal experience of receiving prejudice. "A well-developed containing function allows for a full experience of a "me" within a "we", and results in experiencing a racial insult as being primarily an attack on the "we" with no threat of disintegration […] A poorly-developed containing function could, however, explain why a racial insult may lead primarily to disintegration anxiety" (p. 175).

Ad-Dab'bagh (2017) further explains that the severity of subjective injuries of being subject to prejudice is determined by how socially condemned the prejudice is. He uses Akhtar's (2007) concept of "culturally syntonic" versus "culturally dystonic" prejudices, which draws attention to the societal and cultural reactions to prejudiced and discriminatory behaviors against the marginalized groups and whether or not these acts are condemned widely and publicly. Ad-Dab'bagh states that prejudice may have more of

a negative impact on the individual recipients of it in the societies in which social justice is sought more rigorously and prejudice is perceived as a socially dystonic act. In societies and communities where prejudice is culturally syntonic, the victims are conditioned to expect such treatments and may be better prepared to handle it (Akhtar, 2017). Both Akhtar and Ad-Dab'bagh agree that Islamophobia is experienced as shocking and psychologically impactful because it is rather a culturally dystonic phenomenon in most places (e.g. certain states in America), where social justice is highly promoted, and prejudice is publicly condemned. As a result, the severity of the subjective experiences of it is rather high and more hurtful even when the frequency of attacks is low. According to Sadek (2017), shame and fear are the most commonly generated feelings in victims of Islamophobia.

Fear and Annihilation Anxiety in Muslim Communities

As mentioned previously, the anti-Islam mindset and Islamophobic acts have increased significantly since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Muslims have become subject to bullying, exclusion, trolling, harassment, banishment, death threats, appropriation, police brutality, vandalism, prejudice, discrimination, assault and hate violence (Sethi, 2018). Davids (2002) asserts that Muslims are not seen as "one of us", they are constantly under suspicion and quick to be punished. Shabankare (2016), along with many other scholars, have attested to the rise of fear in the Muslim communities as the result of increased Islamophobia. Muslims fear their safety, and the safety of their families and loved ones in the face of growing division and propagation of hatred and contempt. Rosenthal (2016) compares what Muslims currently experience with some historical tragedies such as

Armenians genocide by the Turks, the crimes of the US government against the Native Americans, Stalin killing millions of his own citizens and the torture and murders of millions of Jews in the Holocaust. While such comparisons tend to highlight the severity of this phenomenon and warn against the potential consequences, they may also further reinforce and intensify the fear that already exists within the Muslim communities. Shabankare (2016) points out that Trump's rhetoric during his 2016 presidential campaign, and throughout his presidency, have induced a great amount of fear in Muslims by implicitly endorsing the white supremacists and normalizing the use of violence and aggression in dealing with the "others". In explaining the fear that Muslims currently experience, Aziz Ansari (2016) states that "today, with the presidential candidate Donald J. Trump and others like him spewing hate speech, prejudice is reaching new levels. It is visceral and scary, and it affects how people live, work, and pray. It makes me afraid for my family. It also makes no sense."

Shabankare (2016) contends that the fear in the Muslim communities transcends the dread of potential discriminations; it is an intense distressing fear of violence, aggression and getting eliminated, in other words, annihilation anxiety. Annihilation anxiety, according to Munoz (2004), is fear about safety, survival and self-preservation and it can be experienced as fear of being penetrated, merged, fragmented, overwhelmed and destroyed depending on one's psychic makeup. This anxiety can appear controlled or uncontrolled, organized or disorganized, somaticized or desomaticized and with or without reflective awareness; it can also be accompanied with anger, regression and trust issues. Munoz further explains that annihilation anxiety can be manifested in fear of inability to cope, losing control, feelings of getting suffocated, immobilized, restrained,

powerless, flooded, losing control of impulses, or losing one's mind. Additionally, it is an anxiety about disintegration of self or self-identity with concerns about falling apart, disappearing, emptiness and nothingness. According to Shabankare (2016) and Sadek (2017), Muslims suffer from different forms of fear and annihilation anxiety which impact their day-to-day life as well as their psychological make-up as a whole. The spreading and promoting hatred and contempt against Muslims through charged political rhetoric and discourses, and biased media coverage, only perpetuates and intensifies the existing fear in Muslim communities.

Shame and Humiliation

Sadek (2017) states that propagating stereotypes against Muslims and perpetrating Islamophobia can generate feelings of shame and embarrassment for the Muslim recipients of it. Abbasi (2005) defines shame as "the painful feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonorable, improper, ridiculous – done by oneself or another". She distinguishes shame from embarrassment which she refers to as "a feeling less painful than that of shame- associated with less serious situations, often of a social nature". She also explains that mortification "is a more painful feeling, akin to shame, but also more likely to raise from specifically social circumstances." Additionally, humiliation is "mortification at being humbled in the estimation of others" (p. 905). In facing Islamophobia, Muslims can feel anything along the spectrum from embarrassment to shame, to humiliation and mortification.

Sadek (2017) believes that the shame evoked by Islamophobia can be the outcome of both the lack of recognition and dismissal of some aspects of Muslims' identity and subjectivity, and the direct humiliating impact of being subject to verbal harassment, discrimination and hate crimes. Auestad (2015) points out that shame and guilt are conflated and are both present in prejudice and they can be indistinguishable for those subject to prejudiced ideologies and behaviors. The subject feels ashamed of being maltreated while they feel guilty of having "caused" such a distress. Sadek further indicates that the very dynamic of inflicting shame and guilt through projecting one's vulnerability, needs and aggression into the marginalized group, is the active agent in causing and maintaining prejudice and discrimination. She contends that perpetuating the anti-Islam rhetoric and pejorative stereotypes, whether it is done by politicians, the media or ordinary citizens, will inevitably lead to feelings of shame and humiliation for Muslims. Through projective identification, the negative stereotypes get internalized which means that the object must disown parts of him/herself and conform with what has been expected of them. The object embodies the negative rhetoric and feels ashamed and humiliated for being/becoming the evil enemy, while also feeling ashamed for being placed in an inferior position and treated with hostility and contempt.

Shame can be an unbearable and psychologically draining feeling to harbor. Sadek (2017) argues that to deal with shame, one must recognize and own it, and acknowledge that he or she feels ashamed. Additionally, one must strive to understand the origins and underlying causes of humiliation, shame, or mortification, as well as identify the defenses employed to fight against it. She believes that Muslims need to recognize their shame and understand the dynamics involved in inflicting and receiving

it, in order to become able to challenge it. Otherwise, harboring shame and humiliation can be too painful and toxic to bear, and individuals may employ unhealthy defenses and coping strategies and dangerous measures to avoid these feelings. The victimized and traumatized individuals and groups may defend themselves against their negative feelings by "identifying with the aggressor" and inflicting shame and humiliation upon others, in other words, by projecting it out (Kemp, 2011). According to Sadek, this dynamic is manifested in the way some Arabs treat the minorities and marginalized workers in Arab countries, some of whom are Muslims from Africa or Southeast Asia. It is also evident in the hostility within the Muslim communities against each other in response to being called "backward and dangerous"; Non-Arab Muslims hold Arabs responsible for reifying these negative stereotypes and blame them for having caused and/or contributed to the anti-Islam rhetoric. Muslims, at times, defend against being shamed and humiliated by shaming the non-Muslims and rejecting all Western values as "decadent and imperialist" or may take extreme measures and actions against the west (p. 217).

Unprocessed and unprojected shame, according to Sadek (2017), may lead to formation of feelings of violence, aggression, self-deprecation, self-loathing, hopelessness, and despair. Sethi (2018) believes that internalization of shame is one of the reasons why many hate crimes against Muslims go unreported. Muslims internalize the negative qualities attributed to them, feel guilty and shameful of their evilness, and feel deserving of maltreatment and prejudices; therefore, some Muslims choose not to report discriminatory behaviors. Additionally, Shame can compel Muslims to disown and question parts of their identity, background, and history. Sadek argues that appreciating and embracing the diversity and historicity of Muslims and their narrative is a key

element in challenging the shame and humiliation that Muslims are made to feel, and it is a way to better contain these feelings.

Muslim Identity

Islamophobia, with its dehumanizing quality, views all Muslims as a monolithic entity who are backwards and aggressive, as well as the enemy who threats others' existence. Hollander (2010) asserts that the larger group's ideologies, values, and beliefs are important components of minority groups' psychic reality, and it plays a role in the formation of the identity of a minority group within the larger society. Therefore, the pervasiveness of Islamophobia has been impacting the development of the contemporary Muslims' identity. In Sadek's account (2017), Islamophobia has contributed to what she calls the "collapse of individual and collective Muslim identities", mainly by inflicting feelings of shame and humiliation (p. 217). The negative stereotypes in Islamophobia and shame, along with the dismissal of the richness of Muslims' background and history, result in the internalization of inferiority and foreclosure of some aspects of Muslim identities. Muslims who are subject to prejudice and face the lack of recognition and appreciation of their diverse worlds and historical context, disown parts of themselves and end up constricting, restraining and changing parts of their true identity as the result (Sadek, 2017).

Islamophobia, like other forms of othering such as racism, sexism and xenophobia can affect most, if not all aspects of its victims' subjectivity and life. In explaining the subjective impact of racism, Desmond-Harris (2016) writes: "[racism] haunts every

aspect of your life, but nobody else sees it and they don't believe you… sometimes it makes a very pronounced appearance, and that's why people seize on it". Davids (2009) asserts that those who are subject to othering and different forms of prejudice and discrimination due to a physical characteristic such as skin color or values such as religious beliefs develop a dual self and identity; one that is aligned and congruent with aspects of the larger group characteristics and values, which is often idealized; and one that is different from the larger group identity which is denigrated and, at times, disowned or hidden. Sadek (2017) further verifies the duality of the marginalized identity and the conscious and/or unconscious efforts to mask the less accepted parts. She explains that Muslims may try to hide their religion and their ethnicity since being a Muslim is equated with being a terrorist. More generally, in order to present themselves as what they are not (e.g. a violent terrorist), Muslims may disown or hide parts of their true identity, background, history and culture, both from themselves and the society. Ironically, such acts further reinforce the stereotype of a monolithic identity through denial, silencing and masking the unique and subjective traits of individuals (Sadek, 2017). The efforts of the minority groups to renounce or mask their differences in response to being subject to prejudice and other threats from the larger groups, creates a sense of alienation, insecurity, and loss of self as one's whole and true self is questioned, fragmented, and rejected (Kalin, 2011). The alienation and othering are, therefore, both an external and internal process that impacts Muslims' sense of self (Sadek, 2017).

In a parallel process, some Muslims are subject to dehumanization, alienation, and monolithic identity from within their own communities, more particularly, from the Muslim fundamentalists. The Muslim fundamentalists pressure Muslims to become

highly conservative and religious fanatics in order to be perceived as a “good Muslim”. The non-Muslim communities, on the other hand, pressure Muslims to renounce their differences and conform to the larger group expectations in order to be perceived as a “good Muslim” and “one of us” (Sadek, 2017). Sadek states that in both situations, Muslims are decontextualized, and their subjective identity and narrative are ignored. Muslims are viewed as limited to their religion, and their unique background, race, culture, and history, in other words, their subjective identity is overlooked. Muslims are under perpetual suspicion, and pressure to prove themselves to the larger groups, Muslim communities, or even the fundamentalists. Therefore, in a defensive manner, Muslims are bound to disavow parts of their self and embrace the needs and wants of the dominant groups to survive and be accepted (Sadek, 2017).

Sadek (2017) defines a collapsed and compromised identity as an identity that is voided from its diversity and depth; it is ahistorical, stereotypical, and one-dimensional, defined by the dominant groups, modified through conformity and disavowal of the subjective qualities of individuals. She argues that the Muslim identity has been compromised as the result of Islamophobia and other forms of prejudices and maltreatments from both western and Muslim communities. Muslims are widely othered and dehumanized and they are chosen to be the safe recipients of the perpetrators’ split-off aggression and hostility. The aggression and hostility can be introjected and manifest itself in different shapes and forms like development of self-hatred and self-deprecation as the result of feeling shamed and humiliated, or inflicting aggression and contempt upon others as the result of identifying with the aggressor. Muslims are also pressured to disown and disavow aspects of their self in order to comply with the needs and wants of

the dominant groups. Ultimately, it is the identity of Muslims that is affected and changed as the result of being subject to these dynamics and the Muslim victims of this dynamic suffer from ego-fragmentation.

Conclusion

This literature review incorporated an understanding of the psychological and social processes involved in Islamophobia, as well as the impact of Islamophobia on the individual recipients of it. Dalal (2006) points out that in understanding a social phenomenon, it is vital to not separate the external social world from the internal world of the subjects as the two are interrelated and interwoven. However, in the literatures reviewed for this study, it was noticeable that more attention has been paid to the social components, as well as the psychological processes employed by the perpetrators of Islamophobia, than the subjective experience of the victims of Islamophobia. The literature on dehumanization, projection, prejudice, and discrimination is more extensive and thorough than the literature on introjection of prejudice and ways in which being subject to these processes impact the recipients. Sadek (2017) alludes to this imbalance by pointing out that studies on Islamophobia and Muslim identity often fail to recognize the diversity within the Muslim communities and to take that into account. Muslims are portrayed as conservative and highly religious in many studies with no mention of their unique qualities, personal characteristic, background, country of origin, etc. In that sense, even in the studies of Islamophobia, the dehumanization of Muslims and the lack of recognition of their diversity are somewhat repeated. The lack of consideration of Muslims' subjectivity and inattentiveness to their experience as opposed to that of the

perpetrators, not only replicates the Islamophobic tendencies, but it can also limit the studies and impede the researchers' ability to fully understand the experience of their study subjects.

Sethi (2018) highlights the fact that one of the main purposes of inflicting aggression and hatred is to silence and subjugate the victims. Focusing more on the experience of perpetrators as opposed to the victims replicates the same silencing and subjugation from which victims suffer. The narratives of victims must be heard, and their story of victimization and/or survival need to be told. Therefore, in spite of exploring some aspects of perpetrating hate and what goes on for the perpetrators in the literature review, the main focus of this study will be on the subjective experience of Muslim women, what gets introjected for them and how they manage the introjections.

Chapter III

Methodology

Reintroduction of Major Approach and Research Questions

The aim of this psychoanalytic case study research (Tolleson, 1996) is to explore and illuminate the subjective experience of Muslim women subjected to Islamophobia, bigotry, and hatred. Like many other minority groups, Muslim women who choose to wear hijab are subject to various forms of maltreatment and they may endure prejudiced and discriminatory behaviors due to not only their faith, but also their gender (as well as other signifiers that could make them an "other"). The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experience of these women and to explore the negative and/or positive changes in their life; the goal is to shed light on how being subject to prejudice and discrimination affects them and what aspects of this dynamic, if any, get internalized. The environmental, social, and cultural factors, the interactions between the victims and the perpetrators of Islamophobia, as well as the introjected parts will be accounted in this study in an effort to comprehend different facets of the subjective lives of the women participants of the study. This study will utilize case study methodology, employed by Tolleson (1996), using a psychoanalytical interpretive framework, grounded in a hermeneutic, constructivist worldview.

This chapter will review the methodology that will be used to conduct this study. More specifically, this chapter will review the rationale to employ qualitative research and hermeneutic psychoanalytical case study methodology, as well as an overview on sampling, data collection and data analysis processes, and the trustworthiness and limitations of the study.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research design will provide an optimal framework for the in-depth exploration and analysis required for apprehending the personal meaning of the experience of the participants of this study. A qualitative approach is ideal for this project because its objective is to capture the complexities of a phenomenon within a multifaceted context (Creswell, 2007). Inspired by the constructivist paradigm, qualitative research seeks the meaning of a phenomenon from the participants' view, which allows multiple meanings and different interpretations to emerge (Creswell, 2014). In explaining the proper implication of qualitative research, Creswell (2007) points out that "we conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants of a study" (p. 40). This method endorses the notion that there is no single objective reality, rather, there are various ways of viewing and understanding a phenomenon. In addition to the interest in individual experiences, qualitative research tends to explore how an experience is contextually embedded (Creswell, 2007; Heppner & Heppner, 2004)

Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) contend that qualitative research answers the question of "what" and offers an approach to conceptualize the studied matter as a whole while investigating different parts of it. "Qualitative research includes an understanding of context, circumstance, environment, and milieu" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 38). Deep understanding of the subject matter from the perspective of the research participants embedded in the real-life complexities, and aiming to describe and explain that understanding, are the core objectives of qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The goal is to capture rich data through an interactive process between the researcher and the participants and the researcher is considered the primary tool for collecting and analyzing data. Kinsella (2006) asserts that hermeneutics is the underpinning philosophy of qualitative research. The hermeneutic approach aims to interpret the meanings that people attribute to a phenomenon, considering the social and cultural complexities of their world. It appreciates the uniqueness of lived experiences embedded in social and cultural environments, and recognizes that all data is interpretative (Van Manen, 1990). Therefore, a qualitative research design, grounded in a hermeneutic framework, will provide the best framework for this study.

Rationale for Hermeneutic Case-Study Methodology

Hoffman (2009) asserts that from a psychoanalytical perspective any individual case is not only rare, but it is also a unique phenomenon as it relates to the subjective experience of an individual as a whole person. Hoffman's argument is highly aligned with the objectives of this research study. The primary objective of this study is to capture the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the participants' encounter with

Islamophobia, and the focus will be on their lived experience and the personal meanings attributed to them. Case study methodology will provide the best framework for the purpose of this study. According to Yin (2003), case study answers the questions of "how" and "why" and provides explanatory data and essential meanings. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) explain that "case study is an explanatory form of inquiry that affords significant interaction with research participants, providing an in-depth picture of the unit of study" (p. 46). Case study aims to find varied and multiple personal meanings and provides the opportunity for the researcher to explore and strive to understand the complexities of the research participants' experience (Creswell, 2014). It aims to seek understanding as opposed to offering an explanation.

While case study methodology will be utilized to conduct this study, the underpinning philosophy that guides this research is hermeneutic principles. Hermeneutic and interpretive approaches further reinforce the focus on the subjectivity of the participants and highlight different dimensions of a complex phenomenon. It provides a comprehensive description and analysis of a lived experience, and it creates a paradigm in which different interpretations of the same phenomenon are both recognized and accepted. Gadamer (1975) contends that hermeneutics investigates the nature of understanding and the conditions in which truth is constructed, which transcends it being only a method of interpretation. Truth is not defined or determined based upon a technique or procedure; truth is revealed when the conditions for understanding the meanings are discovered. Gadamer also asserts that any form of understanding is contingent upon a level of self-understanding that is embedded in the history and culture that has shaped it.

In alignment with Gadamer's (1975) conceptualization of hermeneutics, the foundation of this study is laid on the notion that meanings are not revealed (Gergen, 1998); rather, they are co-constructed in a relational space between the researcher and the participants. In other words, meanings are not discoverable, they are interpretive. There will be no absolute truth and no universal way that the incidents of bigotry and prejudice are experienced by the women participants of this study. Each of these women has a distinctive encounter with Islamophobia and attributes meanings to these experiences based upon their subjectivity, their sociocultural background, and unique circumstances within a real-life context. Additionally, the researcher will try to be cognizant that in the same manner that the process of constructing meaning is unique to the individuals, interpreting data will be a subjective process as well. The researcher's personal values, cultural background, socio-economic status as well as countertransferential feelings are expected to somewhat influence all aspects of this process including conducting interviews, verbal and non-verbal interactions with the participants, and the way in which data is understood and interpreted. The researcher's goal is to remain loyal to the richness, complexity, multiplicity, and depth of the personal narratives of the participants rather than offering a generalizable causal explanation.

Research Sample

The research sample will consist of 5 self-identified Muslim women, ages 18 to 65, who have experienced various forms of discrimination and harassment due to their faith as well as their gender. The experiences of discrimination and harassment will include, but are not limited to, being subject to bullying, trolling, exclusion, banishment,

stigma, police brutality, appropriation, vandalism, arson, discrimination, and assault (Sethi, 2008). The goal will be to select women who choose to wear hijab -or wore it at some point in their life- and are motivated and capable of reflecting on the discriminatory incidents that they encountered and are able to articulate their subjective experience. A purposive sampling strategy will be implemented to attract those who meet the inclusion criteria and are willing to discuss their experience in an in-depth and sincere manner. The researcher will network with acquaintances and colleagues, publish an ad on social media and spread flyers in the local mosques in order to locate appropriate participants. Those interested will either email or call the researcher and a time for a brief preliminary screening will be scheduled. The screening process will consist of a brief interview with the volunteers about their experience with Islamophobia. The researcher's own clinical judgement will be employed in order to assess whether or not the volunteers' experience of discrimination fit the inclusion criteria and to assess the volunteers' capacity for self-reflection. Any markers of severe or unstable mental health issues or explicit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) will exclude the volunteers in order to avoid causing any further psychological harm. During the preliminary screening, the researcher will inform the potential participants of what the study would entail and explain the process and the objective of it. The researcher will review the consent form with the eligible and appropriate candidates and their questions and concerns will be addressed before they are asked to sign the consent form.

Creswell (2007) suggests that no more than four or five participants be selected for a case study methodology. The goal is to obtain depth and more compelling formulations, not breadth and generalizability (Tolleson, 1996). Five women will be

recruited to participate in this research project once they agree upon the terms of the study, and they agree to be interviewed 3 times or more, each time for 60-90 minutes. Intensive interviewing will be vital in this process in order to capture the complexity and depth of the participants' experiences. Additionally, spending more time with the subjects will strengthen trust and enhance familiarity which will ultimately result in capturing more genuine and authentic accounts.

Data Collection

This exploratory study relies mainly on the distinctive narratives of the women participants reported in a series of interviews. Once the preliminary screening is completed and the researcher has determined the interviewed volunteer met the inclusion criteria, the researcher will explain the details and the requirements of the study. Upon the volunteer's understanding of the process and verbal agreement to partake in the study, they will be asked to sign the informed consent form and the subsequent interviews will be scheduled. The interviews will be semi-structured; the questions will be open-ended to allow the participants to provide a detailed account, elaborate their experience and share what the most meaningful aspects of their experience are. This method will grant both the researcher and the participants the flexibility needed for this study to allow the significance of personal narratives to emerge and the deep meaning of the participants' distinctive experience to be captured. The researcher's goal is to employ an active and empathic listening in order to limit any resistance to the participants' accounts and restrict overtly positive and/or negative facial and verbal reactions. This form of listening and attentiveness will ideally encourage and strengthen the participants' ability to freely

express themselves and assist them to overcome the potential barriers like feelings of shame, fear and embarrassment associated with openly describing their experiences of being mistreated. Additionally, it will be the researcher's goal to remain curious and impartial, appreciate the complexities and uniqueness of each narrative and respect the participants. In collecting data, it will be essential to avoid fitting the participants' experience into pre-determined theoretical frameworks or the emerged themes in the literature review in order to stay true to the personal meaning of the experience of the study subjects.

The participants will be notified that each interview will be audio recorded and transcribed by a transcription service. The researcher will review the transcripts prior to starting the coding process. The researcher will also take field notes in order to document observations from the surrounding environment, environmental elements that can have a potential impact on the process, non-verbal interactions, countertransferential feelings and personal thoughts and ideas. The field notes will be reviewed and, if applicable, incorporated into the coding and categorizing process.

Data Analysis

This study will employ Tolleson's (1996) psychoanalytic case study methodology consisting of within-case analyses and cross-case analysis. The data will first be analyzed on the individual case level. As Tolleson (1996) points out, within-case analysis ensures that the richness and uniqueness of the individual accounts are captured and illuminated, and the data derived from the interviews is treated as an entity on its own. The data will

be analyzed within the psychoanalytic and constructivist framework in which both manifest and latent content of the data, and the observations and inferences of the researcher will be taken into account. Categories of Meanings based upon the researcher's interpretation of core themes in the interview narratives will be assembled for each participant. These categories are meant to offer an insight into the participants' subjective experience of being subject to bigoted ideologies and prejudiced behaviors present in Islamophobia.

The Categories of Meaning from the individual case analysis will then be examined in totality and will be compared to one another in order to discover and distinguish the differences and commonalities amongst the subjects. Cross-case analysis provides a framework for the researcher to review the emerged themes and meanings from a broader perspective and glean the generalities within the study. Moving from the individual Categories of Meaning to the cross-case themes from the larger perspective will allow for the formation of a larger and more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

Ethical Considerations

The primary ethical consideration of this study is the risks involving interviewing a potentially vulnerable and marginalized population and the discomfort caused for them by talking about emotionally charged incidents. The participants of this study are victims of Islamophobia who have faced negative consequences because of their faith. Partaking in this study and describing the details of the incidents of harassment, discrimination,

prejudice, and bigotry could potentially invoke feelings of vulnerability, anxiety, being exposed and helplessness. As part of the screening process, the researcher will assess the participants' eligibility as well as their mental well-being in order to reduce chances of psychological harm. Additionally, in interviewing members of a minority and marginalized group susceptible to discrimination and hatred, one would need to take into account the real fear and potential danger that the participants may face in relation to reporting these incidents and making them public.

In order to diminish the potential psychological harm, the participants will both verbally and via the consent form be notified that they could stop participating in this study at any point throughout the process. The researcher will also provide a list of mental health professionals for those interested in seeking professional help.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The hermeneutic definition of validity will be implemented in this case study. The researcher will utilize techniques such as reflecting and summarizing the responses in order to make certain that the participants' narratives are captured accurately. The researcher will also strive to ensure that the analyzed data and the Categories of Meaning are reasonable, sensible, and coherent. Furthermore, if needed, the participants will be asked to review the Categories of Meanings in order to verify that the interpretations captured the essence of their experience and accurately represented their subjective experience and the meanings attributed to them. It will be the researcher's intention and goal to present a comprehensive image of the lived experience of the women participants

of this study by staying true to their personal narratives and by offering rich, coherent, and authentic interpretations and findings.

Limitations of the Study

The experience of women participants of this study is embedded in culture, and cultures can vary based upon geographic locations. If participants of the study are selected from the same region in order to conduct in-person interviews, the researcher will risk recruiting participants with homogenous socio-cultural backgrounds and the study may lack diversity. On the other hand, while recruiting nationally will enrich the study by increasing diversity, it will limit the researcher's ability to establish a strong rapport with the participants due to having impersonal and virtual meetings. Another limitation of this study is that Muslim women who are willing to talk about their experience are presumably those who are empowered, have the capacity for self-reflection and have the ability to describe their experience and vocalize how they are impacted in an authentic and coherent manner. As the result, it is the researcher's assumption that the study will not reflect the experience of those who are affected more severely and have experienced more intense trauma-related symptoms. Additionally, cultural and/or religious limitations, the perpetual fear induced by being subjected to Islamophobia, and inability to articulate one's experiences will limit the number of volunteers to partake in this study. Last but not least, a language barrier can be another limitation of this study. Many Muslim women are immigrants who are non-English speakers and may not be proficient in English. Taking part in an interview conducted in English may be intimidating for these women and therefore, they may not volunteer to

participate in it and if they do, language barrier may hinder them from fully conveying and articulating their personal accounts. It will be the researcher's intent to ensure that the participants' full account is captured through asking clarifying questions, summarizing and reflecting back, and asking the participants to review their responses, in case a non-English speaker is interviewed.

Chapter IV

Findings

Case #1: Holly

Identifying information.

Holly is a 32-year-old Muslim female. She was born into a Muslim family and self identifies as one. Her parents are both South Asian immigrants who moved to America in their 20s. Holly has two older sisters, and they were born and raised in the US. When asked to identify racially, Holly stated, “it’s complicated, for health stuff I put South Asian, otherwise I always put other.” Holly was born in Chicago, a few years later, they moved to Columbia, South Carolina, where she lived for about 18 years. She attended college in South Carolina and completed a double major in Political Science and Public Affairs, and a double minor in Art History and Communication. She moved to New York for graduate school and studied International Affairs with a concentration on Economic and Political Developments. During her graduate studies, she interned in Washington DC. Holly has lived in several locations on the East Coast as well as in the Midwest. Holly currently lives in Washington DC and is fully employed at the State Department. She has been married for a year and lives with her husband. She reports that socioeconomically, she falls into the middle-class category.

On wearing hijab.

Holly chose to wear hijab when she was 16 years old. This was a personal choice; nobody pressured or mandated her to do so. She believes her decision was partly influenced by the fact both of her sisters also chose to wear hijab and to her, wearing hijab seemed like "just something that we do." Despite the possibility of being influenced by her sisters, Holly regards the freedom to choose how to dress and how to practice her religious beliefs as invaluable. She stated:

> Hijab is one of the most empowering things in my life. This is just at a personal level because it was definitely a choice that I made for myself, I was never told by my parents in the same way that you need to go to school, and you need to get a job. There are all these expectations of the person that you're going to marry and the work that you do. This was one of those things that I just felt like it was completely my decision. At that age, there weren't a whole lot of decisions that I had to make that were my own and that I could own and that I could decide if I wanted to continue doing it or if I did not. It was completely up to me and nobody else had a stake in it. It was like the introduction to my adulthood and taking responsibility for myself to decide to do this without needing permission to start or stop it.

Although wearing hijab has made Holly a target for harassment and Islamophobic acts, she continues to wear it and still finds it empowering and meaningful. However, her mom and one of her sisters have stopped wearing hijab.

Narratives of Islamophobia.

Holly's personal experiences with Islamophobia started in high school when she started wearing hijab, but she had been familiar with bigotry and prejudice against Muslim women through her sisters' negative experiences in high school, which preceded hers. However, at high school, Holly experienced her peers as accepting and curious when she started wearing hijab. She recalls that many of them would ask her about it, and she welcomed the opportunity to educate, and dispel the myths and misinformation. But although her interactions with peers were positive, she recalls her friends' parents started to look at her differently and occasionally she would hear them whispering derogatory comments. Holly also recalls that "people started to stare at me like I was an alien."

The occurrences of Islamophobic interactions increased in college. Holly and her sisters went to the same college in South Carolina, and they had similar experiences. She explained:

> I went to a very Methodist college where a lot of people didn't understand being different. Sometimes you just don't know if this person does not understand, or they just don't like you. My sisters and I were very active, and it was actually disheartening to see the treatment of the college of us. I think my sisters and I have all had an experience of someone telling us that we were too ambitious. Who tells a college student that they are too ambitious?! Telling us that this is never going to work, and then not supporting us, and then not helping with projects and activities. Somehow every idea we had could not work or we would be discouraged but to also see other people to be given the opportunities or encouraged was frustrating.

Holly reports that she suppressed many of the specific negative memories of those years due to having to deal with her personal trauma of losing her father. Despite repressing some painful memories, she recalls asking for funding to study abroad and it was denied. She took out loans to take a semester abroad and remembers that she had money for only one meal a day while, through social media, she discovered her white peers were funded by the school for the same opportunity. She also shared she worked 8 jobs in order to put herself through school while others were granted scholarships and financial assistance. Holly is not sure whether the lack of financial support stemmed from discrimination, but she states, "when my sisters and I compared notes and stories we realized that we were having similar experiences, they (the college) pulled us down and held us back from being able to do anything."

Holly encountered many adversarial interactions while working at a box office at a movie theater during her college years. She stated she was grateful for the glass in front of her which protected her from people approaching her inappropriately. Mostly, she was subjected to derogatory remarks such as "you would look much cuter if you didn't have that thing on your head" or "now that you're in America, you don't have to wear that." She was also frequently approached by those who tried to convert her to Christianity.

In 2007, Holly volunteered at the democratic campaign in South Carolina during the primaries. She recalls that Hillary Clinton visited their campaign office and took a picture with Holly per her request. Holly read Barack Obama's book. He fascinated her and she admired his drive and authenticity. However, when Obama visited their campaign, Holly was thrilled and zealously wanted to take a picture with him. When he approached her and other volunteers, she voiced her request to which Obama initially

agreed. However, when one of his guards approached Holly and others to collect their cameras, he looked at Holly and refused to take her camera. Holly was baffled and confused. She approached Obama again after his speech and asked to take a picture with him which he evaded. She stated:

> I was so confused and then it was a week or two later, someone sent me an article and they said: “look at this, didn't this happen to you?” And it was an article where two hijabi women had been asked to step out of the frame of the shot that [Obama] was in. He was campaigning and he was going around. And the story broke that the Obama campaign had advised him to not take photos with Muslims, with hijabi women, because they wanted to downplay the rumor that he was a Muslim. I remember when he came up and his face changed. He shook my hand, and he could tell how upset I was because all I said to him was “I read your book, it was really good, good luck on the campaign trail.” You could tell that my spirit had just been crushed by him and he felt bad about it.

Holly conveyed she usually does not like to tell the story of her interaction with Barack Obama due to her conflicting feelings about it. She feels betrayed and humiliated by the interaction. However, she still voted for Obama and respects his presidency. She shared:

> I mean, it worked for him, right? He played the narrative that he needed. And I think if he hadn't been able to play dirty and to do things like that, he would not have been an electable candidate at the end of the day. However, it still hurts my feelings. I was a 19, 20-year-old volunteer. So, to say that this is a conservative or Republican problem is wrong. And when I would say but Hillary took a picture

> with me, everyone said yes because nobody suspects that Hillary is Muslim. I think that was also a reminder to me that just the way I look is threatening to so many people. It's not just me deciding to wear my hair braids or deciding to wear jeans.

Although Holly experiences discrimination and dejection in high school, in college, in her job and even in a democratic campaign office, the majority of Holly's discriminatory experiences are centered around airport security. She stated, "I would say traveling is a big part of my crappy experiences." She has had countless occurrences with being "randomly" selected for additional security screenings. She stated that her sisters have also been subjected to similar treatments at airports numerous times. Holly recollects the time when she was travelling with her sisters, and her mother. They had a connecting flight that was canceled. Airport personnel asked them to wait aside while all the other passengers were booked to take another flight. They stood there for hours waiting to be booked another flight. She said:

> It was so disempowering and so frustrating for us to just be at the mercy of TSA agents who walked off with our passports. We ended up staying overnight in the airport, and the entire shift had changed before someone finally put us on a new flight. And it was so sad and so frustrating and obvious that we were being treated differently and this was my first experience, there were at least 15 more personal experiences like that.

When Holly was in college, one of her classmates organized a solidarity act before their class took a flight for a conference. She sent a group e-mail stating that "we all stand there and watch Holly and her sister get pulled aside and profiled because of

their hijab" and suggested they all wear hijab at the airport to protest. On their way to Denver, they all wore hijab and the TSA agent, who happened to be Muslim, let them through. On the way back, they ran late and did not have time to distribute the scarves and Holly and her sister were pulled for special security. She also recalls that on another trip with her class, they were told that they all needed to go through special security. After Holly protested, she was told by her teacher that in fact, only Holly needed to go through security as her name was placed on a watch list due to her common Muslim name. On her negative experiences at airports, Holly added:

> The crazy thing is that I would never actually go off when I go through the metal detectors. With all the clothes that I am wearing, the only thing they care about is my hijab; they are not checking my pants, they are not checking my jacket, it's just my head. They always ask what is this? They always look at and pad my hijab and say, what is this? And I would say it's hair! I remember when I was flying back from staying abroad, they pulled me out. And I asked why he pulled me out and he said random security check. And I said do I look stupid to you? He said, "well, you know what you could do if you didn't want to get profiled."

Traveling with an American diplomatic passport did not improve Holly's experience at airports. She shared an incident in which she was asked by the security officer what she did, when she responded that she worked for the government she was asked "which government?" Working for the federal government has not always been easy for Holly. Even though she has not encountered any explicit discriminatory behaviors through her hiring process and from her immediate supervisors and co-workers, in general she has been subjected to more scrutiny, some prejudiced treatments

and microaggression. She reports that airport personnel check her badge more frequently than others and she often is asked what her occupation is. Holly is fully aware that the State Department "used to be a white male profession." The department was somewhat more diversified during the Obama's administration, however, many of the long-term employees, and visitors and contractors would still be dismayed by seeing Holly in the hallways. She stated:

> For maybe a full year some white dude stared at me in the hallway and looked me up and down. To the point that I had started asking my co-workers will you come with me when I go to get coffee? Will you come with me when I go to the bathroom? Not because I felt like anyone else was going to do anything uncomfortable, but just because I wanted to not have to stick it out. My first instinct is to say, I've been here, I don't know who you are, but I've been here. But it's just little things like that; to the point where I would say things like that to co-workers and they feel like you're just being paranoid, you're a little too sensitive. And then those same people went walking with me and they'd be like, "Oh, no, you're not, they're definitely looking at you up and down." Or they would point out that guy just walked by and stared at you. Sometimes I would see it, sometimes I wouldn't.

Emotional effects of being subjected to Islamophobia.

The mistreatment that Holly has been subjected to over the years has been quite impactful emotionally. In describing the emotional effects, Holly quoted a passage from

Maya Angelou: “people won’t remember what you said, and they won’t remember what you did, but they will always remember how you made them feel.” Her narrative is filled with negative feelings of disbelief, dejection, and discouragement. She expressed being subjected to Islamophobic acts made her feel vulnerable, hurt, disrespected, and humiliated. And it subsequently made her feel sorrowful, agonized, angry and resentful. She explained:

> That stuff is hurtful at its core. They forget that the way they're treating a person, at the end of the day, is affecting a person, an actual person's life. This is not stuff that you forget. The reality is that for me and maybe for my sisters, it was hard to see something that was so much part of our lives, just our faith which was such a personal thing, and it really shouldn't affect anybody else, just be attacked on a daily basis by people who didn't bother to get to know anything about it or care to understand that they were actually ignorant in their understanding of it. That was almost hopeless. If you're going to be hateful, at least don't be ignorant about it, at least have a reason.

The most salient feeling throughout Holly’s narrative is a sense of frustration. She is frustrated she has been maltreated because of her faith and she is exasperated by the hypocrisy in America. While freedom of religion is a constitutional right, she has been maltreated and discriminated against because of her religion. She has experienced countless situations in which she was approached by strangers trying to convert her to Christianity. She said:

> Can you imagine if I was doing the exact same thing, wearing hijab, trying to hand out pamphlets, talking about my religion? Can you imagine if I was going

> up to people and asking them have you read the Quran? Let me hand you this piece of paper with a verse of the Quran and tell you about how wrong you are in the way you're living your life. The hypocrisy of it is the most frustrating to me. There's this double standard, and I've not experienced it anywhere else outside of the United States that people try to proselytize their religion on the street that way.

Feelings of fear and threat, on both sides, are also integral parts of Holly's narrative. She is well aware of the fear of Muslims in the society and how it has partially caused and amplified Islamophobia. She stated, "people look at me as a threat to their ideology, to their livelihood, to their economy and in some ways to their future." She also spoke to the fear within the Muslim communities and the real dangers that they face. She described the two incidents in which two Muslim men were targeted and killed:

> I remember those two stories made me feel so nervous and I was not even scared for my life but having to accept that that could happen to any of us. I remember being most upset, felt like I was living in hell and these stories were all over the news.

While acknowledging the sadness, frustration, and indignation, Holly also described feelings of powerlessness, defeatism, and desensitization. She and her family have been subjected to these dynamics for so long and so frequently that, to some extent, it has been normalized for them. She believes that she has suppressed some of her feelings and forgotten many of the negative interactions in order to be able to live a "normal life," and function. She has adopted the habit of just smiling, or as she framed it "an outer shell of smile and happiness," in reaction to bigotry as she needs to maintain a

sense of normalcy and “pick her battles.” She said: “people tell me that I offended them because of the way I choose to dress. It doesn’t make sense, but you get to a point where you’re like that’s fine, I don’t care anymore.”

However, as it is true for most complex situations, Holly’s feelings and reactions are also complex and conflicting at times. Despite all her negative feelings and her sense of hopelessness, Holly has been able to feel resilient and empowered by some of these experiences. She stated “in the beginning, I was more alarmed, and the world was such a scary place. I think once you've experienced it so many times, you start to learn how to play it.” She frequently illustrated due to her maturation, education, and life experiences, she has learned about her rights and the legal system, as well as ways to stand up for herself and self-advocacy. She shared how the negative interactions influenced her major decisions and empowered her to make choices that positively changed the course of her life. In other words, she has used the defense of sublimation in order to cope with Islamophobia by turning tragic events into positive and socially accepted choices that may have a calming effect (Vaillant, 2011). She explained:

> I believe that my experiences pushed me to move to a place that I found to be decisively more progressive. I think that the experiences drove my decision to study what I did and to work in the field that I did […] I wanted to work in a place that was decidedly more progressive, and I wanted to work on issues that got me out and were very international in nature. So regardless of what I ended up doing, it would require me to be in a bigger city with more open-minded people.

Holly recognizes the growth, empowerment, and resilience in her, and views it as a positive force in her life. She explained:

> I was always the quiet, scared, weak one. And I think I could have easily remained that person if I hadn't gone through some of my own experiences. And so sometimes I just feel grateful that I am able to handle things at a level that is above my age. It's these life experiences that have shaped me to be able to understand and I handle myself in a better way than I think I could have if I had grown up in a city where everybody looked like me or where people were very tolerant and understanding.

Categories of Meaning

Hijab makes me empowered but unsafe.

Hijab has been a complex object for Holly; it has played a central role in her life and has represented various internal meanings at different points. She finds hijab an immensely empowering tool that has facilitated her individuation and improved her sense of self. The decision to wear hijab was a personal and very independent decision for Holly. She felt empowered and integrated by the ability to make a decision that impacted all aspects of her life and defined parts of her identity; for her, this was the onset of the formation of independence and development of a strong sense of self. Though Holly's parents were proud of her decision, they expressed concerns regarding the implications and the potential consequences of wearing hijab. Yet, Holly felt strong enough to enact her decision which helped her establish a positive sense of self and a clearer understanding of her identity. She views herself as an independent and empowered individual who was not only undaunted by looking different than her peers but embraced

the visible differences and valued the religious significance of it. Considering that Holly lived in a geo-politically conservative and an area lacking diversity, her decision to become visibly Muslim took courage and exhibited a great amount of self-confidence. Holly's physical uniqueness helped her become aware of her unique qualities; hijab represented Holly's individuality and subjectivity, clarified what mattered to her the most, and helped her develop a more positive and confident self-image:

> [Hijab] has given me a lot of confidence because I think in a scenario in which I had not worn hijab, I would have focused on other attributes of life, like my weight, the way I dress, my hair, etc. Being a hijabi, all of a sudden, gave me this cover. It put me at this different level, different status. It reminds me to be on better behavior.

Wearing hijab enabled Holly to develop a positive religious identity as well. She started wearing hijab during the Bush administration in the era of the "fight against terror" and during the Iraq War. She shared, "when I heard people badmouthing Islam, quoting books, quoting things that had actually nothing to do with Islam and they didn't even know that I am Muslim, I decided to wear it." Holly used hijab as a means to portray a more positive image of Islam and to invite people to ask her about her faith in order to correct some of the misinformation. The decision to not only reject the misrepresentations, but to actively fight against it, placed Holly in the position of power and control, and generated an increased sense of self-fulfillment for being the "face of my religion." To Holly, the effort to portray a positive image of Muslim women was also a tool to reconnect with people around her. Starting to wear hijab was the onset of Holly's long-standing sense of being alienated and rejected. Her choice to look different did not

negate her need to belong and she used hijab as a connecting bridge. Hijab granted her the opportunity to show that she was not different from the majority of Americans. She began to discuss her interests in politics, art, and history in the hopes of reaching more inclusivity. Holly explained that her intention was "to represent the nexus between my religion and its compatibility with a western country."

Despite Holly's positive associations with hijab and the sense of pride and fulfillment that wearing hijab has generated for her, she is well aware hijab has made her a target for Islamophobic attacks. She believes that most of her negative experiences, at airports or in the workplace, were triggered by her wearing hijab and being visibly and unapologetically Muslim. The discrimination against hijabi Muslim women became acutely clear to Holly when one of her sisters stopped wearing hijab and suddenly, most of the mistreatment that she had previously been subjected to, specifically the additional security screenings at airports, completely halted. She shared:

> Sometimes, I forget that I am wearing hijab, it is part of my identity. For me, it's like wearing a jacket or wearing pants. You forget that this is the first impression that a lot of people are having. But I get stared at a lot, I get stared at everywhere I go. And, in a sense, I definitely know it's because I'm a hijabi.

Holly finds it conflicting that an object that is meant to be a personal representation of her faith, ultimately fostering many positive feelings and meanings for her has been weaponized and used to subject her to prejudice and discrimination. Hijab has been an integral component of Holly's identity while it has made her life unsafe and more challenging. On the one hand, Holly has utilized hijab defensively to fight against the negative feelings associated with the vilification of Muslims and has used it as a

connecting tool to cope with the othering and dehumanization that she has faced; and on the other hand, hijab has perpetuated the very maltreatment and abuse that she has been trying to fight against. Holly's sister, for instance, no longer needs to battle Islamophobia -at least not to the same extent- because she has stopped wearing hijab. For Holly, the religious and personal significance of wearing hijab outweighs the risk that it poses and despite all the hardship, she has decided to continue to wear it. Continuing to wear hijab has enabled her to visibly protest Islamophobia while it represents her strength to tolerate prejudice and bigotry and not surrender.

My gender and race subject me to discrimination as much as my faith does.

Islamophobia against Holly highly intersects with misogyny and racism. It is not only her faith but also her gender and skin color that make her subject to harassment, bigotry, and discrimination. Holly, and her family, have endured ongoing suffering due to their religion and for being visibly Muslim, which has influenced various aspects of their life. Holly is also aware that in addition to her faith, her skin color, as well as her gender have also made her a perpetual target for maltreatment. Islamophobia is not blind to racism and xenophobia, and Islamophobia against Muslim women in particular, is highly interwoven with misogyny. Muslim women who wear hijab stand out in the society for visibly practicing their religion which, for many, it is not only offensive that Islam is being "promoted" in such explicit ways, but they also find it threatening that a woman is not defeated enough to hide her beliefs. Holly's experience is not an exception in this regard. She has been subjected to misogynistic behaviors as well as racist tendencies

throughout her life which, at times, were interwoven with Islamophobic acts and at other times were separate from it. She shared that she often wonders:

> Are they treating me this way because I'm Muslim, is it because I'm brown or is it because I'm a woman? […] I think if I had not even been Muslim, I would still have faced challenges just because of the way that I look, just because of the fact that I believe that I should be as educated as the male counterparts in my classroom, and I should have every opportunity, and I should get paid as much as my male counterparts.

On multiple occasions throughout her interviews, Holly mentioned that there still exists a perception that the dominant culture in America should consist of "blonde hair, blue eyes, white people." She believes there has been a longstanding fear that the minorities, those who are from a different race, background, and religion, would gradually eliminate the "dominant groups."

Holly views herself as the embodiment of danger and a threat for many; her very existence is perceived as menacing and alarming. Holly has chosen to be Muslim and to visibly practice her religion, which is a source of empowerment and resilience for her. However, it is quite disempowering to be discriminated against for what one cannot control, which in this case is race and gender. Her sense of empowerment in comparison with the wave of hatred she faces for what she cannot and should not change, is somewhat weak. Holly recognizes her ego-strengths in dealing with different types of prejudiced and discriminatory behaviors; she feels confident that she is able to stand up against them and not change the way she practices her religion, or her lifestyle. In other words, Holly is confident that she will not "surrender." However, on a deeper level, she is convinced that regardless of what she does or how she presents herself, she is perpetually

targeted, and the othering and discrimination are never ending. In addition to how frightening it is for one to view herself as a “convicted” target, this belief has had a defeating effect on Holly and has made her feel hopeless and consequently somewhat desensitized and apathetic. At times, she asks herself the questions, what is the point of caring and fighting if one has already lost?

I accept the lack of belonging.

The lack of belongingness and acceptance by the society is evident in Holly’s account, and though she is well aware of it and is cognizant of the internal meanings of being rejected, she seems to have been able to accept it and not allow it to influence her life in any major ways. The pervasive othering and dehumanization of Muslims have made Holly feel despondent and frustrated, and consequently isolated and alienated. Holly feels a strong connection with her immediate family and friends; however, despite the efforts she has made, she has had difficulty establishing a sense of belonging at a macro level and her sense of alienation has persisted. She explained:

> The question I get asked the most in my entire life is “where are you from?” And when I say I'm from America, I get the “but where are you really from?” It’s the implication that you don't actually belong here. You are new to this country. Even the comments like “I didn't expect you to speak English” imply that. There is a large majority of the country and of the world that still has not been able to wrap its head around the fact that this is what America looks like.

She has experienced the othering and the implication that she does not belong both in her personal and professional life, and in subtle and explicit ways. The need to feel a sense of belonging and unity with one's community and environment is one of the basic needs that has not been fulfilled for Holly, which contributes to her overall sense of sadness and dejection. Intellectually, Holly understands the psychological underpinnings of othering in relation to creating an enemy to become the recipient of one's innate hatred and aggression. She said:

> Muslims are the enemy today. Yesterday it was Blacks. People are the enemy, tomorrow it might be the Chinese. There is always going to be some other group that is fighting or being marginalized.

However, the intellectual understanding of a destructive phenomenon often does not ameliorate or diminish the detrimental emotional effects of it. Holly feels isolated and detached from her country and the general population, and struggles with finding ways to connect and fit in. She is rejected because of her religion; her race and gender and the lack of belongingness has made her feel frustrated and fearful. Without roots and a strong sense of connection, the world can feel like a scary place; Holly has strived to fight against the alienation through dispelling misinformation and presenting a more positive image of Muslim women. Her wish is to undo the othering and vilification of Muslims in the hopes that she will be accepted and find a sense of belonging. Holly's pattern throughout her life has been to stand up against injustice, harassment, and bigotry. She strives to incite a change and not be defeated by the overwhelming forces that she fights against. However, defeat seems inevitable as her efforts have not ameliorated her situation in any meaningful ways. She said:

> You stop caring. You stop fighting, you get so tired you just want to be left alone. Hijab still does what it did in the beginning, people still ask questions and I'm still happy to answer but I can't convince every person out there. It gets to a point where you are just tired of it.

Furthermore, the lack of belonging and her sense of defeat have made Holly somewhat more prone to not noticing the microaggression that she faces daily. Holly is not only desensitized but, to some extent, she expects the maltreatment. The lack of recognition eliminates her opportunity to fight against the maltreatment, which further perpetuates the discriminatory dynamics and strengthens Holly's existing perception that prejudice against her is unceasing.

In spite of all the negative feelings and associations, Holly is not driven by fear or defeat. On the contrary, she seems well-integrated, composed and at peace. She feels the general sense of alienation and rejection, but she has been able to establish a connection with her co-workers and has many friends. Holly seems to have been able to compartmentalize these experiences and their meanings, and not personalize them. In order to sustain the compartmentalization and protect herself from the detrimental emotional effects of feeling rejected and perpetually subject to prejudice and discrimination, Holly utilizes the defense of intellectualization to think and understand these complex situations rationally with some emotional acknowledgement while she separates them from her personal being. As a result, Holly is able to acknowledge and speak to these troubling dynamics while exhibiting a degree of acceptance of them to lessen the destructive effects of them in her life.

Discrimination may never end but it won't change who I am.

Islamophobia has been a longstanding and constant part of Holly and her family's life. Islamophobia is a complex phenomenon and as it is common in such phenomena, its impact on Holly has also been complex and multifaceted. It has generated conflicting feelings in her and, on occasions, she has had contradictory reactions to it. Holly's feelings about being subject to maltreatment and abuse encompasses a full range of emotions; she feels sad and agonized, frustrated and perplexed, and, at times, empowered and resilient. Holly's approach to deal with Islamophobia has also changed over the years. She hoped to be a catalyst for change by standing up against prejudice, striving to portray a positive image of Muslim women, dispelling the misinformation, and battling the perpetrators. However, she gradually felt burned out, increasingly more defeated, and hopeless about inciting positive changes.

Hijab in particular, which is the visual representation of her faith, has been a complicated object for Holly. While hijab generated positive feelings of pride and self-confidence, it also makes Holly a target for Islamophobic attacks. She feels proud and empowered that despite the difficulties, she has continued to exercise her right to freely practice her religion. However, Holly's sense of empowerment is sometimes overshadowed by the general sense of hopelessness she feels as the result of the incessant othering of Muslims and her lack of belonging. The frequent and the magnitude of Islamophobic attacks, along with the sense of rejection that she feels, has made Holly feel as though she is perpetually doomed to be attacked and discriminated against. Yet, she has been able to differentiate these experiences from her being and maintain a strong sense of self. She explained:

> I'm still a person and in those moments, I'm less willing to engage and have to try to correct it or get into an argument or get into a fight or explain that person's ignorance to them. But that doesn't mean that it's gone. I mean, particularly in this environment, the last few years it has been extremely difficult. But the important thing to me is that I don't change because other people want me to be different. The fact is whether I was a hijabi or not, those people would still have ignorance towards me. It doesn't make a difference. I mean, it's an underlying problem. I don't want to give them a pass, but I don't want to do something that I would regret or become a bitter person.

Holly's ability to maintain a strong sense of self is manifested by her demeanor and her way of engaging throughout the interviews. In spite of discussing painful experiences, she maintained a positive attitude and exhibited passion and eagerness. She was energized and enthusiastic and openly shared her experiences as well as her conflicting feelings while showing insight and a deep understanding of such complex phenomena.

Holly's understanding of her experiences as well as her reaction to them demonstrates her sense of resilience. Holly is convinced that because of her either faith, or race, or gender (or all of them together), she is destined to face discrimination and bigotry, but she is confident that the discriminatory dynamics would not change who she is. Holly's strong sense of self and her unwilling to compromise demonstrates her strong ego. She has the insight and understanding of her needs, acknowledges the limits of society and still has the ability to successfully navigate her life. She has a clear sense of her value and belief system, and a deep understanding of her individuality which helps

her feel empowered and capable of facing hardship. Holly perceives the world around her as persecutory, unsafe, and menacing, but her internal world is steady and reliable. Islamophobia can have a suppressing and subjugating effect, but Holly is able to sublimate it and views it as a catalyst that has improved her sense of self and made her a stronger person. She is aware of her capacity to bear and cope with maltreatment, which makes the knowledge of the persistence of abuse, more tolerable and manageable. She explained:

> Our lives could have been so different had we grown up in a more progressive place. My sisters point out that maybe we wouldn't have been as strong women as we are now if we had been in a place where we never had to fight for ourselves. It's a valid point because I sometimes see other people and feel like why are you letting someone push you around? Stand up for yourself! It occurred to me that that's not intuitive to everyone because not everyone has had to do that out of necessity. It's about character building.

Case #2: Karen

Identifying Information.

Karen is a 51-year-old Caucasian female. She was born and raised in Michigan. She attended college in Washington DC and graduate school in Nashville, Tennessee, where she received her MBA degree. At age 31, Karen married a man of Egyptian descent and they have 4 children. Due to her husband's profession, they moved 15 times to different cities and states. Five years ago, they relocated to Florida where Karen and

her children currently reside. Karen describes her husband as abusive resulting in a profoundly unhealthy relationship. They separated about 4 years ago and they are currently in the process of finalizing their divorce. At this time, Karen does not work; she teaches at the Sunday school of a mosque. She identifies as upper middle class socioeconomically.

Karen was born into a Catholic family. In middle school, she started to learn about different religions and became interested in Islam. Even though there was a large population of Muslims in Michigan, she believes there were not enough resources for her to further explore her interest. Once she moved to Washington DC for college, she started to read and learn more about the religion of Islam; she contacted mosques, read the Quran, talked to Muslims, and educated herself and gradually converted to Islam. She shared that "I was in the Muslim closet for a while, then 9/11 inspired me to come out."

On wearing hijab.

Karen recalls she was flying to Atlanta when the terrorist attacks on September 11th occurred. She vividly recalls the rapid increase in verbal attacks and the upsurge of prejudiced beliefs and views against Muslims. This explicit demonstration of bigotry and hate, motivated Karen to become visibly Muslin by wearing hijab 4-5 years after she converted to Islam. She said:

> I loved it then. I made it a very mindful act, so when I put it on in the morning and I was ready to go out, I thought I'm putting this on because I am reminding myself to watch how I talk, and to watch my actions, and to be merciful to all. It really was a very intentional act. It was a very spiritual thing, and it was definitely more

> than just a cover. It was a reminder to me about who I wanted to be, and what I wanted to project to others about who Muslims were and what they were like. And that was wonderful. I'm sad that hijab is rarely like that anymore, there's so much baggage tied up with it.

Karen wore hijab for approximately 10 years, she then gradually stopped wearing it about 3 years ago. At first, she changed the way she wore it to make it easier for her scarf to come off in case someone tried to choke her with it. She then completely stopped wearing it except in the mosque and during Ramadan. The increased incidents of Islamophobic attacks, particularly the attacks that took place in the presence of her children made Karen highly fearful for the safety of her children. This fear, in large part, was the reason why she stopped wearing hijab. She remembers hoping, “maybe if I take it off, then I won’t be targeted as much and hopefully things are safer.” The other contributing factor that led Karen stop wearing hijab was the negative reactions of her children. When her eldest son was 14 years old, he refused to go out with Karen if she wore hijab and her daughter was mocked at school due to Karen covering her hair. After Karen took off hijab, the occurrences of hate-driven attacks significantly decreased, however, Karen faced a backlash from her husband and the Muslim community.

Taking off hijab has continuously been conflicting for Karen. When she first stopped wearing it, it felt as though she was “cheating or sneaking by.” She shared, “it took me about a year before I just didn’t debate in the morning whether I should put it on or not; it wasn’t easy to just discard it because I had worn it for so long.” However, she has continued to struggle with guilt about not fully practicing her religion, and a sense of shame in relation to “not standing up” for herself. She stated:

I really have mixed feelings about it. I have no problem wearing hijab going to the mosque, but I don't see myself ever wearing it full-time. I would like to be able to wear it on some days and not wear it other days, but I don't think that we are there yet.

Narratives of Islamophobia.

When Karen first started wearing hijab at work, her coworkers were shocked and baffled, her supervisor inquired about it and she believes that her colleagues started to act "weird" around her. There was a sense of suspicion and uncertainty about how to interact with her which Karen contributes to 9/11. She believes that people at work started to wonder, "what is she going to do? Is she going to blow up the building? And I was like I failed organic chemistry, you're pretty safe!" Through her closer co-workers, she learned that some of her other colleagues were reluctant to work with her because she is Muslim. When she wore hijab in public places, Karen noticed the change in people's behavior toward her. She also recognizes the treatment of her in public places, such as grocery stores, changed drastically. She shared that she has been followed through stores; she has been called a terrorist; people around her started to make remarks about Bin Laden and Al Qaeda; and her hijab was pulled on multiple occasions. She shared "I've had people banging on the window of my car and say go back to where you came from and I'd say so you think England would take me?!"

For several years, Karen received stock bonuses annually. However, once she started wearing hijab at work, the annual bonuses stopped. When Karen inquired about it,

she was told that the bonuses are not given to people at her level anymore. Karen states that she can never be fully certain of what precipitated this change but finds the timing of it curious. Her request to be promoted was also declined more than once. Then she has been in situations in which she was awarded an accommodation or a prize and was told by others that she only received it because she is the "token Muslim." She stated:

> There was a lot of talk like if you weren't Muslim, they would have offered you this but also because you are Muslim, they can't deny your request. You don't know what the truth is. It's really tough to prove stuff like that in the workplace unless someone is willing to come forth and say I heard Bob say that they are not going to promote you because you're Muslim.

Karen traveled frequently for work and recollects she would "randomly" be selected for additional screening when wore hijab. She recalls one occasion in which a male coworker of hers was carrying a pocketknife and he got through the security with no problem while Karen was pulled for additional screening. She explained:

> It was embarrassing but you would expect it. I would know when I got my boarding pass because it was marked, and it meant that it was going to take me longer to get through security. But when I took off hijab, the random selection stopped. It's like you were always on this display; they would put you there, they would wand you in front of everyone and sometimes pat down your hijab.

One of Karen's most outstanding recollections of Islamophobia, while wearing hijab, is when she and a friend were walking on a beach and "a very tall and intimidating man" confronted her and yelled in her face "Is this Jacksonville? You're not supposed to

look like this in Jacksonville." Karen still remembers the overwhelming sense of terror that she felt after the initial shock of this incident subsided. She said:

> He probably had guns in his truck. And in Florida, we have the stand your ground law, where if he came up to me on the beach and he shot me, he could plea that he was scared for his life because I wore hijab and he would probably get off in Florida, that's how the climate is here.

Karen's fear for her safety magnified exponentially when she had children and these incidents started to occur both in their presence and to them independently. She remembers people would make remarks on the streets when her children were with her or in a stroller, which alarmed and terrified her. She shared, "I didn't know how to protect my babies; I don't want anything to happen to them. I didn't want things that happened to me happen to them." But Karen's children did experience similar negative occurrences of being treated with hatred and prejudice. They too were subjected to derogatory and hateful comments. There have been numerous threats of violence against the mosque they attend, and a threat of mass shooting was made against their Sunday school. Karen stated:

> Kids at school would make comments about Muslims and they would know that they were Muslim because of me, because I would show up to parent teacher conferences or I would be in car line or I would bring in cupcakes and I would be wearing hijab. So, it was very obvious to their friends that they must be Muslim because their mom is Muslim. Kids are mean. I didn't realize that kids could have so much prejudices at that age, but I guess they can. My daughter told me that even in kindergarten and in first grade she was teased about being Muslim, and

> that shocked me. Because I guess I just assumed that it would happen later. She had a friend at school who hid that my daughter was Muslim from her mom.

Once Karen stopped wearing hijab, the direct attacks ceased, but she would still hear hateful and bigoted comments directed at other Muslims. She said, “people would confide in me about what they think about Muslims because they thought I was one of them.” She recalls when she volunteered to prepare food for the homeless, another volunteer talked about the school that Karen’s children attended and said, “it was run by Muslims who were trying to convert people and train terrorists.” When Karen goes out with her Muslim friends who wear hijab, she sometimes overhears the comments that people make about her friends. Comments such as; “what is she wearing and what is she doing here in Florida?” Karen has heard people call her friends “ragheads.” This is conflicting for Karen as it makes her feel both guilty about not being visibly Muslims and relieved for not having to deal with it anymore. She also recollects her neighbors’ reaction to her hijab:

> I know that my hijab has caused issues before. When I moved there, I wore hijab. There were people who would just give me looks and I had other neighbors who would say, “oh, she is perfectly normal, she is American.” But then during Ramadan one year, I made lentil soup, and got chocolate and we brought them around to a lot of neighbors, like a Ramadan gift. Then I noticed some people did not like it. Then when I took off hijab, I had this one neighbor and it bothered her because then she couldn't tell I was Muslim. She thought I was trying to blend in or trying to pass. Like they want to know I'm Muslim from 20 feet away. But if

> I'm not wearing hijab, they can't tell and that's scary for them, like what if we're all secret Muslims like Obama?!

Emotional effects of being subjected to Islamophobia.

The most prominent feeling throughout Karen's narrative is a sense of fear. The occurrences of Islamophobic attacks have negatively affected Karen's sense of safety and security, both for herself and her children. She describes it as "a very visceral fear for your life that there is an actual danger." Karen has been afraid of getting shot, being choked by her own scarf, or getting physically assaulted. She has also been terrified that her children would get physically and psychologically harmed. She feared her children could be physically attacked or even shot at Sunday school. She has made an effort to mentally prepare and protect her children who, she believes, are more "vulnerable" and need her protection. Given the reality of being Muslim in America, she helps them develop self-advocacy skills and resiliency while simultaneously warning them about the real threats against Muslims. She said, "you need to watch what you say, you can't joke about certain things, you can't be a pyromaniac and a Muslim." Karen shared that during the time she wore hijab, there were only a few places where she felt safe and protected. These places were typically Muslim-run stores or the mosque but otherwise, she lived in an ongoing sense of dread and fear:

> I felt like there was a target on my back and these incidents kept increasing and they were happening with my kids. It wasn't just me at risk, it was also my children at risk. My husband wanted to get a gun to protect us from Islamophobia

but that was the last thing I wanted in the house. I have boys who are curious who also have depression, I did not want that risk.

Karen also found the experience of being subjected to Islamophobia embarrassing and humiliating. She found it embarrassing that she was subjected to additional screening at airports, that she was singled out and pulled aside before everyone's eyes. She found it humiliating to be yelled at on the streets, and to be called a terrorist or followed and harassed in stores. Intertwined with her senses of embarrassment and humiliation is the feeling of confusion. When facing the mistreatments and possible discriminations, Karen often wondered about the "real" intention behind it. During the time when she wore hijab, she continuously wondered whether the maltreatment of her was driven by Islamophobia, or misogyny, or a true wrongdoing or shortcoming that warranted the negative reaction. She believes that her judgment was clouded, and her ability to fairly assess herself and accurately perceive her surroundings and understand social interactions were impaired. Ultimately, this self-doubt led her to a negative self-image. She stated, "there is always a level of doubt about did that happen because I'm Muslim or is it really what they are saying? Am I actually qualified or is there another reason?"

In experiencing Islamophobia, Karen feels othered and dehumanized. Being othered and the lack of belonging to one's community and society can generate feelings of isolation, fear and dread, and ultimately feeling insecure and unsafe. The implication that one does not belong, especially when it is done based upon one's way of dressing, can be deeply hurtful and distressing. Karen has experienced countless interactions in which she was assumed to be non-American solely because of her hijab. She stated:

> I would go to a store and they would assume I'm not from America because I wore hijab and they are like "your English is so good, I am so proud of you!" The assumption is that there is no such thing as changing religions, like whites cannot be Muslims from America. They would actually be surprised that I spoke English fluently.

Despite encountering heart-wrenching situations and being made to feel fearful, anxious, unsafe, humiliated and hurt, Karen is able to use humor in conveying her narratives. She uses humor as a way to make sense of some of these incidents and to defend against the painfulness and unfairness of being attacked due to her religion and the way she chose to practice her religion. Throughout the interviews, Karen often made jokes about her experiences which would also highlight the absurdity of some of these interactions and remarks, like being told to "go back to where you came from," or the suspicion that she would want to poison her neighbors. By using humor, Karen is acknowledging the harsh realities while she makes light of it to make the pain more tolerable. But she also believes she uses humor since, at times, it is the only available tool to cope with Islamophobia. To her, reacting negatively and responding with contempt would perpetuate the stereotypes and may even increase the risk that she already faces:

> I talk about [Islamophobia] mostly with my daughter as a Muslim woman to a future Muslim woman and honestly, we joke about it all the time and that's how we get through it […] At work, I would try to overcompensate and I would always have things like cookies in the meetings and I would be like I'm not trying to kill you, these are American Oreos! You have to use humor; you can't get angry back because you're just going to make it worse.

Categories of meaning.

I gave in, I must be a weak person.

A consistent theme throughout Karen's story is her self-perception of being weak due to her decision to stop wearing hijab, which she perceives as surrendering. She believes she has not only given up on fighting against Islamophobia, but under its pressure, she has disavowed parts of her identity and changed the way she practices her religion. Karen's senses of weakness and defeat, manifested throughout the interviews and while discussing various topics, are overarching feelings that influence different aspects of her life and have had detrimental effects on her.

Ever since Karen became visibly Muslim, she was subjected to contempt, threats, and harassment in her personal and professional life. Her children have also been taunted, teased, and mocked at school and threats were made against their safety. For many years, Karen lived in a state of anxiety, fear, and dread which exponentially increased as Islamophobia started to affect her children. Her anxiety and the increased attacks eventually resulted in Karen's decision to no longer wear hijab, which made her less of a target and granted Karen and her children a safer life. However, this was a costly and consequential decision. Following the decision to take off hijab, Karen's marital problems were exacerbated; and in order to avoid the potential criticism and rejection from the Muslim community, she felt compelled to keep it a secret. The tangible consequences and the secrecy, along with her sense of guilt for not fully practicing her religion flooded Karen with feelings of self-loathing and shame.

Karen's guilt and shame emerge every time she sees hijabi women on the streets which makes her think "they are brave enough to wear it and I opted out." The shame also resurgences when she witnesses or hears Islamophobic comments directed at other Muslim women. Furthermore, she feels guilty for not setting a good example for her daughter by not standing up against the Islamophobic ideology and continuing to practice her religious rules. She reported, after having participated in the first interview for this study, she started to "reexamine" her decision to not wear hijab. This is, by verbalizing her shame for not wearing hijab, she questioned her decision and ultimately, her fortitude.

Another contributing factor in Karen's perception of weakness and shame is her race. As a white-American convert, Karen believes that the Islamophobia she experienced differs significantly from what darker-skin, immigrant, or other marginalized Muslims face. She believes that her Islamophobic experiences have been less severe and less damaging than it has been for non-white Muslims. She recognizes that in spite of general bigotry against Muslims, she has had certain advantages because "I didn't have an accent and ultimately I have white privileges." Karen is either not perceived as a "real Muslim" because of her looks and skin color and is viewed as less threatening, or people simply do not feel as much hatred and contempt towards her because she looks "American." As a result, "they would usually cut me some slack." Moreover, she generally feels more confident and compelled to speak up against discrimination and prejudice which she attributes to her "white privileges." For her, these differences are highlighted in the disparity between her experiences and those of her children:

> I'm still white, I can take off hijab and I can blend in. For my kids, it's not as easy because I have an American name and they have not. Their names are Muslim

> sounding names. They look mixed, not as pale and not as traditionally white as I do, so that makes it more difficult for them. Two of my kids look more Egyptian and two of them look more like me and they definitely have different experiences based on that.

The different treatment Karen and her children have experienced is indicative of the important role that race and skin color play in Islamophobia. Not only is there less bigotry and prejudice against lighter skin individuals but they also feel more empowered to speak up against injustice and advocate against discrimination while darker skin individuals are exposed to more hardship and, perhaps, have more internalized powerlessness that can make them feel more subjugated and inhibits them from speaking up against their maltreatment.

Karen's recognition of lessened Islamophobia and her perceived capacity to speak up against discriminatory tendencies further contributes to her self-perception of weakness and disempowerment. Given that she believes she was subjected to less Islamophobia due to her white skin, she feels a greater sense of shame that she chose to no longer wear hijab. She feels she chose "the easy way out", she explained:

> I am incognito now because I'm white, I can just blend in. Even for the people who knew I was Muslim, they too think, well, she's not wearing hijab, so maybe she's not Muslim anymore. So, to them I'm OK again.

The tendency to invalidate the severity and seriousness of her own experiences is a notable component of Karen's negative self-image. It is critical to note that in abusive dynamics, whether it is domestic violence or Islamophobia -which Karen has experienced

both- the victims' experiences are often minimized and invalidated in order for the cycle to perpetuate. The invalidation can be internalized which influences the way abuse is perceived. It appears as though the internalization of invalidation has made Karen minimize the seriousness of her own experiences and, as a result, views herself as a disempowered and weak person. Islamophobia has negatively affected Karen's self-image in a deep and fundamental way. Consequently, she is self-doubting, and at times, a self-deprecating individual who looks down on herself for choosing safety over hijab. She lives with a sense of shame and guilt and so far, she has not been able to placate these negative feelings and make peace with her decision.

I am not a good Muslim if I don't wear hijab.

In addition to her general negative self-image, Karen has also developed a negative religious identity. The main contributing factor in her negative religious identity is not wearing hijab. Karen views herself as a "bad Muslim" who has given up and is not fighting for what is right. Although she realizes that she made the decision to take off hijab out of necessity, Karen has continued to question her decision and continues to deal with self-doubt and self-criticism.

Hijab in general has been a conflicting object, which has represented contradictory feelings and complex meanings in Karen's life. Despite the initial senses of inspiration and pride, Karen believes that wearing hijab made her a very visible target for harassment and Islamophobia. Hijab subjected her to scrutiny at airports, discrimination at workplace, and verbal and emotional harassment in public places. Karen believes that

the feelings of fear, embarrassment, and confusion that she experienced as the result of wearing hijab were unnecessary and could have been avoided had she not worn hijab. She is also aware that because she was visibly Muslim, she made her children subject to harassment and prejudiced beliefs. Throughout her narrative, Karen frequently referred to hijab as "an easy target" and stated:

> You just feel vulnerable. I felt like there was a target on my back all the time […] I feel like there has to be support groups like hijab anonymous, or non-hijabi anonymous or something. Because I feel like every woman who wears hijab faces some level of Islamophobia because of it.

Karen's decision to not wear hijab was followed by an immediate and significant decrease in Islamophobic attacks, which further highlighted the connection between hijab and Islamophobia for her. Additionally, Karen finds the very notion of hijab oppressing and misogynistic in nature. She finds it unfair that the burden of "being visibly Muslim" is placed upon women which continuously puts them at risk. She resents how much value and significance hijab carries within the Muslim community in that it is viewed as a criterion to be accepted as Muslim. She explained:

> [wearing hijab] is a big issue for Muslim women. If you don't comply and don't wear hijab that just disqualifies you as a Muslim woman. I mean, you cannot participate. You cannot be on the board of directors of the mosque. You should not teach Sunday school. All because of this piece of fabric, which I think is just such a burden, such a huge burden. There's this huge social expectation regarding what a good Muslim woman looks like and it always involves hijab. It's a burden put on women that men just don't have to deal with. It's a big test, if she wears

hijab, she's a good Muslim. If she doesn't wear hijab, obviously, she is a bad Muslim.

In spite of her very vocal and explicit objection against what hijab represents, Karen seems to have internalized some of the same viewpoints about hijab. Throughout the interviews, she openly and frequently spoke to her senses of guilt and shame about not wearing hijab; she referred to herself as a "bad Muslim"; and spoke to her continuous inner debate about whether or not she should wear hijab. On the surface, Karen condemns how hijab is viewed as the determining factor and criterion for how "good" of a Muslim one is; yet, at a deeper level, she, too, uses hijab as the evaluation tool and has reached the conclusion that she is not a good Muslim because she does not wear hijab.

The juggernaut of Islamophobic attacks negated Karen's initial feelings of pride and hope in relation to wearing hijab and made her feel disempowered and defeated. She was pressured to choose between safety and her religious dress code, and she chose the former. Although this was a reasonable decision for Karen, it generated many negative feelings and a distorted self-image. As a result, she minimizes her own experiences of Islamophobia; she doubts her strength and ability to tolerate hardship. She views herself as a weak person and questions her Muslimness. Karen is torn since she self-identifies as Muslim and a part of her is critical of the meaning of hijab, while she also tends to doubt herself and view hijab as the determining factor of Muslimness.

Muslims may in fact be what the stereotypes say about them.

In abusive and discriminatory dynamics like racism and misogyny, the victims are often at risk of internalization of what is projected upon them. It is common for victims to be made to feel inferior, weak, flawed, and undeserving of equality and proper treatment; and at times, these projections are internalized and become part of their identity. Victims of Islamophobia are also susceptible to internalized Islamophobia which is noticeable in Karen's narrative. She recognizes internalized shame about being Muslim in those who disavow parts, or all of their religious identity. Karen explained, "you just want to disappear; you don't want to draw attention." She also identifies a degree of internalized Islamophobia in her own children. Her eldest son refused to be seen with Karen when she wore hijab. He does not identify as Muslim and wants to change his name "so that he is not identifiable as Muslim." Although her daughter identifies as Muslim, she has an adversarial reaction towards wearing hijab. In addition to being exposed to Islamophobic ideology and behaviors, and negative stereotypes about Muslims, Karen attributes parts of her children's internalized Islamophobia to her marital problems, as they tend to associate their father with Islam. Karen stated:

> It's not like I'm going to love my son any less but it's sad that he feels like he has to do this. I don't want my kids to feel that they have to hide their Muslimness. This is part of their identity. Whether they become practicing Muslims or not, they're still culturally Muslims. It's just sad. I want them to have an authentic faith that is free of prejudice, but you can't believe in Islam and not fear Islamophobic reactions.

Karen also seems to have internalized some Islamophobic rhetoric and beliefs. Karen's internalized Islamophobia is evident in her negative self- and religious-identity, as well as her tendency to be highly critical of Muslims at times. In experiencing Islamophobia, Karen was made to feel inferior, flawed, ashamed of her religion, and deserving of maltreatment; feelings of inferiority, and shame seem to have been internalized in her and have become components of her self-image; she looks down on herself and views herself as a weak and disempowered individual. She understands she stopped wearing hijab in order to protect herself and her children, but she also states, "I feel like I am hiding and taking advantage of my white privilege." Karen views herself as a bad Muslim, who perhaps deserves the maltreatment from the Muslim community which partly stems from internalization of the notion that the victim "deserves the maltreatment."

Furthermore, Karen seems to be very critical of Muslims in general. She, like her children, associates her husband and their abusive relationship with his religion. That is, she has developed strong negative feelings towards Muslims due to the backlash she faced from their Muslim community following their separation. Throughout the interviews, she spoke extensively to the racism and misogyny that she has faced within the Muslim community and, at times, she appeared to be more focused on criticizing Muslims than on discussing external Islamophobia. Karen's negative interactions with Muslims are real and valid and have clearly been highly impactful. Her criticisms and denunciations are reasonable and legitimate, and her consequent feelings of disappointment, frustration and resentment are well justified and understandable. However, it is curious that while partaking in a study about Islamophobia, she tended to

focus more on Muslims' wrongdoings, flawed ideologies and costumes, and their "backward" lifestyle, which makes one wonder if due to the propagation of negative stereotypes and a degree of internalized Islamophobia, these experiences are disproportionately highlighted for her. In a way, she identifies with the aggressors in viewing Muslims as flawed and backward, who perhaps deserve to be maltreated, while she still self-identifies as Muslim and have raised her children to be culturally Muslim. Regarding converting to Islam, she said:

> I don't want to say I regret it because I have my children and I have many different experiences. But I also can look back and say my life would be a thousand times easier if I'd never converted […] I know I should say of course Islam is perfect, but I can't do that because there's Islam in theory and there's Islam in practice and they're miles and miles apart. And some of the most incredibly kind and generous people I know are Muslims. But then stereotypes exist for a reason. You see where those come from.

I live in two disintegrated worlds.

A sense of split is noticeable throughout Karen's narrative. This split and the lack of integration applies to more tangible parts of her life like the Muslim versus the non-Muslim community, as well as her internal world. She spoke to the perceived dichotomy between the Muslim and the non-Muslim worlds and her challenges with integrating the two. She views and conceptualizes these worlds as completely separate entities that she

moves from one to another, and even though she has connections to each one, she does not feel like she fully belongs to either. She stated:

> It feels like these are two worlds that do not integrate. You know, just like bi-racials talk about it and to some degree my kids experience it, like the way they interact with the Muslim community and relatives and the way they are with the American non-Muslim community. The expectations are different. But they feel much more comfortable in both because they are both their worlds, whereas for me, I was kind of adopted and now I can't go back, and I don't know if I want to.

In addition to the lack of belonging which can be distressing and anxiety-producing, Karen feels somewhat pressured by both sides and does not feel "good enough" either way. She gets harassed, attacked, and ostracized by the non-Muslims when she wore/wears hijab or publicly identifies as Muslim, while she felt tormented and rejected by Muslims following her separation. Hijab exemplifies and highlights this struggle for Karen. She talked extensively about how Muslim women get praised for wearing hijab by Muslims which makes them a target for Islamophobic attacks; and they get admonished by Muslims if they take it off while they may be granted an easier life by non-Muslims. Karen's marital problems and ultimate separation exacerbated her lack of belonging as she felt unsupported by both sides. She felt "judged" by Muslims and found their approach and mindset towards divorce misogynistic; and she felt blamed by non-Muslims for having converted to Islam and for "having brought it upon herself."

The lack of integration manifests itself in the way Karen presents herself to others and in her internal world. Throughout the interviews, Karen was vivacious, energized, and lively. She maintained a positive attitude and exhibited a great sense of humor.

Despite her cheerful affect, Karen shared deeply hurtful and challenging issues. She talked about her negative self-image, distorted religious identity, and admitted a degree of internalized Islamophobia. She relayed conflicting internal feelings, and contradictory viewpoints and perceptions in discussing her own experiences and those of her children, as well as her general understanding of Islamophobic tendencies and its effect on Muslims. The lack of external and internal integration seems to be one of the underlying reasons for Karen's deep feelings of insecurity, fear, shame, and self-doubt. She seems to have a fragmented sense of self and lack ego-integration. Karen is torn between two worlds that are not only unsupportive of her, but actively reject her. She has been harassed and maltreated for converting to Islam and practicing her religion visibly and freely by non-Muslims, while she is ostracized for ending an unhealthy and mentally abusive relationship by Muslims. She has been harassed by non-Muslims for wearing hijab and promoting a positive image of Islam, while she has been admonished and reprimanded by Muslims for worrying about her safety and the safety of her children and wanting to secure a safer and more protected environment for them. Despite the hardship and adversity, Karen has maintained a positive attitude, preserved some ties with both Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Ultimately, she still identifies as Muslim. However, there is an underlying sadness in response to the lack of belonging and a disappointment for being rejected. She feels isolated and alone and she blames both the external worlds, and her own self, for the lack of belonging.

Case #3: Marla

Identifying information.

Marla is a 28-year-old Middle Eastern female. She is of Arab origin. She was born and raised in a Muslim family in Syria and moved to America in 2013 when she was 20 years old. Marla initially lived in metro Detroit, Michigan. However, about two years ago, she and her husband relocated to Miami, Florida, so that her husband can complete his residency. Marla previously worked in the car industry in Detroit, but she stopped working once they moved to Florida. She is currently an undergraduate student, studying mechanical engineering. They are expecting their first child early 2021. Socioeconomically, she identifies as middle class.

On wearing hijab.

Marla started wearing hijab when she was in the fifth grade. Her sisters started wearing it when they were a bit older, but Marla decided to wear it earlier "because it was just something that we did." She attended a private religious school where wearing hijab was promoted and celebrated. Wearing hijab did not require much deliberation for Marla; it was a normalized act since her mother and sisters and additionally, all other females she knew also wore hijab. She stated, "it was exciting, we would have hijab parties and celebrate. It was like second nature and it was the norm there." She was also aware of the religious significance of wearing hijab, which was important to her. She spoke about the sense of satisfaction she gained from wearing hijab and being able to "practice my religion comfortably without any judgement."

Marla continued wearing hijab when she moved to America for about a year. Michigan has a large population of Muslims which was initially reassuring for Marla. However, during the first year she wore hijab, she felt ostracized and rejected by society. She encountered negative interactions with people whom she believed "assume things about you and don't talk to you in the same way that they do with others." She felt as though she was treated differently and was always looked at as if there was something unacceptable about her. More importantly, in spite of her qualifications, she did not find a job during the year she wore hijab. She slowly changed her style and started wearing hats instead of a scarf. She then completely took it off. Soon after she stopped wearing hijab, Marla found a job. She explained:

> I was the same qualified individual with the same resume and I finally got the job that I wanted. After I stopped wearing it, I did not feel isolated and looked at weirdly, I just felt more comfortable and was able to live a much more normal life. And I felt much safer because they were all these videos on the social media of Muslim women getting attacked. I guess I did it for the sake of having an easier life and it's unfortunate that I had to do it but it's the reality.

Narratives of Islamophobia.

The majority of Marla's Islamophobic experiences occurred during the time that she wore hijab. She was shocked and baffled by the extent of Islamophobia that Americans harbored and found it overwhelming and unbearable. Marla reports it was difficult for her to tolerate the way people looked at her on the streets and in public

places. She was isolated and her attempts to "blend in" and make connections with people seemed futile as it would not be reciprocated. She was subjected to unsolicited questions and discussions about religion which, she felt, were filled with misinformation and misunderstandings. She shared that she would repeatedly be asked questions like, "does your dad choose a person for you to marry? Why are you guys jihadists? Why does Sharia law ask you to kill Christians? Why does ISIS hate us and why do you guys not do anything about it?" Marla felt as though she could not escape from these questions. To her, every interaction she had with people would, at some point, result in her being asked about her religion and her personal beliefs. She continuously felt attacked and pressured to defend herself, her family, and her religion.

During the time that she wore hijab, Marla was unable to find a job. However, as soon as she took it off, she found the job she wanted. For Marla, this highlighted the discriminatory effect of wearing hijab on her. When she worked as a cashier in the interim, she had multiple negative interactions with the customers. The one interaction that still stands out is when a male customer yelled at her, "if we did not have Obama as the president, b**ches like you would not be in this country!" This incident was terrifying to Marla and it was one of the reasons she stopped wearing hijab. Following her decision to not wear hijab, there was a significant and noticeable decline of the glares of strangers, the random derogatory remarks, and a decline in the number of questions she was asked about Islam. Marla continues to face unsolicited questions people find out that she is a Syrian immigrant, but she states that it is not nearly as much as it was before.

Like many other Muslim women, Marla has been subjected to additional screenings at airports, which completely halted once she was no longer visibly Muslim.

Her mother, on the other hand, wears hijab and gets selected for additional security checks every time she travels. However, the maltreatment Marla's father and brothers have endured has been far worse than hers, which has minimized and diminished the emotional effects of the airport-related incidents for Marla. She said:

> The system is messed up big time. My dad and my brother used to get delayed at the airport for up to 10 hours for questioning when they used to have their green cards and they would just come from Syria to visit my aunt in California. They would be questioned for like 6, 8, 10 hours. My brother was 16, 17 at the time. But I guess being a Muslim male makes you suspicious. I have a brother who is French-Syrian. When he tried to visit us for the first time, just because he has a Syrian background, he was also delayed for 6 hours at the airport and we didn't know where he was. My brother had lived in France for 16 years but just having the word Damascus, Syria, in your passport, that you were born there, makes you a source of suspicion.

Marla and her family have been significantly affected by the Muslim ban. Her siblings who live in Syria, are no longer able to visit Marla and her mother and, due to the ongoing war in Syria, they are not able to travel there either. Their family has been torn apart because of their religion. Marla finds it unfathomable that her family is not allowed to travel to America to visit her "just like any other person who lives in the US and has families overseas who can just travel back and forth."

Marla is no longer visibly Muslim, and she often does not disclose her religion or her nationality. This resulted in a remarkable decrease in experiencing Islamophobia personally. However, she still hears the Islamophobic rhetoric in the media and from

people around her. Additionally, she hears about the accounts of Islamophobic attacks from fellow Muslims. She has heard Muslims be called derogatory names like “camel junkies, camel riders, goat f**kers, and ragheads.” She continues to feel pressure to defend her religion and once her religion is identified, she feels judged and looked down upon by others.

Emotional effects of being subjected to Islamophobia.

Marla moved to America with the preconceived notion and a fantasy she was moving to a utopia; a judgement-free land where there is no prejudice against people because of their differences in race, sex, gender, and faith. Marla’s initial reaction to being mistreated and discriminated against because of her religion and the way she chose to dress made her feel stunned and appalled. She was dismayed and felt disillusioned by the extensive and unexpected bigotry and prejudice against Muslims. She had hoped and believed that she was moving to a place where she no longer needed to worry about her safety for looking different and believing differently. Her great sense of hope transformed into a great disappointment. She was judged and discriminated against solely based upon her appearance and, as a result, she felt rejected and not welcomed. In addition to her shock and disbelief, she found the maltreatment and discriminatory incidents “downgrading and humiliating.” She felt excluded from the society and struggled with finding a sense of belonging. She believed she was viewed as inferior and was judged for wearing hijab. This generated a deep sense of embarrassment in her. The implication of inferiority along with the humiliation that she felt, in addition to feeling disillusioned, made her disavow parts of her religious identity by not wearing hijab and hiding that she

is Muslim. Her disappointment led her to somewhat withdraw from engaging with people.

Furthermore, Marla was subjected to what she felt like an incessant line of questioning about her religion and stereotypes about Muslims. The common theme for her in these interactions was the induced sense of being accused and guilty. Marla often felt attacked and berated which made her feel pressured to repeatedly try to defend herself. She initially felt compelled to dispel the misinformation and correct the misperceptions. She would engage in discussions about Islam, attempt to correct the propaganda, provide a more accurate explanation of Islamic laws, and paint fairer image of Muslims. However, she soon lost hope and only felt coerced to continue to explain herself in these unwanted and unwarranted interactions; she stated, “I feel like they were just asking these questions to embarrass me and shame me, they didn’t really want to know the answers.” To her, the assumptions had already been made; she had no desire to engage in discussions to clarify the misinterpretations and yet, she was frequently put in a position where people around her demanded an explanation. She stated that “it feels like you’re in trial and you’re the defendant.” What made these inquiries particularly unbearable was the conviction that her explanations did not ameliorate anything. She believes that those who subjected her to this line of questioning had no real desire to listen and learn.

At a deeper level, Marla felt a noticeable amount of fear and anxiety in relation to being subject to Islamophobia. She identified safety, or the lack thereof, as one of the major reasons why she took off hijab. Covering her hair and being visibly Muslim, made Marla feel as though she was continuously at risk of being emotionally and physically

attacked in expected and unexpected ways. She expressed feeling terrified when she was verbally attacked at work, and her sense of fear increasingly amplified as she watched the news and heard about the accounts of Islamophobic attacks against Muslim women. She said:

> I felt that people were looking at me like I was a terrorist, or I shouldn't be or work there because I came from a terrorist place. That's exactly how I feel when people are just looking at me, staring at me. But you see people look at conservative Jews and how they dress, they just look at them, I wouldn't say they're scared of them. They just look at them because they're dressed differently, but I didn't feel that was the same look I got. It was very different, felt different. I was scared and I could tell they were scared too; we were both scared.

A noticeable theme throughout Marla's interviews was her overall sense of frustration and aggravation. Yet, although at times she verbalized feeling "annoyed," "angry" and "frustrated," she resisted to further elaborate on these feelings. In spite of her frustrated tone, her visible aggravated facial expression, and body language, Marla denied experiencing these emotions and instead, insisted on feeling indifferent, apathetic, and even "care-free." She was able to acknowledge that as these incidents were occurring, she felt exasperated and infuriated; however, she was unwilling to further engage in a discussion regarding these feelings. Marla seems to be utilizing apathy defensively and as means to survive and carry on with her life. Remaining frustrated and angry when there is no real outlet or change generates internal pain and hardship and can become a barrier to one's progression in life. As a result, Marla has isolated the affect associated with her experiences, in order to diminish her internal pain and to make these occurrences more

tolerable and digestible. She speaks of her experiences matter-of-factly and seems to have difficulty identifying and expressing her feelings articulately. At one point during one of the interviews, Marla stated, “it doesn’t matter how I felt, and I don’t care anymore, I don’t want to care. I just want to live a normal life.”

Categories of meaning.

The world has disappointed me, now I have no expectations.

Due to the ongoing war in Syria, Marla emigrated from her home country with the hopes she will find freedom and peace elsewhere. Immigration is a distressing process which became unnecessarily more challenging for Marla as she faced a significant and unexpected wave of rejection and hardship in America. Her hope and sense of optimism quickly turned into despair, dismay, and disappointment as she was subjected to Islamophobic and xenophobic attacks. Marla felt an overwhelming sense of disillusionment, while she struggled to find a job to support herself and find ways to assimilate and adjust to her new life. The overpowering juggernaut of external factors that contributed to Marla’s negative experience made her feel subjugated and defeated; and it ultimately resulted in her internal withdrawal, disengagement, and the conviction that the external world will always disappoint her.

In addition to the general public’s mistreatment of Marla, her recognition of the existence of systematic Islamophobia and xenophobia has significantly contributed to Marla’s sense of disappointment and hopelessness. She spoke extensively about the role of the American media in the propagation of Islamophobia and spreading misinformation

about Muslims and Islam. She finds it unfathomable that the misinformation about Muslims is broadcasted overtly and publicly, and Muslims are misrepresented and portrayed negatively in the news, in the movies and tv shows. The magnitude of broadcasting Islamophobic rhetoric has made her feel powerless and hopeless. She is one person facing a tsunami of misinformation and misrepresentations, she said:

> The most weird questions I used to get usually came from people who just learn their information from the sources like the media or the movies, probably Fox News. Like on Netflix, there are so many shows I can mention that they just show Islam as a horrible religion, and show Muslims as criminals that everybody hates. I think the influence is big and the damage is done […] When you come here and see what the media is doing, it's too much. And Americans are usually very affected by the media and believe what they see and hear, and you can't change that. So, eventually you just lose hope.

Additionally, Marla has been highly affected by Donald Trumps' Islamophobic policies. Because of the Muslim ban, Marla has been separated from the rest of her family. She also strongly believes that Trump's hate-laden and divisive rhetoric have legitimized and magnified aggression against Muslims and her safety is now at risk as the result. Once again, Marla feels quite powerless facing the magnitude of Trump's divisiveness and promotion of violence which affects her on a very personal level.

The end result for Marla is a sense of disappointment, hopelessness, and withdrawal from the world. She has lost hope in the possibility of receiving a fair treatment and justice in either her home country or her chosen country. When prejudice and bigotry are promoted in vast and systematic ways, and are perpetuated by powerful,

external forces such as the media or the president, the recipients of such prejudiced behaviors are made to feel little, powerless, alienated, hopeless, and helpless. Marla is made to feel all these negative feelings which has resulted in her ultimate withdrawal and her pervasive sense of hopelessness about society and her lack of expectations.

Being a Muslim is an impediment to succeed in America.

A major theme in Marla's experiences is feeling disappointed and disillusioned due to noticing Americans' deeply seeded Islamophobia, interwoven with racism and xenophobia. As a result, she believes her religion will hinder her progress and success in America. Marla moved to the United States hoping she would live a free and peaceful life; but through her negative interactions, she came to believe her wishes to live a free life with a sense of normalcy are improbable as long as she is identifiable as Muslim. Through her personal experience, Marla has learned that being recognized as Muslim in America subjects one to contempt, prejudice, and bigotry and it also impedes one from advancing in life and accomplishing goals. For Marla, hijab is the paragon of this belief. Due to being visibly Muslim, Marla was subjected to disapproving, judgmental, and accusatory looks. She felt ostracized and struggled to make connections with people and, consequently, she had difficulty making friends. When she did engage in conversation with others, she often felt compelled to defend her faith and ethnicity. Furthermore, in spite of her ongoing efforts, Marla was not able to find a job while she wore hijab.

Coping with the psychological effects of being accused and rejected by society was challenging on the emotional level but not finding a job caused financial constraints

and significantly hindered her goals in a tangible way. Marla needed a job in order to accrue work experience to both find a more secure and long-term position and apply for school. As a result, she felt compelled to remove the most visible sign of being Muslim and stopped wearing hijab. Marla's life improved following her decision. She found a job, her social life expanded, and she was not subjected to as much scrutiny from people. She said:

> I wasn't happy that I had to do it. I wasn't happy that I was forced to do it. I have no country to go back to because of the war in Syria. And I needed to live here and support my family and just make a new life for me. So, I wasn't happy about it, but it's something I had to do, I don't regret it. I would do it again […] I think it would have been much harder for me to have a normal life if I continued wearing hijab. I wouldn't have made the progress I made in the same time period. I think it would have taken me longer, if ever.

Marla is cognizant that Islamophobia intersects with xenophobia and racism. She is fully aware that her skin color and her nationality are contributing factors in the formation and amplification of prejudiced beliefs and discriminatory behaviors against her. She is aware that similarly to Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism can potentially impede her progress in America. However, she believes that the more prominent and destructive factor in experiencing discrimination was her religion, and, at the time, hijab "outed" her as a Muslim. She stated:

> It's my headscarf, then my accent, and because I'm Syrian. There is always something. But after taking off hijab some of it, like the looks that I got or feeling isolated decreased. But I think some of it is just not connected to the hijab itself.

It's connected to the culture, like just being a Muslim woman, even if you're not wearing hijab.

Marla strongly believes being a Muslim in America causes fundamental disadvantages as it impedes one's ability to thrive. Marla is an ambitious and driven individual who moved away from her home country in order to have a better life. Yet, her advancement was obstructed due to her religion, her nationality, and her skin color. She was put in a position where she felt pressured to choose between embracing her religious beliefs publicly, or progress in life and she chose the latter. Marla's decision was born out of necessity and was a means to survive, create a life for herself, and reach a sense of normalcy and stability. She chose the more reasonable and viable option to self-preserve. However, in order to do so, she had to sacrifice and disavow a part of her religious identity, and, at times, even her nationality. This is the harsh and bitter reality that Marla has had to deal with and accept; though she feels saddened, disappointed, and hopeless by the injustice she has faced, she has worked to accept it as an unavoidable part of her life. Marla has given up hoping that the external world would help and support her, and has taken it upon herself to strive to improve her life.

If I avoid, I wouldn't need to deal with painful things.

As the result of experiencing prejudice and discrimination, Marla avoids stressful situations in order to decrease her distress, frustration and indignation. The most prominent example of her avoidance is her attempt to hide that she is Muslim in order to decrease the Islamophobic attacks. In spite of her internal senses of disappointment and

sadness, Marla stopped wearing hijab and stopped publicly identifying as Muslim to protect herself from the accusatory and suspicious glares, the incessant questions about her religion, and perhaps more importantly, to end the discrimination and find a job. Moreover, being viewed and treated like a convicted terrorist, or guilty of a crime further amplified Marla's sense of defeat and the need to use avoidance to self-preserve.

Marla expressed feeling disappointed and indignant for having to change the way she practices her religion, but she also verbalized that, to her, this was a necessary decision since her survival depended upon it. Furthermore, Marla is cognizant of the real safety risks that Muslim women face. This awareness is another contributing factor in her decision not to wear hijab. She shared that after Donald Trump was elected president, she asked her mother to wear a hat instead of hijab to protect her from potential attacks. Marla's experiences have taught her that she and her loved ones are safer when they cannot be easily identified as Muslim.

Marla's attempt to avoid or hide parts of her true identity transcends not being visibly Muslim and has extended to her active efforts to conceal her nationality and religion, and to avoid engaging with people discussing, what she perceives, as controversial topics such as Islam, and the Middle East. Marla feels "burned out" and hopeless about inciting changes and dispelling the misinformation and stated:

> If you just pretend that you didn't hear anything you won't have to go through the same conversation again and again, that feels pointless. I either let it slide now or just say something mild. Sometimes when my husband and I are at some gatherings, I would just hear how people talk about this subject and talk about

> people from the Middle East that just feels not right. But again, a long time ago, I decided that I'm not getting involved.

Another contributing factor to Marla's attempts to hide her nationality and religion, is the negative associations and stereotypes about Muslim women. Marla believes that Muslim women, especially those from the Middle East, are subject to more misogyny and maltreatment since they are viewed as oppressed, subjugated, powerless, and inferior. Marla asserts "Muslim women from the Middle East are viewed as slaves here." For many perpetrators of abusive dynamics, perceiving one as an inferior, grants the permission to treat them with more contempt and subject them to more abuse, or as Marla explained:

> I would say it has given some people the impression that they can treat me less or even be abusive towards me, verbally or otherwise, and expect me to just take the abuse and not say anything or react. They think I am more likely to take the abuse because I was brought up that way.

Marla's avoidance has strong protective implications. Her avoidance and efforts to hide have protected her from potential physical harm and/or discrimination. Furthermore, it has limited her engagement in unnecessary and distressing discussions and being subjected to misogynistic and abusive dynamics. Despite the unwanted constraints forced upon her, Marla expressed she feels empowered and liberated by her ability to not engage in "pointless" discussions and by being selective regarding who she discloses personal information such as her nationality and religion. In addition to feeling safer and more in control, she also believes that this strategy has enabled her to advance in her career and education. It is for this reason, in part, she feels proud of herself.

In spite of her verbal report of feeling empowered and content with her choices, Marla appears to, at times, suppress her negative feelings of frustration, indignation, and distress. Despite the visible signs of feeling frustrated and her previous comments, she denied experiencing such emotions and reported feeling either indifferent or empowered. However, it is evident feelings of apathy and defeat are a critical part of her story. She frequently referred to the hopelessness she feels in relation to dealing with Islamophobia, which has resulted in her sense of defeat. Becoming disinterested and the desire to avoid is an understandable reaction to the lack of change in the perpetuation of hate and prejudice. The need to choose self-preservation and survival over fighting a war that feels pointless and unwinnable is reasonable and rational. Marla seems to have accepted the defeat and found a way to not allow that to influence her life in noticeable and major ways. However, in order to perpetuate this dynamic, she needs to minimize and suppress some of her own feelings. Her ability to accept the reality and make a life for herself in spite of Islamophobia, as well as her ability to set boundaries and not engage in discussions that are distressing are Marla's strengths. However, her adaptive defenses of suppression and isolation of affect can be psychologically draining and difficult to sustain. This conflict is evident in her response regarding the future and feeling hopeful:

> I'm actually hopeful about the future but I'm not really sure. I mean, there are so many things that need to get done, like the Muslim ban, or in the politics, in general [pause] I think the damage is way too big for me to think of ways to change. It's, you know, I'm truly not sure [pause] I don't really know what else can be done, I don't think on a personal level I can do anything, so, I'm not really hopeful.

Case #4: Jasmin

Identifying information.

Jasmin is a 32-year-old North African female. She was born and raised in America, but her parents moved to the US from Egypt. Jasmin grew up in a predominantly Arab and Muslim community in Chicago. Her family observed the religious rules rigorously and had strong ties with the Muslim community where they resided. Their community mainly consisted of Palestinians and was a relatively closed community with strong internal connections and limited exposure and connection with the dominant culture. Jasmin attended schools with large Muslim populations and grew up mainly around Muslims. She went to a college and Law school in Chicago. She worked at a small firm following graduation that was run by Muslims; she then worked at a much larger firm that, per Jasmin's account, was predominantly a white firm.

Jasmin is married and has 3 daughters. Her husband is South-Asian, and their children are bi-racial. About 2 years ago, Jasmin and her family moved to a small town in Georgia from Chicago. Jasmin currently works part-time as a self-employed lawyer. She identifies as middle class socioeconomically.

On wearing hijab.

Motivated by preaching she heard at a funeral of an adolescent girl, Jasmin decided to wear hijab at age 9. The message conveyed at the funeral was that people can

die at any age and it would be better to start practicing your religious rules sooner. Although most young girls start wearing hijab around puberty, Jasmin wore it earlier and has been covering her hair since then. She recalls that some relatives and adults in the community reacted negatively to her wearing hijab at such a young age and questioned her decision. However, her mother, who also wears hijab, classified them as non-religious and encouraged Jasmin to continue wearing hijab. She expressed that she was "excited and happy" that she was able to fully practice her religion and felt very strongly about adhering to the religious rules.

For the past several years, Jasmin has been wearing a turban instead of a scarf. She shared she wore it instead of a scarf at a work function and her co-workers, who were predominantly white at the time, "loved" it, which made her feel "white people like my turban more than my scarves maybe this will make them less racist." She shared that after they moved to the south, "I don't feel comfortable wearing my scarf anyway, so I keep wearing my turban." Jasmin is somewhat conflicted about the way she has chosen to cover her hair. On the one hand, she has continued to practice her religion, which is crucial and invaluable to her. On the other hand, she is aware her decision was highly influenced by past negative interactions and was somewhat coerced. She relayed her thoughts about wearing a turban:

> I feel like people can't identify me right away as a Muslim, so, I might be wrong, but I feel like I don't look so different to people, white people specifically. I mean, I feel more comfortable in public, especially here in the South. But I don't know, it doesn't feel like full hijab. So, I feel kind of bad, I feel like it's fallen short on what I should do. But then I also feel more comfortable. I've noticed, people who

> take off their hijab do it in stages where it's usually like their hair starts to show, and then they start wearing hats and then they don't wear it. So, I'm hoping I'm not on that spectrum.

Jasmin's conflict about wearing hijab extends to her daughters as well. Her daughters are currently preschoolers and are too young to have to face this dilemma. However, Jasmin is fully aware that in the next decade, she and her daughters will have to make the difficult decision of how to safely practice their religion in relation to wearing hijab. She stated:

> I know it'll be hard. I hope the world will be a little bit better by the time they're older, but I would like them to wear hijab because I'd like them to always remember that they're Muslim and I'd like them to not be afraid of discrimination and to remember that we're here temporarily and this life is short and above all, we're Muslims and we're souls, and we're going to be returned back to God and you know, even if people don't like you, it's OK because it is just passing days. But if we are here in Georgia, I wouldn't want them to wear it if their safety was a question like if there were attacks on people, you know, like I don't know what's going to happen with the election. I wouldn't want them to be noticeably Muslim if it goes a certain way and people are upset.

Narratives of Islamophobia.

Jasmin's experiences of Islamophobia are longstanding, extensive, and highly intersect with racism. Jasmin's first encounters with discrimination were witnessing the

treatment of her mother, who is a hijabi women, in public places. She recalls the looks on the streets and the random remarks. She vividly recalls that when she was 5 or 6, a store owner refused to sell food to Jasmin and her mother. Her mother's reaction was that of anger and frustration. Jasmin also reports that throughout her childhood, her neighborhood, which was primarily a Muslim neighborhood, was continuously under surveillance. Residents of her neighborhood lived in a constant fear and dread of FBI informants and were wary of "unmarked cars with huge antennas that were constantly driving around and seemingly unoccupied buildings." For several years, Jasmin suspected that the fear of FBI surveillance was "just paranoia;" however, as an adult, she learned the surveillance was not a conspiracy theory and was in fact "the largest Muslim surveillance project outside of 9/11 operated by the FBI." The residents of her neighborhood were subjected to an ongoing surveillance for about 30 years and, in Jasmin's account, "they never found anything."

Jasmin was subjected to discrimination and prejudice by her teachers at high school. She visibly noticed the favoritism for lighter skin pupils and noticed the divisive nature that was present at school. Even though at the time, she was not fully able to identify and understand it, Jasmin recognized the inequality. Jasmin described the incident in which she was accused of plagiarism by her AP Literature teacher because her essay was "too well-written." After weeks of investigating, the teacher finally verbally quizzed Jasmin on the content of the essay and accepted that Jasmin had not plagiarized, stating "you probably write so eloquently because Arabic poetry is very eloquent." However, Jasmin does not speak Arabic. Due to Jasmin attending a college with a large population of Jewish pupils, she continued to experience prejudice.

Jasmin reports that her most notable encounter with discrimination and prejudice was at work when she worked at a law firm that was primarily owned and run by white-Americans. When she was first hired, she noticed the company lacked diversity. She stated:

> I noticed that everyone there was white, the entire corporation, aside from the two secretaries. I immediately felt like that was odd and I was like they could not hire a single person of color? There were no minorities and I realized I was the highest paying employee of color and I was uncomfortable with that, but I tried to be nice to people, but I noticed that my supervisor would only give information to the white employees. Not once, not twice, every single time, only the white girl would know what was going on. Then I asked the brown secretary and she said, "I've been here for 7 years and she never tells me any of her schedule." She would also only socialize with white people and strongly favored them and when she went on maternity leave only the white girl got instructions. I'm a lawyer, I know what discrimination is. We were being treated clearly on the color line.

The discrimination at workplace also extended to the assignment of projects and evaluations. Jasmin and her white colleague were often assigned the same projects to collaborate with one another. Jasmin shared that her colleague usually received credit for the work that was accomplished collaboratively. Furthermore, only her colleague was asked to attend meetings to discuss the work they accomplished together. She spoke to the double standards by which the two of them were evaluated; Jasmin's mistakes were highlighted and magnified while her colleague's mistakes were minimized and downplayed. Additionally, she shared, "everyone in the company that was promoted was

white, there was never any person of color that was promoted." Although Jasmin believes this discrimination was mainly driven by racism, she stated that she cannot dismiss the fact that she wore hijab during this time and publicly identified as Muslim. On a few occasions when Jasmin made a complaint to Human Resources, her claims were dismissed. Jasmin describes the 2 years that she worked there as "the most terrible and traumatizing experience of my life." She also expressed that working in that environment and dealing with the ongoing discriminatory treatment of her was "more difficult than losing my dad."

Additionally, Jasmin has been exposed and subjected to hostility and animosity from the general population on the streets, grocery stores, shopping malls, and other public places. She reports that people would look/stare at her with contempt and, she hears random remarks about "terrorists" and "foreigners." At airports, she is often selected for additional screenings. She has been a victim of road rage, which she attributes to her hijab. More specifically, she was once detained at the Canada-United States border for several hours for no clear reason. She shared that she, her husband, and her mother were traveling back to the US when they got stopped at the border. They were asked to leave their belongings, including the car keys and their cellphones, in the car and were detained in a room with no windows along with many other Muslims. She explained:

> The Homeland Security agent took my husband in and spoke to him and questioned him. He had gone through our phones, gone through our wallets, looked at ID's, credit cards. If there was a business card with a Muslim person's name on it, he would ask who is this, how do you know him? What is your reason

> to travel? Etc. And then they finally let us go. Gave us back our phones, gave us no explanation for what that was, why they kept us there for seven, eight hours in a room with no food, no water, no explanation, in a room filled with Muslims and the few white people that were there, the Europeans with their red passports, they were in and out in like five minutes. And they were also not anxious because they let them park their cars and walk in and explain things to them. We were forcibly taken. And things like that are very traumatic. I think one hundred percent that it was because we are Muslim, because the room was only filled with Muslims.

Emotional effects of being subjected to Islamophobia.

Jasmin's initial reaction to maltreatment and discrimination is feeling disrespected and offended. To Jasmin, it is disrespectful and offensive that people make assumptions and pass judgments about her based upon the color of her skin and/or the way she dresses; she feels disrespected that her work has been undermined and she was not taken seriously professionally. She also finds many of the remarks that she has heard over the years extremely offensive and ill-mannered. Furthermore, she exhibits a great amount of anger and frustration associated with her negative experiences. She expressed feeling infuriated and indignant that her work, whether it was her essay in high school or her professional work, has been dismissed or appropriated. Jasmin has been a highly dedicated individual who has invested a great amount of time and energy into her academic and professional work over the years. Having her work dismissed, minimized, or even appropriated due to her race and faith is contemptuous and unbearable. Furthermore, there is a degree of powerlessness she has felt when encountering many of

these adverse situations. This disempowerment has perpetuated and magnified her anger and frustration.

Jasmin's most prominent emotional reaction to racism and Islamophobia are feelings of anxiety and fear. Her anxiety has been more situational, whereas fear has been an ongoing and chronic feeling. She talked about the anxiety she felt growing up in relation to the "rumors" of the FBI surveillance. At work, she struggled with fluctuating anxiety as she continuously felt monitored and under surveillance. She stated, "I felt like they were constantly trying to catch me in something, I was so anxious, they were trying to get me in trouble and later on I found out that it wasn't just a feeling." In both situations, Jasmin's suspicions about being targeted and watched came to be true, which verified and further intensified her anxiety. She also spoke to perpetually living with the fear that "something bad is going to happen." This persistent anxiety does not allow her to feel content or comfortable in most situations. Jasmin constantly feels watched and expects to be persecuted for being of a different race and practicing a different religion than the majority.

While fear and anxiety cast a shadow over her life, there are specific situations that are particularly anxiety-producing for Jasmin. For instance, traveling in general induces a great amount of anxiety. She has had numerous negative experiences at airports and has been detained at the border for several hours for no apparent reasons. She stated:

> [at airports] it's not just sometimes, they always have to check me extra. I'm always scared of that, it's very uncomfortable. I don't know where they're going to take me, it makes me very anxious. I get very anxious about traveling, I don't

> know if they're going to kick me off the airplane or something, I'm just very anxious about it all.

Anxiety stems from fear and Jasmin is fully aware of the intensity of her fear and anxiety. Her trepidation has an impact on her daily routine, decisions, and other aspects of her. The surveillance throughout her childhood, the tension in college, the discrimination at work, being detained at the border, getting subjected to scrutiny at airports, being a victim of road rage, and the other anxiety-inducing situations and interactions Jasmin has experienced have all evoked an ongoing sense of fear and dread in her. She shared she feels unsafe when she leaves her house and often asks her husband to accompany her. All of her accumulating experiences has led her to wear a turban instead of a scarf so that she attracts less attention. Moreover, she works remotely, in part, to protect herself from people who can potentially mistreat her. She said:

> [Discrimination] has caused a lot of anxiety for me, I literally feel like I have PTSD. I really do. I've worked with other white people after that and they were really nice, but I have so much fear and I'm very traumatized […] I worked with someone, like a therapist, and she helped me heal my heart a lot, she did a lot of self-love and she taught me self-compassion which helped with my anxiety, otherwise, I don't know how I could function.

Categories of meaning.

They can't hurt me if they don't see me:

The most outstanding and the overarching theme in Jasmin's account is her desire to hide. In a very literal way, Jasmine decided to not be seen in public in order to ensure her safety and decrease the discrimination that she would otherwise face. The Islamophobia to which Jasmin has been subjected, highly intersects with racism, and it has been very consequential in her life. Jasmin is unwilling to stop wearing hijab, and she obviously cannot change the color of her skin and her looks. As the result, she is convinced that she is always under surveillance and a perpetual target for Islamophobic and/or racist attacks. Given her life experiences, Jasmin ultimately believes the only way to feel safe is by becoming invisible.

The onset of her withdrawal from the society began in Law school. Given the majority of the student population was Jewish, she felt the persistent tension and was unable to make friends. She minimally engaged with her peers and limited her physical presence at school. While working at the white-majority firm, she made the decision to wear a turban instead of a scarf in the hope that she would draw less negative attention and make herself less of a target. Since she left the firm, Jasmin has been self-employed and working remotely in order to decrease her social presence and protect herself from potential harassments and maltreatment. She stated:

> Now I work remotely. People are wonderful because I have no accent. They can't tell that I'm brown on the phone. They know my name is different, but they don't know I wear a scarf and they like me, and they have been giving me great

> reviews. They just love me, they give tons of compliments, like you're so easy to work with, it's nice to hear that.

Jasmine's existing fear and anxiety were significantly heightened due to their relocation to Georgia. Jasmin held negative associations with the southern states prior to their move. Since they moved, she has been hypervigilant, anxious, and generally at risk, which resulted in her ultimate withdrawal from the society and her attempts to not be seen:

> I don't want a confrontation. I am very scared to go into stores here, I'm very scared to pump gas somewhere where people can see me, where I'm standing there. There's a lot of fear. I have genuine fear for my safety and it's an open carry state, people just walk around with their guns […] Here, people are very hardcore Trump supporters and I genuinely do not feel safe like I'm very, very, very, very careful. I only wear my turban. I don't go anywhere without my husband. I feel very cautious wherever I am. I am very conscious of my environment. I feel a lot of emotions coming off of people. They just look at me and I could see the disappointment or the distaste or the disgust or the disapproval.

Jasmin's heightened fear and the lack of safety are clearly evident in the way she speaks about her experience and explains her need to be invisible. She feels a visceral sense of fear and anxiety that she feels unable to contain or has difficulty finding means to defend against it which has made her to resign to physically removing herself from anxiety-inducing situations and places, which at this point is her entire environment. The world as a whole makes her feel frightened and in danger and she finds no viable options

to cope with it than to take refuge in her house with those she can trust. She relayed that she is ambivalent about whether she would want her daughters to wear hijab when they come of age and is also considering home-schooling them in order to protect them from Islamophobia and racism.

Jasmin's strong tendency to withdraw and becoming invisible is indicative of her utter hopelessness regarding a positive change and the possibility of reaching a sense of safety, security, and protection in the society. She views herself as the embodiment of risk and danger and finds only her physical presence to be enough to make her a target. The need to feel safe and protected are primitive and basic needs, and the unfulfillment of such basic needs can generate overwhelming amounts of fear and annihilation anxiety. Jasmin's fear for safety and her need to ensure it are overpowering and pervasive forces that impact all aspects of her life and take priority over her other needs, such as her need for establishing healthy social interactions and ties with one's community. However, though Jasmin's defensive withdrawal alleviates her anxiety temporarily, it strengthens her fear and annihilation anxiety in the long run, deprives her from forming healthy connections and practicing distress tolerance, and perhaps more importantly, it contributes and perpetuates her ongoing feelings of anger and resentment. Jasmin is fully aware of the unfairness of this situation. She is frustrated and disappointed that she is forced to go into hiding, and longs for a sense of normalcy in her life. Yet, her debilitating anxiety about the real dangers in her world, does not allow her to leave her safe space.

I was rejected; therefore, I reject back.

Jasmin's withdrawal from the world is her defense mechanism to fight against annihilation anxiety while it is partly driven by her anger from being frequently rejected by the society. While Jasmin has always felt a very strong connection with her immediate family and community, she has a longstanding history of feeling othered, alienated, and rejected by the society at large. Being perpetually rejected by her environment, has resulted in her own tendency and desire to reject it as well.

Jasmin believes that she was never fully accepted by the dominant culture and has always been viewed as an "outsider" and a "foreigner." Her first encounter of not being viewed as an American was in high school when she was accused of plagiarism for writing an eloquent essay. Her high school teacher made the assumption that Jasmine had translated her essay from Arabic and compared her with a peer who had just moved there from Korea. Throughout her adult life, Jasmin has encountered countless individuals who were shocked that she spoke English fluently and with no accent. While she was in a close proximity with her Muslim peers, Jasmin did not feel a strong need to connect with others; however, in college and Law school, as she moved away from her community, she felt rejected and isolated. The alienation was culminated at work, when she worked at a firm that lacked diversity and was primarily run by white-Americans. Jasmin said:

> Honestly, I never felt like white people accepted me. Like we were always otherized, I feel. They never wanted to be my friends. If they did it was very surface level. Especially in college and law school. I felt very odd man out in law school, I did not feel like I fit in at all, I felt very different.

Feeling rejected and the inability to establish a sense of connection with one's environment can create a wide range of feelings and cause different reactions and various outcomes. For Jasmin, she felt hurt and furious and took the rejection as a personal attack and injury and she felt the urge to reject back. For instance, she shared that there was a large population of immigrants in college but "I didn't really get along with them, I didn't really vibe with foreigners." As a way to cope, she has, at times, identified with the aggressor and replicated the very dynamic of othering and rejection, from which she was suffering.

Her emotional response to being rejected was one of self-doubt and self-loathing. She became self-conscious and questioned herself and her interpersonal skills. To the point that during the peak of being maltreated and discriminated against at work, she sought out professional help to improve her communication skills as she presumed that she was doing something wrong that had warranted the "miscommunications and misunderstandings." Through this experience, she became able to identify discrimination and exonerate herself which resulted in a newly found sense of anger and resentment that strengthened her tendency to reject back. Throughout her interviews, she made statements such as, "I never, ever, ever want to work with white people again," "white women are the worst," and, "I would avoid white people at any cost."

Jasmin's use of the defense of identification with the aggressor seems to be her way of regaining the control that she lost. It is a response to feeling threatened and her means to deal with her overwhelming sense of anger. Furthermore, it allows her to avoid the internal feelings of anxiety, shame and hurt. However, at times, she was able to

acknowledge the deeper feelings of sadness and hurt. As an instance, regarding her experience of being detained the border, she said:

> It was very hurtful because it was coming back into America. And I felt like, wow, is that even my home? If my home detained me for no reason for eight hours with nothing, in a room filled with bars, like that's essentially a jail, they took my car, they took my phone, like, what rights do I even have in my own home? I'm being treated like this, I don't have another country this is my only country, I've never lived somewhere else, I don't know. If that's home, then where do I belong?

Inferiority has been internalized.

Jasmine is cognizant of her internalized racism and Islamophobia. To her, experiences of racism and Islamophobia are interchangeable, and she struggles with distinguishing one from another. However, she is aware that the way in which she has experienced both is through the induction of feeling belittled, inferior, and worthless and the internalization of these projections. Jasmin seems to have an internalized bad object which has affected many facets of her life. Therefore, in spite of utilizing different defenses in order to avoid the internal anxiety and distress, Jasmin seems to be struggling to feel self-cohesion and self-love.

Jasmine holds a strong conviction that white, non-Muslim individuals hold a sense of superiority, look down upon the minorities and insinuate a sense of inferiority in them. Jasmin has encountered the superiority versus inferiority complex all her life. She

has been made to feel inferior due to her darker skin color and for being visibly Muslim. More specifically, she believes that Muslim women are viewed as "docile, less competent, uninformed, and oppressed," and they are looked down upon due to their perceived powerlessness. Her overall sense of internalized inferiority made her idealize whites and view them as superiors:

> I feel like growing up I thought white people knew more than the women in our community or something. Or if a white person said something, I would think they definitely know the rules, like if they said we're doing something wrong then it must have been wrong because they know. Or if something was produced by a white person, like a classic video book, I would trust it more. I'd be like they must have done it professionally.

She also identifies her internalized bad object as the reason why she was not able to detect, and name prejudiced and discriminatory behaviors and stand up against it. She blamed herself for being mistreated, felt inadequate and deserving of the mistreatment and assumed responsibility for the perceived wrongdoings. In other words, her internalized sense of inferiority perpetuated the very discriminatory dynamic that she wanted to end. It wasn't until Jasmin sought professional help that she realized what she had been experiencing was not her fault. She educated herself on racist and discriminatory dynamics, as well as self-love and self-compassion, which eventually enabled her to remove the blame and recognize injustice and maltreatment. However, though this recognition has been liberating and empowering for Jasmin, it has generated a great amount of anger in her:

> I realized that [white people] are constantly trying to parent people of color. They're telling us what to do. I remember when I was younger, I would see white people tell my mom what to do or not to do in a condescending tone. When I hear that condescending tone given to minorities now, I want to get up and slap these racist people.

Idealization is often followed by devaluation; Jasmine seems to have idealized white-Americans for a long time which has resulted in her current tendency to devalue them. It is common for those who leave abusive dynamics to have a heightened sense of anger in the wake of realizing the extent of their maltreatment and its unfairness. Jasmin's anger and indignation are evident in her tendency to devalue white-Americans, her excessive contempt at times, and her generalizations; statement like, "white women are the worst", "I will never work with another white person", "white women are all racist" exemplify this dynamic. Throughout the interviews, Jasmin seemed to be overly focused on race; in that she frequently referred to people by their skin color and appeared to be angry and frustrated, and exhibited high vigilance and abrasiveness while discussing race and racism. As an example, when she found out that I am Iranian, she stated, "Iranians identify as white which is ridiculous, nobody thinks they are white", which sounded both aggressive and unnecessary as we were not discussing Iranians; but also alluded to her tendency to still view whites as superiors on a deeper, and perhaps more unconscious level.

Jasmin's anger and tendency to devalue those who subjected her to painful experiences is understandable. As the result of her past experiences, Jasmin now deals with an unbearable amount of anxiety and an ongoing sense of fear and dread that have

affected her life in significant ways. Furthermore, in spite of the insight she has gained, and her efforts to develop a sense of self-compassion and self-love, Jasmin still struggles with fending off her internalized sense of inadequacy and inferiority, establishing a sense of belonging, forming healthy relationships, and feeling integrated. She stated:

> I think a lot of people have been so conditioned by racism that a lot of it is internalized. They spent their entire life being told their lessened. It's sad, I mean if you're told something so long, you believe it.

Case #5: Hana

Identifying information.

Hana is a 22-year-old female. She was born and raised in a Muslim family and she self identifies as Muslim. Hana was born in Iran; she and her parents moved to Maryland when she was 2 years old. Hana's nuclear family and extended family are highly religious. Islam is a significant part of the family's culture and is fully observed and practiced by most family members. When asked about her racial identity, Hana stated, "I pick white for health, but I don't see myself as white, I guess Middle Eastern would be other." Hana went to an Islamic elementary school in Maryland. When she was 11 years old, they moved to Boston where she attended a "normal American middle school." Hana shared that they lived in a primarily white neighborhood and her school lacked diversity; "there were maybe three black kids and one Asian kid there." Hana attended an all-girl high school where there was a great amount of focus and attention to "female empowerment," and diversity was celebrated. Hana is currently completing her

last year of undergraduate study in Psychology and works part-time at a pre-school. She plans to study Social Work and work at child services in the future. Socioeconomically, she identifies as upper middle-class.

On wearing hijab.

Hana attended an Islamic elementary school where wearing hijab was mandatory. Her mother, and most other females in her extended family wear hijab. To Hana, wearing hijab was an expectation and an obligation, to the point that objecting to wear hijab, or inquiring about it, never even occurred to her. She explained:

> I had no idea what was going on. I was very young and people in my family did it and I had no idea what it meant. I just remember that I had a party and people in my family wore it. It seemed like a big deal and then I started wearing it. I had no choice.

Due to wearing hijab, Hana was subjected to ongoing bullying and harassment in middle school. What made her experience more unbearable was her confusion about hijab; she never fully understood the philosophy of hijab and never accepted it as part of her religious practice. She felt discriminated against and was ostracized because of something that she neither fully believed in, nor did she agree with the rationale. Hana believes that hijab is misogynistic in nature and is discriminatory against Muslim women; it facilitates and furthers Islamophobia, and negatively affects Muslim women's life. However, she continued to wear hijab throughout middle school and high school, under the assumption that wearing hijab was her parents' expectation of her. Witnessing the importance of practicing the religious laws in her family made Hana reluctant to question

or even have a conversation with her parents about hijab. She stated, “I thought they would stop loving me if I didn’t wear hijab.”

Hana’s mental health treatment, along with her positive experience in high school and the focus on female empowerment, enabled her to feel and embrace her sense of agency in relation to wearing hijab and she became aware that she can determine what wants to do in her life. This was an empowering phase of her life that fostered personal growth and independence, which resulted in her ultimate decision to not continue to wear hijab in college:

> In high school I decided that when I went to college, I was not going to wear it anymore. I never liked wearing it, it never made sense to me. I never got the idea. I didn’t want to be offensive to my family, but I just thought it was stupid to have to cover your hair from men. It makes no sense. I never understood that.

Empowered by her mental health treatment, Hana became able to talk to her parents and inform them that she no longer intended to wear hijab. To her surprise, her parents accepted and respected her decision. Hana has not worn hijab since then and is currently not planning on wearing it again.

Narratives of Islamophobia.

Hana’s most negative encounters with Islamophobia occurred in middle school. She attended a primarily white school where there were no other hijabi students. Hana was bullied and harassed ruthlessly and was severely ostracized by her peers. She

struggled with making friends; had difficulty joining clubs and engaging in extracurricular activities; and was continuously rejected by her peers. She stated:

> I really suffered mentally; I really had a rough time. I was just always sad, I didn't have any friends and I just suffered mentally, like a lot. I was bullied a lot because I wore hijab and I didn't want to wear it anymore, but I was scared that my parents would be mad at me. It was a very, very bad time for me. Middle school is bad in general, but it was especially bad for me, it was so hard. Like the hormonal changes is already so hard, everything is changing in your body and I had no one to talk to. Especially girls can be cruel; they are very concerned about friendships and cliques and this stuff and I was never included.

In addition to her social isolation, Hana was perpetually subjected to derogatory comments, rhetorical questions, and microaggression. She reported that questions and remarks like "don't you get hot all the time with that on your head?" "do you think that is cute to wear?", "you're probably so slow because you have so many clothes on you, you're so, so slow", "you cannot be good at sports with that on your head", "does your dad let you wear makeup?", "will your dad let you leave the house?" were daily encounters for her. Hana also remembers a spike in derogatory comments about Muslims when Obama was running for president and rumors about him being a Muslim spread. She vividly recalls that when she attempted to befriend a peer during that time, she was told "my dad said we don't like Muslims and we don't like Iranians."

Hana spoke to the lack of romantic experiences as well; not only was she rejected by her female peers, her romantic interests in her male peers were also declined and turned down:

> It's middle school, everyone has a crush and like talked to boys, it was a big deal. And I remember all the girls would literally tell me "oh, those boys will never like you because of how you look and how you dress." I was so young, and I was just so confused. I was like what is wrong with me? Like why is this the case? Even when I went to the guidance counselor and I told her one time that this was happening to me she was like "you just have to be stronger." That's what she told me when I told her, and I was like I cry every day and I don't know how to be stronger.

When Hana was 12 years old, she was selected for additional security at an airport. Hana states that she does not recollect the details of this interaction but believes that she may have been inappropriately touched or harassed otherwise. What Hana recalls is that her father was indignant and furious. He felt Hana was violated and intended to file a complaint. Hana recalls feeling "confused and embarrassed." On the one hand, she was unable to fully understand what had happened to her, on the other hand, she felt embarrassed because "I didn't want my dad to make a scene." Hana and her mother have had similar experiences at airports over the years, however, this incident, in particular, stands out due to its complicated nature and the chaos it created. Hana's father did not file a formal complaint but remained disturbed and distressed for some time after it occurred.

In addition to the specific Islamophobic occurrences, Hana has experienced Islamophobia in her daily interactions in minor but still impactful ways. During the time when she wore hijab, Hana was treated with contempt, repulsion, and suspicion. She explained:

> People's faces say a lot about how they feel, I could always see that people would pull away from me; they didn't want to be close to me. They didn't want to sit next to me, like on the bus or something; they wouldn't want to be close to me in the stores. When I would go to expensive stores, they always followed me, and they would tell me repeatedly that their stuff is expensive as if I can't afford it.

Hana has been subjected to Islamophobia both personally and vicariously through her mother's experiences of Islamophobia. Throughout her childhood and adolescence, Hana often witnessed the maltreatment of her mother and learned about discrimination against her. As a hijabi woman, who is an engineer and a university professor, Hana's mother has been subjected to extensive and complex forms of Islamophobia and discrimination. Hana spoke to her mother's ongoing struggles at work, as well as her daily encounters with Islamophobia in her personal life. Being aware that Islamophobia has impacted her mother in many consequential ways has both normalized and minimized Hana's personal encounters and feelings about Islamophobia. She said:

> I have seen and heard some of the most mean things when I've gone to places with my mom before, when we both wore hijab and even now because she still wears it. People, especially like older women, are very rude to my mom. There has been so many times that I almost gone to fight with them because I get so angry that they are disrespecting my mom. They don't know that she is a professor in engineering; she is very smart and they just assume that she is like a poor, uneducated Muslim women.

Emotional effects of being subjected to Islamophobia.

Hana's initial emotional reaction to being bullied and other Islamophobic encounters is feeling sad, dejected, and despondent. She frequently referred to her struggles with establishing a connection with peers and befriending them as hurtful, heartbreaking, saddening and depressing. She expressed feeling sad and disappointed that she had to wear hijab and could not dress the same way as her peers. Moreover, she felt perpetually sad and extremely hurt that none of her peers seemed to be interested in becoming her friend and she continuously felt rejected. She said:

> It made me very sad because I just couldn't understand what was happening and why it was happening to me. I didn't even want to be in that position to begin with. People were judging me for something that I didn't even like or want. They were constantly judging me like she does this or that. They were racist or whatever, but they were misjudging me because I didn't even know who I was myself and they were judging me and making assumptions about who they thought I was.

Being mistreated publicly was also embarrassing and humiliating for Hana. There is general shame associated with being made to feel that one is different and deserving of being poorly treated due to their differences. The public nature of it, which was the bullying in middle school, made these experiences more shame-laden and demeaning for Hana. She was also vicariously subjected to hatred and aggression, through witnessing the maltreatment of her mother in public and has felt shame and embarrassment consequently. Shame and humiliation play a big role in Hana's eventual development of a negative self-image; she also identifies shame, and the need to avoid further

embarrassment, as the primary reasons why she did not tell her parents that she was being bullied at school. She explained:

> I never told them because I was so embarrassed, I didn't want them to know. And honestly, I didn't want my mom or dad to go to school and say something. I didn't want people to know or someone get in trouble because of me, I didn't need that, it was already bad, like I didn't want more people to know.

To Hana, being maltreated because of race or religion is purely unjust and wrong. She finds it perplexing that there is so much prejudice and hatred towards a group of people based upon their beliefs or the way they dress. She stated:

> It's very ignorant and very unfair. Yes, there are some bad people who were terrorists but that doesn't mean that you can treat all Muslims like that. There are some very bad white people, that doesn't mean you can treat all white people badly because there have been some bad white people out there.

However, though the unfairness of this dynamic can cause feelings of frustration and anger in many, it made Hana sad, despondent, and disempowered. Hana struggles to get angry for herself and finds it easier to feel indignant and outraged by the maltreatment of other Muslim women. More specifically, she feels incensed when her mother is the subject of Islamophobic rhetoric or treatment. Hana is able to recognize and acknowledge that a part of her intense reaction to her mother's experiences is displacement of her own anger. She struggles with overcoming her feelings of sadness and shame in order to access her anger and frustration; and she finds it less anxiety-producing to be angry on

her mother's behalf than to acknowledge her own feelings and to self-advocate. She stated:

> I get so angry. I'm like, you know, my mom is probably smarter than you, but you just assume that she's stupid and like a Middle Eastern woman who can't read because you are so racist. And I get so heated, I get so angry. I think when it happens to me, I would just get embarrassed, it's easier for me to stand up when it's not me, I get angry. I feel like it's hard to stand up for yourself when you're sad because you just cry, or you stutter, it's easier when you're angry on someone else's behalf. I feel like it's much easier. But my mom thinks that if you act out violently, then you just perpetuate this stereotype. But I think you shouldn't let these people think that they have the right to talk to you like that. They should be put in their place, especially when they just assume you're stupid. That's what makes me angry, that they assume you're a poor, uneducated Muslim woman who cannot speak for herself. That's what makes me mad.

Perhaps the most consequential impact of being subjected to Islamophobia for Hana was developing a negative self-image and consequently an eating disorder. Being bullied and feeling rejected, along with her fear of the potential rejection from her own family and community made Hana question her self-worth. She struggled with self-deprecating thoughts and feelings and a lack of self-worth, which eventually developed an eating disorder. She believes she felt powerless in not being able to control her appearance which resulted in her attempt to control her looks/body through restricting, binging, and purging the food she consumed.

Hana's self-loathe initially emerged in elementary school as the result of the strict rules of school and her difficulty complying with them. She was made to feel inadequate and "troubled" which generated a great amount of self-doubt and self-criticism in her. In middle school, she felt trapped with hijab and was continuously rejected by her peers because of it. Consequently, her doubts about hijab also created an internal conflict which further intensified her negative self-image. She felt as though she was a bad Muslim and was afraid that her parents and extended family would not love her if she stopped wearing hijab. Hana said:

> I developed a lot of issues with self-confidence. I had an eating disorder in high school and even the first year of college. I still struggle with self-image. And I had zero self-love. I suffered mentally a lot because of middle school. I went to therapy because my mom and dad were very concerned that I was becoming this way. I just basically never learned to love myself. I learned that when I was older instead of in those years when I should have. It was very rough. I feel like nobody liked me, like I didn't fit in, I didn't have friends, I feel like I hated myself, like it was a lot, it was a very rough patch, but now I'm OK. I had such a bad self-image that I always thought I was ugly or fat so I would throw up the food that I ate because I would feel guilty that I would get more fat. I worked on that, a lot, and now I'm fine and I can love myself, but it was really hard.

Categories of meaning.

Hijab is the main cause of all my hardship.

Hana views hijab as the main cause of most, if not all, of her past difficulties. To her, hijab was a bad object as it subjected her to bullying and harassment at school; made her believe that her parents' love for her was conditional and contingent upon wearing hijab; and made her question her Muslimness, and consequently her goodness as a person because of her doubts about hijab. Hijab defines the majority of Hana's childhood and adolescence and she blames her struggles with self-image, self-loathing tendencies, and her eating disorder mostly on wearing hijab.

Hana started wearing hijab at a very young age as it was mandated by her elementary school. Hijab was an obligation and what her family wanted her to do. However, the meaning of it was not explained to Hana and even when it was, Hana did not fully understand and agree with what hijab meant and represented. Because of hijab, she was often scolded and reprimanded at elementary school for not wearing hijab "properly." Additionally, she was bullied at middle school, which led her to questions her self-worth and sense of integrity. On the one hand, Hana just wanted to fit in, dress like her peers, make friends and date. On the other hand, she believed that she would be disowned by her family had she stopped wearing hijab. Furthermore, she identified as Muslim and cared about her religion, but her doubts and confusion about hijab made her question her Muslimness and her sincerity. She continued wearing hijab and did not disclose her doubts to her family which caused a major internal conflict and made her believe she was dishonest and a "fraud."

In addition to becoming a target for hatred and aggression, Hana believes that hijab masks one's real personality and character. To her, hijab is such an outstanding and visible phenomenon that it overshadows all the subjective characteristics and personality traits. In her experience, people made negative assumptions and passed judgements about her which compelled them to distance themselves from her solely because of hijab. Nobody took the time to know her and she was not given the opportunity to introduce herself. Hijab covered her hair but also veiled her subjectivity from the public. In other words, she was dehumanized and grouped together with other Muslims who have been vilified. Furthermore, hijab dehumanized Hana in the Muslim community as well. She asserts that Muslims too, would make assumptions about her based upon the fact that she wore hijab. Their only focus was on her hijab and she was assumed to endorse certain Islamic ideologies and beliefs because of it. She explained:

> [hijab] was like my only personality. I feel like when I wore it, no one would ever think about me as a girl, the only personality that I had was being a Muslim; they didn't even care about me as a person. Like who is she? What does she like to do? It was like oh she is Muslim and that's all we need to know.

Hijab facilitated her maltreatment and had a dehumanizing effect on her life which explains Hana's strong negative feelings and aversion towards hijab. Moreover, Hana's life improved significantly after she stopped wearing hijab. Her relationship with her parents improved, she felt more integrated and developed a stronger sense of self, and her depressive and eating disorder symptoms were somewhat stabilized. Hana attributes the majority of the positive changes in her life to not wearing hijab. In a similar manner, she blames most of her past difficulties on wearing hijab. Although the important and

consequential role that hijab has played in her life cannot be minimized or dismissed, Hana's tendency to view hijab as the sole object that precipitated the maltreatment is curious. It seems as though Hana utilizes hijab as the bad object that has caused all her difficult, frustrating and unbearable experiences. She views hijab as "all bad" in that it contains only negative qualities. Such a split grants Hana the opportunity to overlook other possible factors that may have contributed to her negative experiences; an unsupportive school, rejecting parents, lack of healthy communication, lack of healthy coping skills are only a few other contributing factors which Hana dismisses by being overly focused on hijab. Perhaps, her tendency to ignore the aforementioned factors enables her to rid herself of the anxiety that would be triggered by exploring these dynamics more deeply. Similarly, she utilizes displacement of anger. That is, it is easier for her to get angry on her mother's behalf in order to relieve herself from dealing with unwanted feelings of anger and aggression.

I felt like I was a bad person.

An underlying theme in Hana's account is her internalized sense of badness. She was treated with contempt and aggression in elementary school, and with repulsion and hatred in middle school. She perceived her parents' love as conditional and worried about getting rejected by her extended family. Hana did not have emotional safety with her immediate and extended family and struggled to fit in with her peers. As the result, she questioned herself, her self-worth and felt as though she was not a "good enough person" either way. Her doubts about hijab and practicing Islam in a certain way made believe that she was not worthy of her parents' and her extended family's love. Furthermore,

being repeatedly and continuously rejected by her peers, convinced her that she was not worthy of their love and acceptance. Hana said, “I felt like no one would love me if I didn’t wear hijab but when you wear hijab others wouldn’t accept you.”

Hana felt compelled to compensate for her lack of self-worth and deep feeling of not being good enough by pleasing others and “proving” to them and vicariously to herself, that she was, in fact, a good person. She kept attempting to make friends, bought expensive clothing to look more acceptable, and tried to join clubs and after-school programs in order to expand her social presence but to no avail. She said, “it felt like no one wanted to be my friend. I feel like everything I did was to make someone else happy; I didn’t have self-expression until I went to college.” The lack of acceptance by her peers strengthened her negative self-image and resulted in her inability to form self-acceptance.

Her need to be accepted and viewed as a good person was heightened in relation to her family. The threat of not being loved by one’s parents -and extended family, who play an important role in her life, is an extremely anxiety-provoking experience, especially for a child and a teenager. Hana’s perception was that her parents’ love depended upon how good of a Muslim she was. She lived with the fear of the loss of her parents’ love as she did not view herself as a good Muslim. To overcompensate for her doubts and aversion towards hijab, Hana focused on other Islamic practices, which she was told were equally as important:

> I felt like if I didn’t practice [Islamic practices], I was a bad person, the whole thing; if you don't pray, if you don't do it right then you're a bad person. And I became obsessed with like making sure I prayed correctly. I went to therapy because it was becoming a little OCD because I would wash myself over and over

> because I would say I'm still dirty and I would think that, oh, I'm a bad person because I didn't do it right. It was very bad; it became so toxic. And I realized this is all because people around me made it seem like the only thing that would make you a good person is if you wear hijab and pray, that's it.

Despite her rigorous efforts to adhere to the Islamic laws, Hana's inner conflict prevented her from developing a positive religious-identity as her real desire was to receive acceptance from peers, "I just wanted to be like everyone else. I didn't care that that hijab was part of my religion, I was hurting inside and wanted to have friends." In using reaction formation, a suppressed feeling is expressed in a contrasting form. It appears as though Hana's fixation on rigorously practicing the Islamic rules was her way of dealing with the guilt of not wanting to wear hijab and wanting to be accepted by non-Muslims. These conflicting phenomena and the lack of control were the major contributing factors in the development of her eating disorder; Hana desperately needed to gain control and be in charge of her life and at the time, controlling her body and the way she physically looked were the only facets of her life that she could control.

Hana's experiences of Islamophobia are complex as they are highly interwoven with her complicated relationship with her parents and extended family, to the degree that it is sometimes difficult to discern one from another. Much of her negative feelings and unhealthy defenses are driven from both her conflicts, or presumed conflicts, with her parents and the negative impacts of Islamophobic dynamics. What makes Hana's experience with Islamophobia even more complicated is the fact that she was subjected to maltreatment at a very young age, when she lacked proper ego-strengths and did not have the mental capacity to make sense of what was happening; she did not comprehend the

Islamic laws, specifically hijab, which made it difficult for her to understand her own experiences of Islamophobia and cope with them. As the result, she interpreted theses occurrences as personal attacks which negatively affected her sense of self in significant and impactful ways.

Support enabled me to find myself.

The outstanding and remarkable theme in Hana's account is the positive impact of support and validation on her and her life. Support and validation helped Hana overcome some of her destructive tendencies like her obsessive-compulsive rituals and her restricting and binging. It helped her develop a more positive self- image and a sense of self-love and self-compassion; and it significantly improved her relationship with her parents and peers.

Up until high school, Hana did not feel emotionally supported. She was mistreated in elementary school and bullied in middle school but did not feel safe enough to talk to her parents about her difficulties at school. When she sought help from the school counselor in middle school, she was told "you just need to be stronger," and she was told by Muslims who were aware of her challenges, "you should pray, that's how you feel better." Additionally, her parents were unaware of her daily struggles and did not notice it. The dismissal of the seriousness of her difficulties by people around her is a major contributing factor in Hana's development of a negative self-image and internalized bad object. Without external validation, it is common for the recipients of maltreatment, especially younger individuals, to feel an overwhelming amount of self-

doubt and to conclude that ‘what is happening must be my own fault.’ Hana’s disordered eating, along with her obsessive-compulsive tendencies were the visible manifestations of her internal conflict and her way of communicating her need for help which ultimately resulted in her parents’ realization and attempt to intervene by seeking professional help:

> I became so obsessed and I literally would go and wash myself like 10 times to make sure I did it correctly. I developed a very bad eating problem. I would binge and purge because I thought I was ugly and fat. I would sleep in my room all day and not come out and be just depressed. It got really bad and my parents were so worried, and they sent me to therapy. I am very grateful that I had that opportunity. She really helped me love myself and that’s why I am who I am today. I am a very self-loving person and I have a lot of confidence. I feel like if I didn’t have therapy, I would still be the same person.

Therapy empowered Hana to differentiate Islam from hijab and to talk to her parents about her struggles. Her parents’ acceptance and support had a great positive impact on Hana. Furthermore, her parents were able to acknowledge and apologize for making her wear hijab, and for not providing a supportive environment where she could go to them and ask for help. Her parents’ acceptance of guilt seems to have exonerated Hana from her own self-doubt and self-loathing. She shared:

> My parents are like we wish you told us so we would pull you out of [the Islamic school]. My mom is able to talk about how she did not take into account how much I was going to be bullied. My mom told me that she regrets sending me to school in America wearing hijab, she said I should not have done it, it’s not fair to your kid to suffer like that and to also feel like you won’t love them if they didn’t

> wear it. She tells other Muslim women if you want your daughter to wear hijab then you have to be aware that they're going to be bullied and it's not fair to put your kid through that at a young age. She regrets that I went to school wearing hijab, and, instead of focusing on being a kid, I was more focused on what's wrong with me at such a young age. It's hard for us to talk about this because we both start crying. But we have moved on from that experience, like all those years of suffering mentally, because for a mother, it's very hard to know that her child was suffering so much. Especially when I went to therapy it was a shocker for my mom and dad to know I even had problems.

Hana is now very cognizant of the positive effects of emotional support on mental well-being. With sufficient help and emotional support, she became able to transition from dealing with self-deprecation, mental disorders and suffering in solitude to developing a more positive self-image, more self-confidence and self-love. She also utilizes the defense of sublimation to channel her negative feelings and experiences into a healthy and socially acceptable behaviors. She currently works at a preschool and plans to pursue a degree in Social Work to help children. Her goal is to provide for them what she lacked in her own life which was a holding environment and a supportive and reassuring adult. She explained:

> I realize how someone's childhood can affect them so much. I realize how important it is to give children a really supportive environment even when they're very young. Like even now at preschool, I realize kids are so impressionable, they mimic everything, and they really take it in. So, we have to be careful and not expose them to things that are going to hurt them. Like I stood out because of

hijab and I wish someone just talked to me about it. Someone should tell you that it’s ok to have these feelings, that you are a good person. Someone should tell children that they are ok, we should tell them you’re doing a good job and you are a good person.

Chapter V

Discussion

Introduction

This research examined the subjective experience of five Muslim women subjected to Islamophobia. The participants are self-identified Muslims who either wore hijab in the past or have continuously worn hijab. Dehumanizing the Muslims and dismissing their diversity by ignoring their various cultural, racial, socioeconomical, and historical backgrounds are the core concepts employed in propagating Islamophobia. In order to avoid replicating such a dismissal, in selecting the research participants for this study, I made an intentional effort to select women from different backgrounds and from different geographical locations in order to highlight the vast diversity of Muslims. The goal of the interviews was to explore and understand the impact of the distinctive and different backgrounds on experiencing Islamophobia and the elicited reactions as well as to explore the experiences unique to the individuals, and the commonalities amongst them in spite of their diversity.

The five participants of this study are from exceedingly different backgrounds. Three participants are Muslim-born women from different races and different geographical locations; one participant is a Syrian immigrant; and one woman is a

convert. In the previous chapter, the within-case analysis was conducted which consisted of the examination and analysis of the unique and subjective experience of each participant. The way in which they experienced Islamophobia is embedded in their distinguishing personal characteristics and traits, as well as their particular social and cultural context. They were asked to share the most significant, unbearable, and meaningful aspects of their experience, and convey the impact of being subject to bigotry, prejudice, and harassment on their personal and daily life and to share the larger implications and more general meanings and associations. As the objective of the interviews was to capture the true essence of their distinctive experience, the participants, for the most part, were granted the flexibility to focus on topics they wished to discuss and share.

In spite of the uniqueness of each account and the participants' diverse backgrounds, there exists commonalities and general trends in the ways they made sense of Islamophobia and their reactions to it. These commonalities will be examined in the cross-case analysis in this chapter. There are common themes, emotional reactions and common defenses that are utilized to cope with Islamophobia; what has been internalized and the long-term effects of Islamophobia are also somewhat similar amongst the participants. The cross-case analysis will start with identifying and exploring larger external factors that have influenced and affected the participants' encounters with Islamophobia. These factors include geo-political differences, intersection of Islamophobia with racism and misogyny, the role of support, and wearing hijab. The focus will then concentrate on emotional reactions of the participants to these external dynamics and ultimately, the long-term implications, common primary and secondary

defenses and protective factors. The protective factors being explored include emotional support, validation, and maintaining a connection with one's community, will be explored.

In analyzing shared derived themes, those presented in the literature review will also be considered. However, the focus will again be on the actual experiences of the research participants. The implications of this study for clinical practice and further study are discussed at the end of this chapter.

External Factors Involved in Islamophobia

Geo-political differences.

In discussing the external factors that influence Islamophobia in noticeable ways, there were a few that all five participants unanimously identified, and the impact of geo-political differences on lessening or amplification of Islamophobia is amongst the most prominent ones. Without prompting, all five participants frequently specified the geographical locations, as well as the political climate, in describing their experiences of Islamophobia throughout the interviews, and spoke to the way in which these factors played a role in their life. They all believe that geo-political changes impact both the frequency of Islamophobic attacks and the nature of them.

The consistent report is that Islamophobia, and the tendency to act upon it, are more prevalent and explicit in the "south" and geographical locations that identify as more conservative. They identified a lack of diversity, and a lack of education/guidance in regard to accepting differences and not enacting one's internal prejudice and

aggression, as well as the common conservatism and prevalent political views as the main contributing factors in augmentation of Islamophobia in the south. Additionally, it is noteworthy that Karen, Marla, and Jasmin, who endorse more fear and anxiety in relation to living in a conservative state live in open carry states. For them, there exists a very real danger in dealing with perpetrators of Islamophobia as many of them may carry a gun and can easily shoot and kill them (The three moved to the south due to their husbands' career; there is an unspoken element of sexism here which may intensify these participants' perceived powerlessness).

In regard to the impact of politics on Islamophobia, Holly, Karen, and Jasmin spoke to the sudden increase of Islamophobia post 9/11 attacks. All five shared that as the rumors about Obama being a Muslim spread, they faced more hatred and aversion and felt personally targeted and attacked. Furthermore, in spite of their personal and various experiences with different administrations, they all expressed feeling disappointed and disheartened by the election of Donald Trump. All five participants reported feeling an instant and intense sense of dread and apprehension in the anticipation of increased and more blatant racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia. This dread was accompanied by a sense of fear and concern for safety and security following his election. At some point throughout the interviews, each of the participants made a comment about how Trump's rhetoric and policies have "emboldened" those who subscribe to racist and Islamophobic ideologies. There was a consensus belief that prior to Trump's presidency, the consequences of being overtly racist or Islamophobic were greater which was an impetus for many to contain and mask their prejudiced beliefs. Trump's bold racist remarks and his unapologetic and brazen tendency to be divisive in the favor of white, Christian

Americans, encouraged many to openly exhibit their prejudices and enact them more publicly.

The outstanding challenge of increased Islamophobia due to geo-political differences is the sense of powerlessness that it induces in its recipients. Geo-political factors are purely external factors that have a direct impact on one' personal life and yet, there is very little that one can do in order to change or even lessen the effects of it. All participants endorsed feeling an overall sense of disempowerment facing the magnitude of Islamophobia. However, their experience of disempowerment was particularly pronounced in relation to the geographical locations and political climate. They all identified and extensively discussed the negative effects of geo-political factors on their feelings of hopelessness and defeat. Although the effects of politics on Islamophobia is well discussed in the reviewed literature, there was little to no attention paid to the impact of geographical differences on experiencing Islamophobia.

Islamophobia intersects with misogyny and racism.

Islamophobia is not blind to other signifiers of othering and it is interrelated with racism, misogyny, xenophobia, and classism. Race and gender are the two main signifiers that all to the participants of this study collectively identified as major contributing factors in experiencing Islamophobia. Racial profiling was frequently and extensively discussed by all participants. Specifically, the unjust and humiliating experiences at airports were common to all of the participants. All of the women were subjected to scrutiny and additional screenings while wearing hijab and/or for being of a different

race. Their negative experiences at airports are a very visible manifestation of the intersection of racial profiling and Islamophobia. All five of the participants were in agreement that lighter skin can potentially diminish or even prevent Islamophobic attacks if one is otherwise not known as Muslim. There was also an agreement that even if one is visibly Muslim, lighter skin can lessen the intensity and harshness of the potential Islamophobic attacks against them.

In this small sample group, the participants with a darker skin (Holly and Jasmin) have been subjected to consistent, intensive, and explicit Islamophobia compared to the other participants. Marla and Hana, on the other hand, both reported a substantial decrease in Islamophobia against them after they stopped wearing hijab. In addition to not being visibly Muslim, they attribute the lessened Islamophobia to their lighter skin since they can "pass as white." Karen's experience, and the disparities between hers and those of her children, is the paragon of amplification of Islamophobia for darker skin individuals. She is white and when she stopped wearing hijab, even those who were aware that she is still Muslim, treated her with more respect and kindness. Her lighter skin children have faced less Islamophobia in comparison with her darker skin children.

Intersection of Islamophobia and misogyny was also frequently discussed by the participants. Misogyny against Muslim women is a complicated form of hatred for women in that Muslim women are often viewed as "oppressed, weak, powerless, subjugated and silenced." The perceived weakness and inferiority is not only demeaning and humiliating, but it also places Muslim women more at risk for being targeted. They are subject to increased contempt and abuse as they are believed to be "already abused," and they are expected to not speak up or fight back. The false perception that Muslim

women are oppressed and less-than, elicits more violent and aggression against them from perpetrators; while the perception of weakness compels others to try to "rescue" them which perpetuates the stereotypes and perception of inferiority. The attempts to "rescue" are offensive and humiliating, and it induces further weakness and powerlessness in Muslim women.

The recognition that Islamophobic experiences are highly intertwined with racism and misogyny has intensified the participants' existing sense of powerlessness. They feel they embody risk and threat and are perpetually targeted, which generates anxiety and fear in them. They all spoke to their efforts, at various points in their life, to correct the misperceptions about Muslim women and to dispel the misrepresentations. However, they all reached the same conclusion that racist and misogynistic beliefs are so deeply seeded in many individuals that made their attempts futile. The women participants concluded there needs to be systematic effort to change racist views and this was beyond their personal capability.

Lack of support.

Another contributing factor in the way Islamophobia was experienced for the research participants is the lack of support and validation. At various points throughout the interviews, they all spoke to the lack of support and validation from their community and environment, which has had different negative impacts on them. The most outstanding consequence of the lack of validation and recognition of the severity of their harassment and maltreatment is the tendency to question the legitimacy of their own

experiences, which subsequently resulted in a degree of self-doubt and self-criticism. As others were unable to recognize and condemn the Islamophobic attacks from which these women were suffering, they too, failed to fully understand it and questioned their personal role in "instigating or perpetuating" these dynamics. The invalidation resulted in minimization of Islamophobic attacks which not only does it form a negative sense of self, but it can also perpetuate and further strengthen the very dynamic that is causing the damage.

There are varying degrees of invalidation that these women have experienced. Holly has had a supportive family and though at times, her friends and co-workers have not shown support, she finds her environment to be generally supportive. Hana is currently able to rely upon her family and friends' support, but she felt invalidated throughout her struggles during childhood and adolescence. Jasmin has a supportive family but finds her overall environment extremely unsupportive. Karen feels completely unsupported, and Marla feels supported by her family but not by the society. Support and validation, or the lack thereof, has played a critical role in how these women have reacted to Islamophobia. With emotional support and proper help, Holly and eventually Hana, seem to have been able to overcome the negative associations with self; while Karen and Jasmin seem to have internalized the self-criticism and the negative self-image. The lack of emotional support and/or professional help, resulted in the use of some unhealthy defense mechanisms which will be further discussed in the section of 'long-term effects and defenses.'

Hijab.

Though hijab can be viewed as a personal choice, since it is a mandatory Islamic rule for Muslim women, it is experienced as an external factor for several participants of this study. It should be noted there are debates regarding whether or not hijab is mandatory or just recommended in Islam, and though there does not seem to be a consensus, many Muslims still believe that hijab is mandatory and not wearing hijab is a sin for Muslim women. Hijab has been a complex and conflicting object for all participants. With exception of Hana, the other participants had the initial feelings of pride, excitement, and empowerment by wearing hijab. Wearing hijab was a symbol of fully embracing their religion and it represented a sense of independence and self-government. In addition to the religious significance of it, hijab also had cultural and familial attributes and significance, which made it more meaningful, and it established a connection and belongingness to their Muslim communities.

However, they all spoke to various ways in which hijab made them a target for Islamophobic attacks and placed them at risk. As Ghalaini (2020) explains, the words "jihadi", "extremists", "terrorist" and "hijabi" are often used interchangeably. Therefore, the message she has received as a hijabi Muslim women is "people who look like me are not welcome in the United States" (p. 99). In his paper "Internalized Islamophobia: Exploring the faith and identity crisis of American Muslim youth", Omar Suleiman (2017) speaks to the increased Islamophobia against Muslim women due to their hijab. He interviewed 19 Muslim girls, aged 16-20 who lived in the United States. Fifteen out of the 19 interviewees reported they had considered taking off the hijab due to fear and

Islamophobic interactions and eight girls reported that they had taken off hijab in certain settings due to feeling threatened.

The experience of the women participants in this study is consistent with these findings. They have been subjected to harassments and abusive dynamics that are reenforced by external forces such as their geo-political differences and are intertwined with unchangeable elements such as their race and gender. As a result, they were forced to change the only component over which they had control and that was to stop wearing hijab. Out of the 5 participants, 3 stopped wearing hijab out of fear and/or having experienced increased prejudiced and discriminatory behaviors. Jasmin has stopped wearing a scarf and now covers her hair with a turban in order to not be an identifiable Muslim. They all recognize the unfairness of being forced into not fully practicing one's religion, and yet, their need to ensure safety and stability in their life trumped the religious significance of wearing hijab. These women's conflicting feelings towards hijab, and their ultimate decision about it, is the most outstanding and tangible impact of Islamophobia on their life.

Emotional Reactions to Islamophobia

While the emotional effects of Islamophobia on the research participants have varied, there are common themes and certain emotional responses that they all experienced. On a more surface level, all five participants expressed feeling humiliated, dejected, demeaned, hurt, and indignant in facing Islamophobia. They found being subjected to maltreatment publicly humiliating and degrading, as a result, they had to

deal with the consequent feelings of shame and embarrassment. Moreover, these experiences have not only been hurtful and saddening, but they have also generated a significant amount of anger and indignation. Intellectually, they are aware of the unfairness of these treatments and are cognizant that they do not "deserve" to be maltreated because of their religion and wearing hijab. The indignation is one of the driving forces in the ability to fight back and self-advocate.

However, at a deeper level, these experiences have had major disempowering and defeating effects on these women. The feeling of powerlessness was compounded by the following factors: the magnitude and frequency of Islamophobic attacks, the extent of the external factors that seem unchangeable and completely out of one's control, the pervasive othering of Muslims, and the misperception that Muslims are not American. For them, their very being precipitates contemptuous and persecutory reactions which results in harassment and discrimination. They feel hopeless and powerless to be a catalyst of change and without change, they remain a constant target of bigotry, which, ultimately, endanger their life.

At the core of it, the five participants of this study all spoke to their deep sense of fear and anxiety, which influenced many aspects of their life. The perception that one is the embodiment of risk and is unable to effectively protect oneself from harm, results in profound and visceral feelings of fear and annihilation anxiety. Annihilation anxiety is triggered when a threat is made against one's survival and self-preservation, and there is a risk of falling apart, and getting overwhelmed and destroyed. Fear of annihilation is a primitive fear that threatens fragmentation and disintegration of the ego. Primitive fears elicit primitive defenses and responses, Bion (1958), Segel (1972), and Klein (1974)

assert that fear of annihilation triggers denial -which manifested itself in these participants' use of withdrawal and avoidance-, as well as projection, projective identification, splitting and idealization (Hinshelwood, 1991).

Long-Term Implications and Defenses Used against Islamophobia

In order to protect themselves from external threats, unwanted internal feelings, and to preserve a sense of self and maintain a degree of self-esteem, the participants utilized different adaptive defenses. As discussed earlier, primitive threats and fears warrant the utilization of more primitive defenses. McWilliams (2011) identifies the lack of attainment of reality, and lack of acknowledging the separateness of those outside of the self as the main qualities of 'primary' or 'primitive' defenses. McWilliams states that while a degree of denial and splitting are the common core components of all defenses, the main primary defenses are withdrawal, denial, omnipotent control, primitive idealization and devaluation, projective and introjective identifications, and splitting (p. 102). She categorizes isolation of affect, intellectualization, humor, and sublimation as some of the more mature, or "secondary' defenses.

At a larger scale, the participants used various defenses, both primary and secondary, to cope with Islamophobia. While a combination of different defenses was used at different stages in their life, similar defenses were utilized more commonly and are more salient in their narrative. Holly uses intellectualization, which is a more mature form of isolation of affect. She talked about her feelings intelligibly but kept them at a safe distance in order to protect her sense of self and ego-integrity. Marla also seemed to

be using isolation of affect to rid herself of the unwanted feelings, but while Holly is able to verbally acknowledge and discuss her negative feelings, Marla attempts to actively suppress and ignore them. Karen and Jasmin identify with the aggressor and have replicated similar contemptuous dynamics, while they both struggle with a degree of pathological introjection internally. The insinuation of badness and inferiority has been internalized and they view themselves as bad objects who are continuously rejected by the world and feel as though they do not belong anywhere. Despite her use of splitting and displacement, Hana, too, struggled with an internalized bad object and a negative self-image. However, the emotional support and mental health treatment she has received has significantly helped her overcome some of these troubling dynamics. Additionally, Hana, and to some extent Holly, have been able to use the defense of sublimation as a healthy resolution of their internal conflict and negative experiences. They both spoke to how their personal negative experiences have influenced their decision regarding their career and lifestyle and have motivated them to provide help and support for those in need.

Although they seem to have used a variety of secondary defenses, it appears as though some of their more commonly used defenses are primary. The most outstanding and commonly used defense is the defense of 'withdrawal.' McWilliams (2011) explains withdrawal as the protective response for those who tend to retreat from difficult social and interpersonal situations; and while withdrawal protects one from having to feel and deal with uncomfortable feelings, it eliminates the opportunity to actively engage in interpersonal problem-solving (p. 104). For the participants of this study, while withdrawal has decreased their chance of engaging in problem-solving on a more

personal level, it has been an effective defense to avoid unwanted feelings and to foster a sense of safety.

In practical and tangible ways, all participants have exhibited varying degrees of withdrawal from social interactions in order to reduce the associated anxiety and other difficult feelings. With the exception of Hana, they all expressed the initial inclination and desire to speak up against Islamophobia in the hope of fostering change. However, their efforts did not appear to enact change. Due to the increased of hopelessness and defeat, they gradually pulled back from engaging in such social interactions and, to varying extents, withdrew from the society. While Holly and Marla's withdrawal is limited to disengagement from discussions with an Islamophobic undertones, for Karen and Hana, it manifested itself in their semi-disidentification with Muslims in addition to their reluctance in engaging in social dynamics that can potentially be Islamophobic. Jasmin's withdrawal is the most extreme as she has eliminated her social presence and has withdrawn from the world intending to become invisible.

Withdrawal felt necessary and has been an accessible tool and perhaps one of the few available means to these women to cope against the magnitude of Islamophobia and its effects on their life. Withdrawal enables a psychological escape, and it does not require a distortion of reality. Those who use withdrawal defensively do not misconstrue or deny the reality but retreat from it as it becomes overwhelming and threatening. The participants of this study do not tend to deny or distort the reality; on the contrary, they are well aware of it and can speak of their Islamophobic experiences and their effects on them intelligibly. Nonetheless, they have retreated from threatening social interactions

and potentially dangerous situations in order to protect themselves and ensure safety, security, and stability.

In addition to defenses used to cope with unwanted feelings, and in a parallel process with withdrawal, there is an overarching theme of the need or tendency to disavow or disown parts of one's identity. Aside from Holly, the other four participants had to disavow parts of their personal or religious identity in order to sustain their distance from the threatening world. For Karen, Marla, and Hana, the disowning has been through their decision to stop wearing hijab and publicly identifying as Muslim -though they continue to identify as one-. Jasmin has been wearing a turban instead of scarf in order to become less identifiable as Muslim and hide her true religious identity. As it is discussed in the literature review, one of the major destructive effects of Islamophobia is the incited changes in the Muslim identity. Sadek (2017) points out the internalized shame and inferiority as the result of being perpetually subject to prejudiced and bigoted ideologies compel Muslims to hide and mask parts, or all, of their true identity, culture, and religion. As opposed to being able to proudly acknowledge and embrace one's background, culture, religion, and other personal attributes, Muslim are made to feel ashamed of their differences and to mask or disavow them. This is an area in which the subjugating and silencing effects of Islamophobia on its victims is the most clear and noticeable. Under the unbearable pressure, these Muslim women were forced to hide who they are and what they believe in, and even if internally they recognize and embrace their true self, they portray a false self as their true self is rejected by the society.

In the use of withdrawal and disavowal, the influential role of feeling hopeless and defeated, interwoven with the introjection of negative feelings, cannot be ignored.

That is projective identification seems to be one of the psychological dynamics employed in the internalization of badness and inferiority. Ogden (1979) explains, individuals who are subject to projection of hatred and aggression, feel pressure to internalize it and become what the projections want them to be. Muslim women are treated as inferiors, less-than, weak, powerless, subjugated, silenced, and ultimately, deserving of maltreatment due to their "inherent badness and powerlessness." As a result, some Muslim women become representative of these stereotypes and projections; as Jasmin stated, "if you're told something so long, you believe it." All five of the participants endorsed having experienced a sense of powerlessness and defeat that has been pervasive and debilitating at different points in their life. Additionally, Karen, Jasmin, and Hana spoke to their internalized shame, guilt, and feelings of inferiority and less-than. At times, such internalizations inhibited them to not fully recognize the maltreatment to which they were subjected, and to hold themselves responsible for it due to a perceived personal flaw.

Fairbairn argues that being subject to unhealthy and abusive dynamics makes the ego split and a part of the ago attaches itself to the 'rejecting-object' and internalizes it (Mitchell & Black, 1995). He emphasizes the adaptive nature of this process. He explains that as one assumes inability to control and change the badness of the external object, one can gain control over it by owning the 'badness' and attribute it to oneself (Grotstein, 1994). The internalized badness, which is notable in Karen, Jasmin, and Hana's account (due to Marla's strong tendency to suppress, it is difficult to discern whether she has internalized a sense of badness or not), can be an active agent in perpetuating cycles of abuse and accepting the furthering of the victimization of the recipients of maltreatment.

Despite the intellectual awareness of how unjust the maltreatment is, those with an internalized sense of badness, may feel deserving of the abuse. After all, if the badness is located within the self, there can still be hope that it can be changed which would ultimately end the maltreatment. However, if the badness is coming from the outside and is reinforced by factors that one cannot control (i.e., geo-political differences, misogyny and racism, lack of support and validation) one feels destined to live in a world "ruled by the devil."

Protective Factors

An outstanding and remarkable theme that emerged from the interviews is the important role that validation and support play in experiencing Islamophobia and the participants' mental health. Due to the small sample size of this study, no generalizable data can be drawn from the findings. However, it is important to note that while all of the participants experienced extensive negative feelings and reactions to Islamophobia, the long-term implications for them varied vastly. While Karen and Jasmin deal with a degree of internalized shame and inferiority, and Marla's functioning and self-preservation highly depend upon suppression of feelings and avoidance, Holly and Hana seem to be better adjusted and integrated overall, and they exhibit more self-cohesion and self-acceptance. Holly is able to distinguish her experiences from her self and sustain her ego-integration. In spite of years of hardship and her major struggles with self-image, Hana has, to some extent, overcome the internalized negative associations with self, and developed a more positive sense of self and healthier coping strategies.

Holly has been subject to othering and discrimination most her life. Because of her darker complexion, growing up in a conservative area, and wearing hijab, she has been exposed to various, and at times, more severe forms of Islamophobic ideologies and behaviors. Although desensitization, and her efforts to isolate her affect and use intellectualization are certainly important contributing factors that have helped Holly maintain a positive sense of self, she also had external help and support, which helped her contain the negative feelings and ultimately live a well-adjusted life despite the environmental difficulties. Holly grew up in a very supportive family who not only encouraged her to pursue her dreams and not give in, but her sisters modeled this behavior for her. Despite their own exposure to harassment and discrimination, Holly's older sisters continued wearing hijab through high school and college and pursued their professional goals. They also set an example of standing up against injustice which was empowering for Holly. Although at times, Holly has had to deal with the lack of support and validation from her friends and co-workers, her experiences with Islamophobia were always validated and condemned by her family. Throughout her childhood and adolescence, the message she received from her family was to reject Islamophobia and fight against it and not feel defeated and disempowered by it. Although a degree of powerlessness in dealing with such an overwhelming phenomenon is inevitable, it seems like what Holly's family conveyed has had a major positive and empowering impact on Holly.

Holly's current beliefs and reaction to Islamophobia are consistent with the message she received from her family. The message is that as a Muslim, she will always be subject to prejudice and bigotry and while it is appropriate to feel indignant and to

reject the injustice, the maltreatment does not need to become an impediment in one's personal life. The emotional and practical support and the holding environment that Holly's family provided made it possible for her to implement this message in her life. Additionally, it made an impactful difference in the way Holly has conceptualized Islamophobia for herself. She has been able to differentiate her external experience from her internal sense of self. While Karen, Jasmin, and Marla have had validating individuals in their life and experienced support at varying points, support and validation have not been a constant component in their lives in the same way that it has been for Holly, which is one of the main reasons why her experience differs from the rest.

Additionally, Holly seems to have been able to establish a well-balanced connection with both the Muslim community and the non-Muslim world. She has strong ties with her family and relatives. She is a practicing Muslim; and partakes in some Muslim gatherings and events. However, her life is not limited to her ties with Muslims. Although she has an overall sense of being rejected by the society -which Holly has accepted it as part of her ongoing experience- on a more personal level, she has non-Muslim friends, has strong relationships with her non-Muslim colleagues, and is successful professionally. It seems like such a balanced approach, and the ability to establish connections with "both worlds," has enabled Holly to maintain her individuality and view her difficulties as external factors that do not define or represent who she is. Holly exhibits self-confidence and self-cohesion, she has been able to use mature defenses in a healthy manner, and although Islamophobia has clearly affected her, she has been able to carry on with her life.

The importance of validation and support from one's family and environment, as well as professional help, is more pronounced and distinct in Hana's narrative. Support, or the lack thereof, has played a crucial role in Hana's life. Due to her younger age and her parents' failure to properly educate and protect Hana from the psychological harm to which she was subjected, Hana suffered significantly, relied upon immature and unhealthy defenses, developed mental disorders, and had an internalized sense of 'badness'. Hana was scolded at elementary school for her struggles with wearing hijab and was severely bullied and maltreated in middle school for being visibly Muslim. Furthermore, because of her family's religiousness and promotion of Islamic laws, Hana conjectured that her family's love for her, and their acceptance were contingent upon how good of a Muslim she was; and to Hana, the most manifest sign of being a good Muslim was wearing hijab and to practice Islam rigorously. The meaning of hijab, and the true meaning and objectives of Islamic practices were never fully explained to Hana, and the expectations were not clarified to her. Hana did not feel emotionally safe enough to tell her parents she was repeatedly reprimanded at elementary school, and due to her internal conflict and ongoing feelings of shame and guilt, she did not inform them that she was being bullied in middle school. Her parents' failure to recognize her struggles strengthened Hana's presumption about their unsupportiveness.

Hana's unignorable symptoms urged her parents to seek professional help for her. Therapy enabled and empowered Hana to externalize what had been internalized and to differentiate hijab from Islam. Additionally, therapy helped her to open up to her parents. Ultimately, therapy was a turning point in Hana's life and resulted in many subsequent positive changes; the value and significance of therapy in Hana's life is priceless and

irreplaceable. Through the therapeutic process, Hana's most debilitating and severe symptoms of depression and eating disorder were stabilized. She became able to form healthier relationships with her peers in high school; and her self-image improved significantly. She believes that for the first time in her life, she felt a sense of self-compassion and self-love; she was enabled to form and access her ego-strengths and form healthy and better adaptive defenses.

Furthermore, Hana's parents' ability to understand the extent of her struggles and provide emotional support and validation, along with their acceptance of her decision to not wear hijab, had a substantial and appreciable restorative effect on her. Hana has stopped wearing hijab, but she still identifies as Muslim. She has formed many healthy relationships and she is academically driven and successful. Due to her personal and professional success, she feels better equipped to deal with unhealthy and abusive dynamics. It is noteworthy that similar to Holly, Hana has also sustained ties with both Muslim and non-Muslims. She has a strong connection with her parents, is close to her extended family, and participates in some Muslim events, while her current friend group consists of non-Muslims and she has an overall strong social presence.

In explaining what enabled her to identify and name discrimination, Jasmin spoke to the help she received from a life coach. She explained that her life coach helped her realize the problem she had was not located within her; instead, it was external. This realization enabled Jasmin to recognize the discriminatory nature of her experience, in part, externalize the sense of inferiority that she had been carrying. Jasmin is now able to identify discrimination and harassment and does not hold herself responsible for the maltreatment she endured; her inner feeling of inferiority has somewhat transformed into

anger and indignation and she has become hypervigilant about racist and Islamophobic dynamics. Nevertheless, Jasmin has mostly continued to struggle with regulating her feelings of anger and frustration and has difficulty battling her internalized sense of inferiority. Although the help Jasmin received had a partial positive effect on her, it does not seem that it has not been sufficient. Jasmin seems to need more extensive support to better cope with the effects of Islamophobia on her.

The experiences of Holly and Hana and, even Jasmin's to a lesser degree, exemplify the difference that families, friends, communities, and mental health clinicians can make in the understanding of the way discriminatory dynamics of Islamophobia, and the reactions it elicits. One of the fundamental and highly essential roles of emotional support is that through identifying and naming a discriminatory and unjust behavior, the victim will also become able to identify and name it. It is a commonality for the recipients of discriminatory or abusive treatments to personalize their experience and assume responsibility and a sense of personal wrongdoing or guilt in lieu of recognizing the unhealthy nature of such dynamics and identifying the perpetrators as the responsible party. It is powerful and critical for those who have been victimized to call harassment, bullying, trolling, taunting, persecuting, and abusing what they are; recognizing and labeling these dynamics is the first step in recovering and healing. Both Holly and Hana have found the process of naming Islamophobic attacks empowering, and it has liberated them from the perceived personal responsibility and inner sense of badness.

Validating emotions is another critical part of making sense of destructive dynamics. For Holly and Hana, it has been an important step in lessening or externalizing the effects of their Islamophobic experiences. It is imperative for those who are subject to

prejudice, bigotry, hatred, and aggression to feel allowed and validated in experiencing a wide range of feelings. Being reassured that their feelings, even if conflicting and contradictory at times, are justified and legitimate, and are understood by others has had significant short-term and long-term healing effects on Holly and Hana. Empathy has enabled them to process some of their more impactful feelings and to move on, as opposed to being fixated or stuck with negative and destructive emotions, and the subsequent unhealthy responses.

Furthermore, an outstanding and interesting contributing factor in Holly and Hana's account is they have both managed to establish and sustain a connection with both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities. They have reached a healthy balance that has supported and fostered their personal and professional growth and granted them a sense of belonging. They are not so tightly involved with the Muslim community that they would perceive the external world and non-Muslims as complete strangers. As a result, they are not so disconnected from Muslims that they would feel detached from their roots, family, and culture. There is a sense of assimilation and integration that is driven from the ability to internally accept both worlds to which a Muslim woman belongs.

Clinical Implications

With the increased number of Muslims in America, and as hatred and Islamophobia is on the rise, it is imperative for clinical social workers and psychotherapists to strive to better understand the experiences of being subject to Islamophobia in order to help the clients who suffer from such a phenomenon in a more

effective way. The findings of this study highlight how deeply effective these social dynamics can be, and it underlines the personal, social, and professional implications of it. Many different aspects of the participants of this study are affected by being subject to discrimination. Depending upon one's background, cultural, familial, and social circumstances, these women's experiences, and the responses to it, vary and differ from one another in major ways. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for clinicians to be curious and to focus on the individual and subjective experience of their clients, while they take social and more general implications of such a widespread phenomenon into consideration. It is vital not to minimize or overlook the individual and personal impacts of a social phenomenon due to its prevalence and commonness. Mental health clinicians carry the responsibility to better understand such phenomena and to help and enable clients to do so as well, and to be mindful that the destructive effects of a dynamic are not lessened or become impersonal, because it has been perpetuated for a long time and has affected a large number of people,

Holly and Hana's experience, in particular, exemplify the importance of support and therapeutic help in understanding and dealing with Islamophobia. Their ability to form a positive sense of self and sustain ego-integration in the face of ongoing Islamophobia attests to the importance of having a holding environment, and empathic individuals who do not tend to minimize the profound impact of being othered and dehumanized and being subject to contempt, aggression, hostility, and violence. Mental health clinicians ought to pay close attention and thoroughly explore and analyze the subjective and personal experience of clients who suffer from such dynamics. It is critical for clinicians to identify and name discriminatory and hateful dynamics and explicitly

condemn them and, in a parallel process, enable and empower the clients to do so as well. Since it is common for those who are victimized to internalize shame, guilt, and a sense of inferiority, it is the responsibility of mental health clinicians to help the victims externalize the internalized negative feelings, and to enable and empower them to strive to not allow the discriminatory process to represent and define its victims. Holly and Hana's narrative also highlight the importance of interpersonal connections and maintaining a degree of healthy functioning in the society. In working with those who have been victimized by Islamophobia, it is important to encourage them to form healthy relationships and continue to study and work. Furthermore, maintaining, or perhaps restoring the connection with both the Muslim and the non-Muslim communities, seems to have a soothing and healing effect on victims of Islamophobia which should be encouraged and promoted by mental health clinicians.

Research Implications

Many other studies can be conducted to complement and expand upon the findings of this study. First, a study with a larger sample size may not allow a similar degree of in-depth analysis, but it may generate more generalizable data. The participants of this study were intentionally selected from a diverse background, which highlighted both the diversity within the Muslim community and stressed the different ways in which Islamophobia is experienced based on distinctive and personal differences. A more homogenous sample size could further show the common trends and themes, while it would allow the differences to be more pronounced and be examined more thoroughly. Additionally, based upon the findings of this study, hijab has played a critical role in

these women's experiences. Additional studies could be conducted to further examine the particular role of hijab in Muslim women's life, and its personal and social implications. Similarly, further studies could be conducted with a group of only hijabi women to look at their experiences with hijab and their decision to continue wearing it despite their hardship. Similarly, another study could be conducted with a group of Muslim women who have stopped wearing hijab to further examine their decision, the subsequent feelings, and the short-term and long-term implications of not wearing hijab,

Conclusion

Muslims are highly othered and dehumanized. They are selected to become the external object that receives one's internal and unwanted feelings of hatred and contempt. Islamophobia in general intersects with racism and xenophobia, and Islamophobia against Muslim women intersects with misogyny, which can make the experience of Muslim women more difficult and intolerable. While the participants of this research had their unique experiences that varied based upon their personal and distinctive family life, cultural background, socioeconomic status, there were certain common themes derived from the interviews. They all spoke to the external contributing factors to Islamophobia, which are geo-political differences, intersection with racism and misogyny, lack of support, and hijab. These external factors make them feel overwhelmed and defeated, and cause a general sense of humiliation, indignation, and dejection. At a deeper level, Islamophobia has generated feelings of fear and annihilation anxiety which warranted the use of primary defenses in women participants of this study. At some level and at varying points, all participants relied upon utilizing the defense of withdrawal to cope with this

highly anxiety-producing phenomenon. They disavowed parts of their religious identity and masked their true self. Three women stopped wearing hijab and one has changed the way she covers her hair to not be visibly Muslim. However, there are certain protective factors that enabled two of the participants in particular to utilize secondary and more mature defenses. The emerged protective factors are emotional support, validation, maintaining a connection with both Muslims and non-Muslims, and professional help. As a result of having such protective factors, these two participants have been able to reach self-acceptance, self-cohesion, and a healthy degree of self-compassion and self-love.

Appendix A

Recruitment Flyer

My name is Laudan Moghadam and I am a Ph.D. student at the Institute for Clinical Social Work. I am looking for research participants to complete my dissertation titled:

The lived experience of Muslim women subjected to Islamophobia

If you live in the DC metro area and are interested in participating in this research study, please call or email me to set up a brief screening interview. Feel free to send this information to anyone who may be interested.

I am looking for 5 participants who meet the criteria below:

- Self-identified Muslim woman between the ages 18-65
- Currently wears hijab/wore hijab in the past
- Has been subjected to Islamophobia and affected by it
- Willing/able to meet 2-4 times, for 60-90-minute interviews

There are no costs to participating besides the time spent for the interviews. All information will remain confidential and all identities will be disguised.

You can contact me at 240-370-5248, or moghadam.laudan@gmail.com.

Thank you!

Appendix B

Screening Interview

1. Do you identify as Muslim?
2. Do you wear hijab, or have you ever worn hijab in the past?
3. Have you been harassed, mistreated or discriminated against because of your faith?
4. Do you believe that the mistreatment that you have encountered has affected your life in any ways?
5. Are you willing and able to talk about these incidents and the ways in which your life has been affected by them?

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Institute for Clinical Social Work

Research Information and Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research

Title: The Lived Experience of Muslim Women Subjected to Islamophobia in the United States.

I, ……, acting for myself, agree to take part in the research entitled: The Lived Experience of Muslim Women Subjected to Islamophobia in the United States.

This work will be carried out by Laudan Moghadam, LCSW-C, under the supervision of Jennifer Tolleson Ph.D.

This work is conducted under the auspices of the Institute for Clinical Social Work at the Robert Morris Center, 400 South State Street, Suite 822, Chicago, Illinois 60605, and (312) 726-8480.

Purpose

The purpose of this case study research project is to understand the lived experience of Muslim women in the United States who have been subjected to bigotry, hatred and discrimination because of their faith as well as their gender; in other words, Muslim women who have been victims of Islamophobia. This research is designed to help provide an in-depth and thorough understanding of this complex phenomenon in the hope of help shedding light to the experience of the subjects of the study and help clinicians

gain a better understanding of this phenomenon in order to become more effective and able to help their clients.

Benefits

The potential benefit of participating in this study is the participants' ability to share their story and have their meaningful and influential experience be heard. The research will also add knowledge pertaining this phenomenon to the psychoanalytic field and contribute to the current literature.

Costs

The only cost incurred to the participant is the time that it takes to complete the interviews.

Possible Risks and/or Side effects

Talking about such issues may trigger some uncomfortable feelings and/or memories. If the participant feels vulnerable during or after the interview process, they can stop the interview at any point. A proper referral to a mental health professional will be provided if needed.

Privacy/Confidentiality

I understand that my privacy/confidentiality will be insured in the following ways:

- Laudan Moghadam will be the only person who will know my identity.
- No identifying information regarding my participation in this study will at any time be available to anyone except the researcher, Laudan Moghadam.
- Only first names will be used in the interview.
- The participant and all others mentioned in the interview will be changed to provide additional privacy.
- All identifiable information will be kept separate of the rest of the research in a locked cabinet.
- The data will be stored in a secure locket cabinet for 5 years after finishing the study at which point, the data will be disposed of by paper shredder and the audio taped will be erased and destroyed.

Use of the Data

The written compendium of data analysis and discussion will appear in my completed dissertation, which will be printed and placed in the library of the Institute for Clinical Social Work, Chicago, Illinois. An abstract of the complete dissertation will be placed in Dissertation Abstracts; and a copy of the complete dissertation or abstract will be available to anyone requesting it.

It is the researcher's hope to share some of the findings in workshops, seminars, and/or journal articles related to the topic studied. At some point, the material may also provide the basis for more extensive research and/or may lead to a book. Should this occur, the participants' confidentiality and privacy will continue to be maintained in the ways stated in the previous section.

Subject Assurances

By signing this consent form, I agree to take part in this study and to be audio taped. I have not given up any of my rights or released this institution from responsibility for carelessness.

I may cancel my consent and refuse to continue this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. My relationship with the staff of the ICSW will not be affected in any way, now or in the future, if I refuse to take part, or if I begin the study and then withdraw.

If I have any questions about the research methods, I can contact, Laudan Moghadam at 240-370-5248 or Jennifer Tolleson at (312) 409-2851.

If I have any questions about my rights – or my child's rights – as a research subject, I may contact Dr. John Ridings, Chair of Institutional Review Board; ICSW; At Robert Morris Center, 401 South State Street; Suite 822, Chicago, IL 60605; irbchair@icsw.edu.

Signatures

I have read this consent form and I agree to take part in this study as it is explained in this consent form.

_____

Signature of Participant Date

I certify that I have explained the research to _____

and believe that they understand and that they have agreed to participate freely. I agree to answer any additional questions when they arise during the research or afterward.

_____

Researcher Date

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