NEGOTIATING SELVES, CRAFTING LIVES:
CULTURE, IDENTITY, AND BELONGING IN AN ISLAMIC SCHOOL

By

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ABSTRACT

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This study draws upon phenomenological, anthropological, post/colonial, and globalization theories to describe and explain the ways in which four individuals experienced their identities as teachers in an Islamic school. It examines how their identities as educators took shape, based on their educational experiences as learners and teachers, over the course of their life histories. Particularly, it focuses on the ways in which their journeys interacted with an Islamic school. The school was a site which drew upon their backgrounds as well as shaped their identities. It was a dual curriculum institution where Islamic and American subject matter existed side by side, yet mixed together in classroom activities. Their role as teachers in this organizational arrangement supported the socialization of students into their identities as Muslims and as Americans.

Three questions guide this study: (1) broadly, how does culture and experience shape teacher identity in the era of globalization? (2) In particular, how did the educational experiences of four teachers shape their teaching identities, including the experiences they had in the context of an Islamic school? And (3) how did their identities shape the culture of the school? To explore these questions, I chose to investigate the four teachers' educational life histories, to understand the experiences they viewed as important in their development as professionals. I understood each educator's trajectory as a journey, the important particulars of which they related to me in conversation. I coupled the narratives of their experiences with observations of their teaching, to understand how the school had shaped them, and how they shaped it as a cultural world. Over

the course of my two and half years of fieldwork, I employed ethnographic research methods. Namely, I conducted participant-observation in classrooms and interviewed teachers to understand these dynamics. These methods were matched with archival research, which helped me to situate the school, and the local Muslim community it was part of, in a social and historical context. Lastly, informal discussions with students and staff greatly supported my understanding the day-to-day running of the school, as well as the way it represented the desires for local Muslims.

My analysis shows that the production of identities among the four teachers centered on the ways in which their experiences over the course of their educational life histories interacted with Islam and US culture, both global and local forces. These interactions shaped their journeys as teachers in a Muslim-American context. As such, each teacher crafted and negotiated an identity based upon their relationships with Islamic religious culture, American secular culture, and the dynamics of the school. The ways in which their experiences with Islamic and American cultures played out in the school produced feelings for the educators based upon belonging and not fully belonging, and were negotiated in varying degrees to support their professional work. Indeed, the school was a site where Islamic and American cultures were woven together, producing a school that shaped, and was shaped by, the teachers. As such, the past, the present, and the future were all elements in play: the life histories of teachers, their activities during my fieldwork, and how they contributed to the school's culture, socializing students into the future, centering on their faith and American culture. These constituted the elements that shaped their identities and the culture of the Islamic school.

For my father

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PREFACE

THE MUSLIM PILGRIMAGE REIMAGINED

The first grade students file slowly onto the stage under the watchful eye of Sister Nour and lead by Mrs. Smith. They are dressed in white clothing, typical of what adult Muslims wear when performing the *Hajj*. The *Hajj* is the pilgrimage to Mecca which adult Muslims are expected to perform at least once in their lives, if they are financially and physically able. The assembled audience of proud parents and families look on as their children gather around a small version of the *Ka'aba*[1] set atop the stage and built for the occasion. With hands raised and lowered in a circular fashion, the children line up and face the audience, reciting in unison verses from the Qur'an. Soon they start singing to the tune "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain" but with new lyrics. Substituting old words with new ones, they sing "we will all go to Mecca on the *Hajj*", adding verses that describe the various rituals that are performed. They outstretch their arms and clap as they sing in chorus. They sing about circumambulation as they walk together around the small cube. They stop and line up again while singing: "We will drink the water of *Zamzam* on the *Hajj*"—all pretending to drink. They sing about stoning the devil—and they throw invisible stones. Then, concluding the ritual, they get down on one knee and mimic the slaughtering of an animal as they sing "we will sacrifice for Allah on the *Hajj*." Finally, standing up with arms raised and then lowered, again in a circular formation, they sing "We will all go to Mecca on the *Hajj*!"

[1] The cubical structure around which Muslims circumambulate during the *Hajj*.

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INTRODUCTION

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Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact…we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.

Stuart Hall, 1990, p. 222

For what is at issue in the discourse of minorities is the creation of agency through incommensurable (not simply multiple) positions. Is there a poetics of the 'interstitial' community? How does it name itself, author its agency?

Homi Bhabha, 1994/2010, p. 331

In Karl Marx's (1888/1998) noted work, "Theses on Feuerbach," he wrote: "The essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of…social relations" (p. 570). Later social scientists were inspired and challenged by Marx's claim, notably Mikhail Bakhtin (1984), who wrote:

> As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. (p. 293)

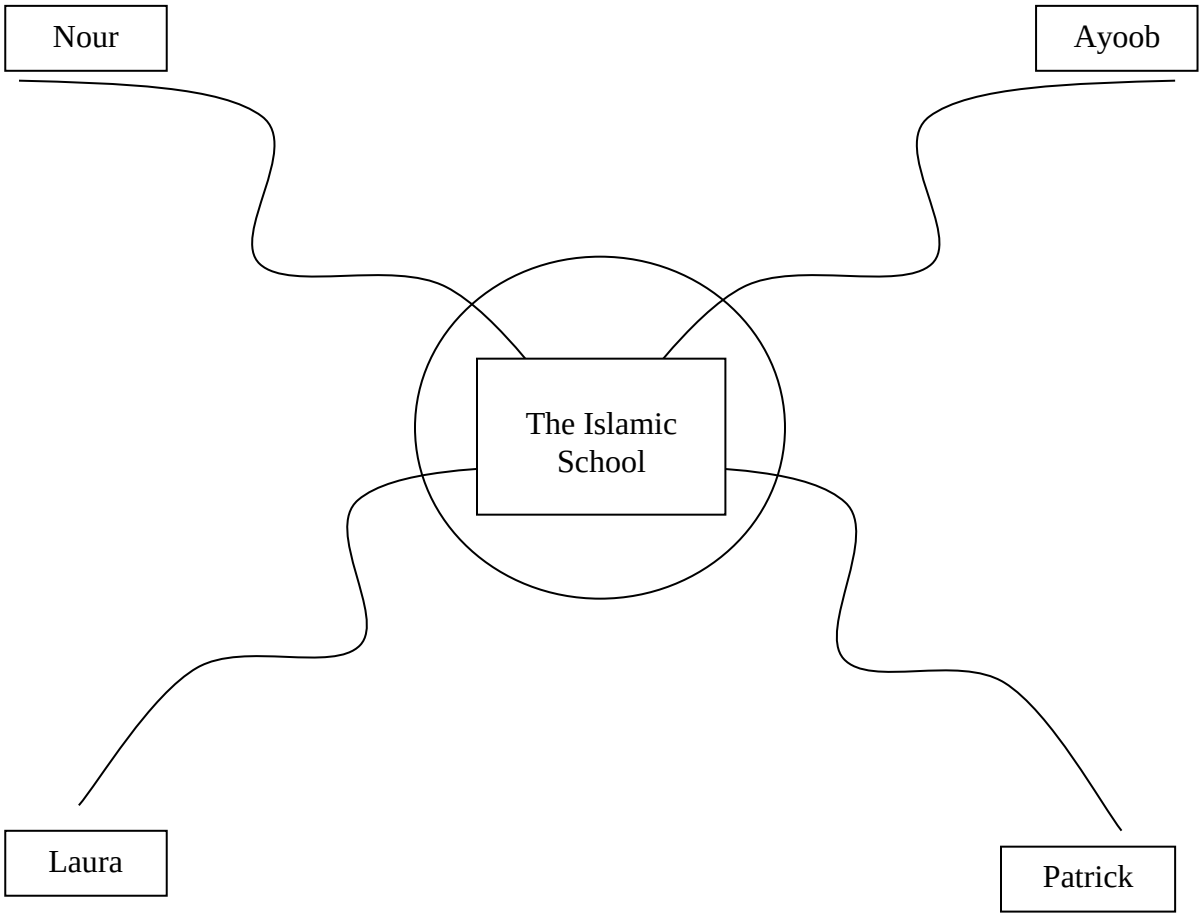
In this way human essence, for Marx, is produced through structural social relations. Yet for Bakhtin the post-structural, particular and individual experience in social relationships are precisely the dynamics that give rise to meaning, through the appropriation of linguistic and, by extension, cultural forms. As Holland et al. (1998) aptly stated: "The meaning that we make of ourselves is, in Bakhtin's terms, 'authoring the self,' and the site at which this authoring occurs is a space defined by the interrelationship of differentiated 'vocal' perspectives on the social world" (p. 173). As such, this dissertation is situated between cultural forces based upon structural social relations, in Marx's terms, and the post-structural notion of social relations as

multifaceted and holding particular meanings for individual selves, as in Bakhtin's sense. These dynamics are made sense of in the local cultural context in which individual lives are situated and it is there that they find meaning. Notions of social relations, structural and post-structural, are important in understanding the production of identity.

This dissertation thus explores the production of educational identities among four Islamic schoolteachers, centering on the ways in which their educational life histories interacted with the social dynamics of an Islamic school, a cultural space that shaped their identities as teachers (see Figure 1). The production of their identities existed in relationship to forces of cultural determinism, the social and structural forces that determine positions in society. In the case of this study, this included a Sudanese Muslim woman, a Black Muslim man, a White woman, and a White gay man (see Table 1).

However, their identities were also formed by constructivist, post-structural forces which included the myriad activities they undertook by their own free will that shaped their understandings of themselves and their educational experiences. In other words, this study considers the social forces inscribed on identity (producing a sense of subject-status) and the particular experiences that are based on individuality (producing a sense of agency) in the production of identity. In this way, the forces that influenced and shaped the teachers' senses of self, their identities, both by virtue of their social position and by their active participation, are conveyed through the context of their educational life histories. These constituted stories that were related to me over the course my fieldwork with the teachers. Moreover, my own story became clearer as I reflected on my own life history as well as my time as an educator in the Islamic school. Indeed this process entailed my own struggle to make sense of the forces in which I was engaged as a learner and teacher over time.

Figure 1: *Pictorial Representation of the Study*



This dissertation includes this introduction and six chapters. The introduction outlines the scope of my study, and includes a theoretical framework which couches the study in the research literature related to the themes to which I refer: the production of identity, and the global and the local. Moreover, it features a methods section that details the data collection process for two and a half years of ethnographic fieldwork, based upon interviews and participant-observation with teachers at the Islamic school. It concludes with a brief snapshot of the overall study.

The first chapter explores Muslims and Islamic education in the US and in the local area, the East Lansing and Lansing community, as well as the rise and functioning of an Islamic center and school. This chapter, moreover, provides context for the four teacher portrait chapters that form the basis of this study. These portrait chapters are ordered according to each teacher's

relationship with Islam, specifically the ways they experienced the faith and the amount of time they spent interacting with it—a key component to their feelings of belonging in the school. As such, the second chapter, the first of the teacher portraits, centers on Nour: a Sudanese woman. Nour was born and educated as a Muslim and taught Qur'an and Arabic at the Islamic school. She was one who experienced an educational life in two different cultural contexts—Sudan and the United States, and who actively embraced the Muslim identity she was born into. The third chapter explores the educational life history of Ayoob, a local Black man who had converted to Islam some forty years earlier, who taught social studies at the Islamic school, and who embodied both local and global cultural dynamics, all of which was couched within his identity as a Muslim. The fourth chapter centers on myself, a gay White man, who studied Islam for nearly fifteen years, who taught as an intervention teacher for struggling students, and who assembled a negotiated sense of self based upon sexuality and Islam. The fifth chapter centers on Laura, a White woman from western Michigan, who was in the process of learning about Islam, and negotiated her new knowledge of Islam with her own identity, in order to navigate within a Muslim space.

Table 1: *The Four Teachers*

Name	Gender	Status	Curriculum Area	Classes Taught
Nour	Female	Sudanese, Muslim	Religious Studies	Qur'an and Arabic
Ayoob	Male	Black, Muslim	Secular Studies	Social Studies
Patrick	Male	White, Gay, Secular	Secular Studies	Intervention
Laura	Female	White, Catholic/Secular	Secular Studies	First Grade

The stories of the teachers were each very different; none was identical to another. In this way, the teachers embodied their teacher identities at the school differently. As I will discuss, beyond the particulars of their life experiences in specific cultural contexts that shaped them, the teachers' educational experiences over the course of their lives were important, as they embodied Islam differently—as Muslims (the first two teachers) and as non-Muslims (the last two teachers). Indeed their relationships with Islam produced varying feelings of being at home in school.

In this way, the sixth and final chapter constitutes an analysis of identity production and belonging. It will show how both were related to the experiences of the teachers, and is organized as follows: 1) The teachers who felt most at home in the Islamic school and 2) the teachers who felt not fully at home in the Islamic school. These findings center on the experiences of the educators as they developed as Islamic schoolteachers, focusing on the knowledge they brought that fit within the school's curricular and cultural organization, the knowledge they acquired there that shaped them, and their old and new knowledge shaping the character of the school. This knowledge and the ways in which it was embodied made them feel either a sense of being "at home" in the school or "not fully at home." This, I argue, was central to the dynamics of the Islamic school, where teachers' knowledge was drawn upon and shaped to educate the students, while producing particular dispositions and feelings among them.

As such, this dissertation explores and theorizes the journeys the teachers traveled in their educational life histories, especially their time at the Islamic school. Their experiences show the dynamics that produced their identities as Islamic schoolteachers. In this way, their backgrounds and work at the school helped to shape its culture, based upon the ways they supported its weaving together of the religious and the secular, specifically Islamic and the American cultures.

The Production of Identity & the Global and the Local

I position this study within the academic field of the anthropology of education. As an educational ethnography, it is situated within the scholarly realms of both cultural anthropology and educational studies. Inspired by such intellectual ancestors as Franz Boas, who introduced cultural relativism into the discipline of anthropology, and Margaret Mead, who introduced participant observation, I position this study within the well-tread terrain of scholarship that seeks to humanize, rather than objectify, cultural lives. In the case of my research, this includes those who were participants in the Islamic school, the educators upon whom this study centers. Important to this effort is the interpretive dimension to cultural understanding. As Geertz (1973) famously wrote,

> Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (p. 5)

As such, my study seeks to understand the meanings the Islamic schoolteachers made of their educational life histories, how their experiences formed resources from which they drew as educators, pointing to the ways in which the culture of the Islamic school functioned as well as the way it was situated at the cross-roads of cultural worlds. Important to understanding the identities of the educators and students who participated in the Islamic school is a consideration of the ways in which they represented themselves to me, how I made sense of these representations, and how I represent them in this study (see Clifford & Marcus, 1985). To best capture the experiences involved in the production of their identities, I draw upon Abu-Lughod's (1991) conception of "ethnographies of the particular" in which the actions and understandings of everyday life are highlighted over general claims of what constitutes culture.

> The…problem with generalization derives not from its participation in the authoritative discourses of professionalism but from the effects of homogeneity, coherence, and timelessness it tends to produce. When one generalizes from experiences and conversations with a number of specific people in a community, one tends to flatten out differences among them and to homogenize them. (Abu-Lughod, 1991, pp. 152-153)

As such, the particulars of lived experience and the ways they were understood by the schoolteachers are important for this study in order to capture and understand the specifics that constitute everyday life, especially the moments that shape identity. In this way, lived experience and identity are closely linked. Identity, as neither static nor an attribute, is a socially negotiated and situated aspect of working out who we are and what we are doing. To understand identity this way, it is important to look at the specifics that constitute it.

The particulars of experience are central to much scholarly work done in educational anthropology. Contributors to George Spindler's classic work, *Education and Cultural Process: Toward an Anthropology of Education* (1974), report on processes of socialization across different cultural groups, in the US and abroad. They provide insight into the ways in which culture is part and parcel to education, from the vantage point of schools, diversity, and the teaching of culture. Their work draws inspiration from the scholarship of Margaret Mead, especially *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928/2001). Her research in Samoa explored the ways in which children were socialized into their gender, and by extension, their cultural identities as Samoans. Other studies have thus shown the myriad ways in which members of various cultures participate in socialization processes. Paul Willis' (1981) *Learning to Labor* approaches the question of socialization from the perspective of structuralist ethnography to show the ways in which working class students in Britain achieve working class jobs. His study centers on social reproduction theory to demonstrate the ways in which school has a stake in reproducing class in British society. Loukia Sarroub's (2005) *All-American Yemeni Girls* hinges on questions of how

Yemeni-American high school girls negotiate their lives in two worlds: American and Yemeni, yet both colored by their commitments to Islam. Similarly, Trica Keaton's (2006) study of North and West African female students in France as well as Kathleen Hall's (2002) exploration of Sikh youth in Britain provide rich insight into the ways in which cultural identities are produced out of negotiated relationships. Such educational ethnographic studies are key to understanding the production of identities.

Broadly, this study is guided by three questions: How does culture and experience shape teacher identity in the era of globalization? In particular, how did the educational experiences of four teachers shape their identities, including the experiences they had in the context of an Islamic school? And, how did their identities shape the culture of the school? I approached these questions by investigating the Islamic schoolteachers' educational life histories to understand how their backgrounds and teaching identities were connected. Central to this study is the issue of how Islam interacted with schoolteachers' life histories (either as Muslims or as non-Muslims) to help produce a sense of Islam and education within their identities as educators, shaped by and shaping the world of an Islamic school. For this study seeks to understand the multiple social forces that have shaped their identities, providing sites of opportunity and constraint in their daily lives. In many ways, the forces of Islam, American culture, and school as an institution have all provided spaces of opportunity and constraint for the educators whom I introduce here. The social dimensions that informed their senses of self were embraced or negotiated in an effort to craft an identity meaningful in their role as educators of Muslim-American students.

To understand the ways in which teacher identities are produced, it is essential to explore life experiences from an educational perspective, to understand the ways in which participants made sense of their learning and teaching involvements that informed their dispositions as

educators within an Islamic institution. I draw upon the notion of life experience based upon what Clandinin & Connelly (2000) articulate: "We take for granted that people, at any point in time, are in a process of personal change and that from an educational point of view, it is important to be able to narrate the person in terms of the process" (p. 30). Processes of individual experience and change for this study encompass two areas: life history and embodiment.

One way to understand the production of identity is through life history narratives, a site for understanding the learning that informs and shapes identity based upon personal experience. Ethnographic works have well explored life history in relationship to the dynamics of culture in which individuals are situated (Bateson, 1990; Behar, 1993/2003; Eickelman, 1985; Murphy, 1987/1990; Shostak, 1981; Wadley, 1994). These studies report on the ways in which life history narratives reveal inner worlds based upon experiences that influence senses of self and activities undertaken. These dimensions to life history show how culture plays a role in shaping an individual's identity, how an individual shapes a cultural context, and how an individual understands her or himself in relationship to the culture or cultures she or he occupies. As Bateson (1990) described, life history can be seen as based upon the ways in which people improvise: "…the arts of improvisation…involve recombining partly familiar materials in new ways, often in ways especially sensitive to context, interaction, and response" (p. 2). In this way, culture is not a determining force but rather one that is interacted with, and made use of, as individuals craft an existence for themselves.

In conjunction with life history, I draw upon the notion of embodiment to understand the ways in which my participants' experiences informed their identities as teachers. Specifically, I see two approaches in understanding embodiment. One involves the relationships between the individual and perceived objects they encounter, while the other involves the connections among

personal experiences over the course of a life history. For the former, I draw upon Merleau-Ponty's view that indicates an object that is viewed and the one who does the viewing are involved in a relationship based upon mutual influence. As Merleau-Ponty (1964/1968) describes,

> The body interposed is not itself a thing, an interstitial matter, a connective tissue, but a *sensible for itself*, which means [it is]…an *exemplar sensible*, which offers to him who inhabits it and senses it the wherewithal to sense everything that resembles himself on the outside, such that, caught up in the tissue of the things, it draws it entirely to itself, incorporates it, and, with the same movement, communicates to the things upon which it closes over that identity without superposition, that difference without contradiction, that divergence between the within and the without that constitutes its natal secret. (pp. 135-136)

In this way, the interactional nature of the body and the things it communicates with conveys the idea that through the body, one makes the world for oneself, yet the body also influences and shapes that world.

> We say therefore that our body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees them and touches them; we say, because it is evident, that it unites these two properties within itself, and its double belongingness to the order of the "object" and to the order of the "subject" reveals to use quite unexpected relations between the two orders. It cannot be by incomprehensible accident that the body has this double reference; it teaches us that each calls for the other. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 137)

In this way, the body participates in its relationships with the world and crafts pathways for itself, a sort of subjectivity, while it is also shaped by forces it exists within, a sort of objectivity. As will be seen, the forces in which the individuals participated shaped them in ways that revealed both their subjugation and agency as people.

The other way I deploy embodiment here is to understand its relationship to personal experiences based on connections to past experiences. Bateson (1990) described fluidity and discontinuity as two forces central to life histories, forces emerging out of the ways people improvise their lives, as a way of crafting a meaningful existence for themselves. The first

involves aspects of lives that may stay consistent over time, such as personal relationships or professional careers. The second, however, involves changes in lives, such as giving birth, adapting to the unfolding lives of children, or changing jobs. "Fluidity and discontinuity are central to the reality in which we live. Women have always lived discontinuous and contingent lives, but men today are newly vulnerable…" (Bateson, 1990, p. 13). Fluidity and discontinuity, I argue, exist as two ends of a spectrum, with most people falling somewhere in between in relationship to experience. Just as a person may stay within the same marriage for many years, the type of activities they do within that role may shift. As such more fluidity than discontinuity emerges in this process. Indeed, the improvisations that emerge out of life experience are important here, as both men and women in this study experienced fluidity and discontinuity in their lives. Individuals embody their life experiences differently, based upon the fluidities and discontinuities they have encountered, and how they make sense of such encounters. In this way, individuals become subordinate to social processes or actively engage with them, producing understandings and experiences of subjugation or agency (Holland et al., 1998; O'Loughlin, 2006).

For the purposes of this study, I consider embodiment as the essential ingredient which shaped the personal characteristics of the instructors, and played an important role in the formation of their identities as teachers. As such, my study centers upon their salient life history experiences I underscore in the text, experiences that were embodied by them in the following two ways: 1) their specific educational life history experiences that shaped their particular dispositions as teachers, including the educational knowledge they acquired and 2) their important and particular experiences with Islam as well as American culture. These dynamics provide a basic framework for understanding the ways in which they experienced their teaching

identities differently at the Islamic school, based upon the extent that they could comfortably embody Islam and American culture for themselves, a key component to the way in which the school's culture functioned. Belonging, for the teachers, hinged on both. The extent to which they experienced fluidity or discontinuity related to the combination of Islam and American culture they embodied led them to feel more or less at home in school. As such, the religious (read Islamic) and the secular (read American) were embodied by the teachers (through their activities prior to coming to the school as well as during their careers at the school) in ways that supported their knowledge growth as well as the functioning of the institution, yet produced feelings of greater and lesser degrees of being at home.

Returning to the Stuart Hall (1990) quote at the beginning of this introduction, it is important to see identity as a process: not simply formed and then represented, but rather, formed by forces over time and shaped within a local context. This study is thus based upon moments in time in which the teaching identities of Islamic schoolteachers were "captured" in the course of interviews and observations. Within the context of my fieldwork, the ways in which the teachers represented themselves in particular moments in time to me, and the ways in which I attempt to represent them accurately here, speak to the ways in which I crafted this study, based upon the notion that their identities' end point was their role as teachers in an Islamic school. Not knowing the future, my work attempted to capture the life histories up until the time I knew them at the school.

The idea of the production of their identities as educated individuals entails processes connected to socio-cultural dynamics, producing particular responses and effects, has been written about by scholars (see Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996). Moreover, the ways in which their experiences entailed preparation for their roles as teachers, constituting a process of

socialization into a teaching identity, dovetails with anthropological conceptions of socialization (Spindler, 1974). Yet, socialization into an identity need not be seen as a "totalizing" process, yielding either assimilated or non-assimilated individuals into dominant or non-dominant culture. Instead, individuals can be seen to hold identities that are connected to greater or lesser degrees to more than one culture (Keaton, 2006; Sarroub, 2005). In the case of this study, this entailed varying degrees of relationship to Islam, based upon life experiences. One participant was born and educated as a Muslim, another had studied about Islam and converted to the faith, yet another had studied Islam for over 15 years yet maintained a desire to not convert, while the last participant portrayed here had only learned about Islam in the context of her teaching career at the Islamic school over the course of eight years. The relationships of the teachers with Islam were part and parcel to their identities, identities forged by social forces and life experiences, generally, as well as by the particular forces associated with Islam and Islamic education. It is the latter that is the focus of this study.

The production of the teachers' identities was influenced by global and local forces, either at the Islamic school (where the flows of global Islam met local cultural dynamics) or coupled with their lives before joining the school. As such, the global and the local is an important way to conceive of their identities in relationship to the context they worked. Specifically, I define the global and the local as the relationship between globalizing forces and local culture.

For this study, global and local refer to two elements: 1) Globalization as a way to understand how global forces met local culture and how these played out in the personal experiences of the local teachers. Their life histories interacted with such forces, mainly the forces of Islam coupled with American culture, which came in the form of experiences they

embodied. Indeed many of the global forces the teachers pointed to involved Islam, a potent force linked to Muslims globally and in US society. 2) Islamic education as a global and local force, both historically and currently. It has historically involved both, in the ways that local cultures have shaped and been shaped by the presence of Islamic educational institutions, a formal educational dynamic, as well as the informal educational processes associated with Islam, such as those based on personal relationships between teachers and students. In the case of this study, as I will describe, the Islamic school was a site where the global and local came together to produce a curriculum hinging on religious Islamic components and secular American subject matter. Indeed, global Islamic religious forces met local secular cultural forces in ways that produced a hybrid curriculum. Lastly, global and local dynamics were central to the school as a cultural space, where knowledge was drawn upon and shaped to support its functioning.

For globalization, I consider the ways in which the global takes local form, and the local takes global form (Appadurai, 1996). This dual dynamic provides a basis for understanding the ways in which globalization entails multifaceted social processes that are not easily reduced to simply "global" or "local." As Appadurai (1996) explained, using the example of India, "It is….a site for the examination of how locality emerges in a globalizing world, of how colonial processes underwrite contemporary politics, of how history and genealogy inflect one another, and of how global facts take local form" (p. 18). Although he uses the example of India, the idea serves as an important point in terms of the ways the global and local can be understood in particular cultural contexts. In this way, the global and the local can be seen as historical, political, and tied together in ways that transform everyday life. For this study, this entailed for the teachers such things as the experiences of migration, visiting other countries, learning through the "global" stories others told, and interactions with immigrants and cultural "Others",

especially those with whom a group identity was developed and shared. Indeed such dynamics are part and parcel to the global era we live in, and central to the stories of the teachers in this study.

Moreover, to consider the ways in which the teachers' identities interacted with global and local forces, one can conceive of it in terms of culture. "In traditional anthropological terms, this could be phrased as the problem of enculturation in a period of rapid culture change…But it does take on some novel dimensions under…global conditions" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 43). The production of identities for the teachers entailed their own interactions with the global forces of Islam, and that for becoming Islamic schoolteachers in a local Muslim-American context, the challenge was one of enculturation or socialization of themselves into that context. This socialization, from a globalization standpoint, is central to the ways in which American society is transforming, and forms a key component within the experiences of teachers as they adjusted, with varying degrees of challenge, to the Islamic school. Embodying the global in the local were part and parcel to the narratives of the teachers.

Beyond discussing globalization in terms of general cultural processes and identity formation, globalization can be understood in relationship to the specifics of Islamic education (I consider Islamic education, from a cultural standpoint, as the ways in which individuals are socialized into Islam, formally and informally). Much scholarship has demonstrated the global and local nature of Islamic education. Some studies have shown the institutional dimensions of Islamic education in historical perspective (Makdisi, 1981) in terms of its origins and development in the Middle East, while others have emphasized its personal quality, such as Berkey's (1992) study on personal relationships and Islamic education in medieval Egypt. Other studies have demonstrated the social dynamics of Islamic education in different cultures across

the world (Boyle, 2004; Eickelman, 1985; Fischer, 1980; Haddad, et al., 2009; Hefner, et al., 2007; Messick, 1993, Zine, 2008). These studies have demonstrated the rich variety of understandings and approaches to Islamic education in both historical and contemporary perspectives. However, few of these studies focus on the US (with the exception of Sarroub, 2005 and Haddad, et al., 2009). And none focus on the functioning of an Islamic school in the US, particularly in relationship to teacher identities. But to understand Islamic education as a cultural force it is necessary to delve briefly into its history, including its spread to the West.

The perpetuation of knowledge as it relates to Islam over time is traced back to the Qur'an. The book itself is considered by Muslims to be the literal word of God. It was passed from God[2] to the Prophet Muhammad via the archangel Gabriel over the course of 22 years in the early seventh century and formed a basis for the Islamic religion. As Ruthven (1997) pointed out, Muhammad's actions are central to the sources that have been passed down over time, revealing the ways in which the early community revered their prophet. The primacy of the oral over the written word was tantamount in seventh century Arabia, and much of the original stories of the Prophet were remembered by the early community and later transmitted to written texts (Ruthven, 1997, pp. 39-40). These stories (which assumed the Prophet Muhammad as a model for Muslims) coupled with the Qur'an served to guide both the individual Muslim believer as well as the wider Muslim community. These functioned as a basis for the Islamic faith as well as the organization of the early community. Over time, the Qur'an and the custom of the Prophet became canonical, forming a central place within the arena of Islamic law (Ruthven, 1997).

The development of Islamic education is highly linked to physical space, especially that of the mosque. The mosque was an important site where Muhammad instructed his community

[2] *Allah*, in Arabic, but understood by Muslims as the same God of the Jews and Christians.

and where later Muslims would recite the Qur'an (a guide to the believer and the community), a site where Muslims learned about and perpetuated their faith—a practice that continues today. The elementary Islamic school (*kuttab* or *maktab*) developed during the Umayyad period (mid-seventh through the mid-eighth centuries of the Common Era), and was possibly modeled on the Byzantine primary school, however its emphasis was on Qur'an and Arabic. The school functioned as an "important agent for socializing different ethnic groups into the Islamic faith and its way of life" (Landau, 2013). As such, it served to spread and perpetuate the faith in the wake of the Muslim conquests of the Middle East and North Africa. As Boyle (2004), noted,

> As Islam spread, so too did the schools that taught the Qur'an. Like the religion they promulgated, these schools intermixed with local institutions and took on the distinctive cultural characteristics of the localities in which they were situated…Indeed, these schools were the bedrock of a system of Islamic education that flourished in many Muslim countries in pre-colonial times. (p. 1)

Indeed similar dynamics were to be found among Islamic institutions of higher education. The development of higher education was connected to the development of institutions of basic learning. As scholarly discourse grew surrounding the Qur'an, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, Islamic law, and Arabic, particular members of the Muslim community became renowned thinkers and teachers, and around some developed schools of legal thought within Islamic law. Moreover, Muslim scholars drew upon the works of the ancients, including the Greeks, which influenced their medical texts, astronomical writings, and philosophical works, to name just a few. Makdisi (1981) pointed to the ways in which Islamic learning developed in its institutional capacity, with elementary learning leading to higher education. For Makdisi, the development of Islamic learning is conflated with the development of institutions. Thus, "the development of the college in Islam went…from the masjid [mosque], to the masjid-inn complex, to the madrasa and other like institutions...the madrasa provided him [the student] with

all his essential needs for learning" (Makdisi, 1981, p. 31). He also cites subject matter in formal settings (e.g., the Nizamiyya in Baghdad, the first college in the Muslim Middle East, established in 1066 CE). This involved a division of the fields of knowledge, the organization of learning (e.g., curriculum), learning methodology, and the community of students and scholars—all during the medieval period. However, Makdisi assumes the development of education to occur within an institutional history, a history marked by progressive development, suggesting western models of education as the pinnacle of progress. Berkey (1992) and Chamberlain (1996), writing against such a notion, demonstrated that education also took place within "informal" educative spaces, such as around personal connections or within households, as evidenced by historical texts from Cairo and Damascus. These proved important sites where knowledge was passed on, between scholars and students, and made available to all. Berkey (1992) demonstrates how this dynamic constituted a central component to Islamic education in medieval Cairo while Chamberlain (1996) explores how it served social elites in medieval Damascus.

Education for Muslims underwent significant transformation in the 19th and 20th centuries, a time when the Muslim heartlands were colonized by European powers, and later experienced processes of decolonization. Eickelman (1985) discusses the decline of Islamic higher education in the 1930s, in its institutional capacity, yet the perpetuation of valued forms of Qur'anic knowledge, originally taught in such places.

> The disjunction between the collapse of higher Islamic education in the 1930s and the continued respect for the culturally valued knowledge which these institutions transmitted and reproduced provides a useful point of departure for exploring the relation between systems of meaning and the social contexts in which they occur. (Eickelman, 1985, p. 6)

Understanding these latter particulars in relationship to a "traditional intellectual's" social biography is part and parcel to Eickelman's study. At one level, he explored how valued forms of Islamic knowledge were perpetuated over time, within or outside of formal institutions of

learning, especially as they related to the biography of a scholar. Moreover, education as providing a space for competing ideologies is expressed through descriptions of public and private understandings of Qur'anic memorization, the subjects taught and methods of instruction at the Yusufiyya mosque-university, and the relationship of the political to the educational (including the domination of French-run schools). Eickelman thus considers education, historically and politically, as instrumental to social and political change. Similarly, Messick's (1993) work on Yemen explores knowledge (especially as enshrined in legal texts) during the Ottoman-British colonial era and its transformation after independence. Taking the example of schooling, he traced the birth of the new government school as emerging as the primary form of education for the masses in place of its traditional Qur'anic school counterpart. Furthermore, Fischer (1980) considered the role of faith and education in the everyday lives of Iranians as a central premise to their mobilization by intellectuals against the Shah's regime. This was similar to the situation of colonial Morocco, where the transformation of knowledge involved spaces of acquiescence and resistance to authority, directed toward what the future state might look like. Knowledge transformed and mobilized the masses through the insertion of political thought into the traditional lesson circles for students and the public. The most salient of these discursive insertions hinged on questions of nationalism.

These authors highlight the ways in which education interacted with the political conditions of colonization and decolonization in the 19th and 20th centuries. The emergence of western forms of education in a context historically influenced by Islamic education meant that Muslim education took on a "religious" form. In this way, the separation of the religious and the secular in the West was imposed on the educative sphere through western colonialism, rendering

traditional forms of education as "religious" and "backward" in comparison to the European-derived institutions that were established (see Eickelman, 1985 for a discussion of this).

These dynamics speak to the ways in which the secular and the religious both diverged and overlapped. The historical dynamics of "religion" in the Muslim world entailed both the secular and the sacred coexisting, at least theoretically, under the umbrella of Islam, with the conscious divergence of the two occurring during the colonial period. As Asad (1993) pointed out, religion as a distinct category emerged from Western traditions associated with Christianity.

> The medieval Church was always clear about why there was a continuous need to distinguish knowledge from falsehood (religion from what sought to subvert it), as well as the sacred from the profane (religion from what was outside it), distinctions for which the authoritative discourses, the teachings and practices of the Church, not the convictions of the practitioner, were the final test. Several times before the Reformation, the boundary between the religious and the secular was redrawn, but always the formal authority of the Church remained preeminent. In later centuries, with the triumphant rise of modern science, modern production, and the modern state, the churches would also be clear about the need to distinguish the religious from the secular, shifting, as they did so, the weight of religion more and more onto the moods and motivations of the individual believer. (Asad, 1993, p. 121)

The distinguishing of the "religious" from the "secular" over time eventually allowed for separate discursive categories. Yet with the rise of European colonialism and European thought, religion, as a distinct category, could be exploited by Western missionaries and scholars whose efforts centered on the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Religions, coupled with Victorian evolutionary thought, could then be ranked hierarchically, with some standing closer to the ideal of European religious beliefs and practices while others stood far away from them. In any case, religion became a site of investigation, a category reified and knowable. In this way, the study of religion was part of a larger project of investigation by western scholars centered on places of European colonial interest, such as the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Said's (1978/1994) classic text, *Orientalism*, discusses the ways in which western scholarship was part and parcel to the

colonial enterprise; the domination of the oriental other. As Said points out, "the general liberal consensus that "true" knowledge is fundamentally non-political (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not "true" knowledge) obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced" (p. 10). In this sense, Said's work demonstrates that western Orientalist scholarship of the 19th century, while theoretically non-political, was in fact imbued with political meaning that served the colonial establishment. This establishment, including its religious/secular divisions, inserted itself into the colonial world through the assistance of scholars, missionaries, and administrators.

The colonial period influenced the Muslim world greatly by shifting educational patterns that existed historically. The emergence of "modern" Western educational institutions in Muslim lands and study abroad participants from the Islamic world in Europe signaled the hegemony of Europe and the West in the educational realm, symptomatic of their rise in global authority. Many institutions of education developed by Western powers were inherited by postcolonial nation-states that emerged in the wake of decolonization, and transformed into national education systems (e.g., India, Morocco, etc.). This process included cultural shifts of older institutions, such as that which happened to two institution of higher education, one in Morocco and one in Egypt.

Al-Qarawiyyin is located in Fez, Morocco and was founded as an institution of higher "religious" learning in the ninth century. It fell into a period of decline during the colonial era; however, its curriculum was updated and secularized in the postcolonial era, soon after Morocco's independence in 1956, and it became an institution of national education. Currently it is the oldest continually operating higher education institution in the world. Al-Azhar is located in Cairo, Egypt and was founded as an institution of higher "religious" learning in the tenth

century. Through the periods of colonization and decolonization it remained firmly oriented as a site of Islamic learning, thus retaining its "religious" character, despite the influences of Western colonialism. Today it remains one of the most prestigious institutions of Islamic higher education. As such, Western influence shaped institutions of education in Muslim lands, whether providing frameworks for "secularizing" education (as in the case of al-Qarawiyyin) or in the case of reacting against secular and Christian forces to preserve religious education (as in the case of al-Azhar). In sum, these features of Islamic education historically show there is precedence for secular and religious connections in the arena of education in the Islamic world, important for understanding the Islamic school this study focuses on. Indeed, the religious and the secular are dynamics associated with the impact of Western colonialism.

The migration of Muslim peoples to the West historically and more recently can be regarded as part of a broader process surrounding the globalization of Islam. This is true given that Muslim peoples voluntarily left, or were forced from, their traditional homelands for varying reasons, ranging from economic opportunities to political oppression to slavery, many going to the (former) colonial metropoles in Europe or to the United States (Bowen, 2010; Diouf, 1998; GhaneaBassiri, 2010; Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Nyang, 1999). Knowledge of Islam traveled beyond its heartlands, and inspired a generation of African-American individuals who sought freedom from cultural oppression through the Nation of Islam, an American Islamic sect that was a mixture of Black national consciousness and Islam. Education has been a feature in the movements of Muslim peoples, either in the construction of Islamic schools for their communities or in the experience of the non-Islamic schooling of the dominant society. As such, Muslims and their relationship to education as a force in the era of globalization speaks to the ways in which the global connects to the local, including the ways it is embodied, negotiated, and resisted

(Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Haddad et al., 2009; Hefner & Zaman, 2007; Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). The process of globalization in education is one that has affected many educational systems throughout the world, including those in the Muslim heartlands, in turn affecting local people.

The dynamic of education for many Muslims hinges on the religious and the secular, meaning the Islamic and the local non-Muslim culture, particularly in the West. The experiences of Muslims in public, secular schools, such as in the United States (Sarroub, 2005) and France (Keaton, 2006), are informed by curriculum structures connected to larger socio-cultural forces, dynamics that Muslim youth fully embody, negotiate, or resist. As noted, Sarroub's (2005) text focuses on the experiences of Muslim Yemeni-American girls who attended a public high school in Dearborn, Michigan. She illustrates, through her own ethnographic fieldwork, the ways in which the girls lived in and negotiated two worlds, the world of America (including the public school they attended) and the world of Yemen (based on their lives at home). Keaton (2006), by contrast, underscores the experience of Muslim African girls in school in France, who occupied the "outer city" (comparable to America's "inner city") of Paris and the challenges of racial discrimination associated with education that they faced, given their presence represented a threat to national identity. The emergence of Islamic schools in places where Muslim immigrants have settled speaks to the bringing of traditional forms of learning to new places, to craft educational pathways for Muslim children in a foreign culture. Haddad et al.'s (2009) *Educating the Muslims of America,* looks at the dynamics of learning among Muslims in North America, including one chapter devoted to the presence of Islamic schools in the USA.

> Exact numbers of Islamic schools in America have not been easy to ascertain…Figures range somewhere over 200, with some estimates reaching as high as 60,000 children receiving parochial Islamic education in a given year…numerous factors impinge on parents' decision on whether or not to give their children this kind of training, including

> cost, distance, the quality of education provided, and what context parents feel will provide their children the best opportunity to learn about Islam, to appreciate their faith, and to prepare for their adult lives. (Haddad et al., 2009, p. 11)

The increasingly visibility of Muslims in the United States speaks to new waves of immigration, conversion into the faith by non-Muslims, and the perpetuation of belief systems by younger generations of Muslims. The presence of Islamic education, whether occurring in the home, the mosque, the "Sunday" school, or a full-time school, speaks to varying dispositions within these communities, based on both idealism and practical reality. The presence of Islamic education, in whatever capacity, suggests that religion is indeed considered a fundamental component to one's life as a Muslim; a disposition that cannot be cultivated through public education alone. Cultivating children as Muslims involves a choice by parents on how to best accomplish this, a choice that may be based on their own upbringing, their own culture, the practical realities of living in a non-Muslim context, or similar.

The perpetuation of the faith through its people, of course, is true of all world religions. However, the practices by which it is perpetuated can vary greatly across different times, places, and peoples. The cultures of Islam alone, many of which are represented in the United States, speak to the diverse ways in which the faith is learned, both past and present. Eickelman (1985) provides an example of Qur'anic learning from early twentieth century Morocco. In that context, the schoolteacher provided the children verses of the Qur'an written on a wooden slate, verses to be memorized that day. Verses were recited aloud to facilitate memorization of the holy book. The schoolteacher carried a stick and would hit a student who recited incorrectly, and students were told "that any part of their bodies struck in the process of Qur'anic memorization would not burn in hell" (Eickelman, 1985, p. 63). In this way, students were socialized into becoming individuals who had memorized the holy text in its entirety. Gupta (2009) by contrast, discusses

textbooks used in the early twenty-first century in Muslim schools overseen by the Madrasa Board of West Bengal, India. These textbooks included information elaborating the flow of Bengali culture across religious lines. "The inclusion of poems by Lalan Fakir [considered a Hindu and Sufi Muslim Saint], for example, establishes the blending of Muslim and Hindu religious and folk traditions" (Gupta, 2009, p. 39). In this context, students learned about elements of their religious culture that they shared with Hindus, a way for cultivating a national identity among them centering on shared understandings. As such, Islamic education for young learners was and is shaped by the temporal and social conditions in which it is situated, a phenomenon ranging greatly (Boyle, 2004).

These particulars speak to the ways in which Islamic education can be theorized; providing context to understanding the functioning of the Islamic school where I conducted field research, as well as to understanding the production of teaching identities. Islamic education is, generally-speaking, a community-based social movement in the US that follows globalizing patterns that take local form (Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1994/2010). To understand the functioning of a community-based Islamic school in the US, I consider Appadurai's (1996) notion of global flows: "…the work of the imagination…is neither purely emancipatory nor entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern" (p. 4). Appadurai's conception of "scapes," based upon global cultural flows, is an apt way to understand the phenomenon of Islamic education. Appadurai (1996) sees these occurring in five forms: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes (p. 33). What could be added to this list is religioscapes. As a global cultural form, Islam and its connection to Islamic education constitute global flows that are, indeed, annexed into localities, producing particular cultural formations.

These flows form a social imaginary that, for Appadurai, is part and parcel to the practices of locals. “The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 31). In this way, the school was a site for the local Muslim community to articulate itself, drawing upon Islamic and American resources, as a way, in Bhabha’s (1994/2010) words, to “author its agency” (p. 331).

Moreover, I consider Bhabha’s (1994/2010) notion of cultural difference: “To revise the problem of global space from the postcolonial perspective is to move the location of cultural difference away from the space of demographic plurality to the borderline negotiations of cultural translation” (p. 319). As such, it is possible to view the Islamic school in this study as a site produced out of power relations between the global forces of Islam and local American interests and practices. As a community-based initiative centered on a local Muslim community, participants actively sought to produce a space for themselves, as will be discussed in Chapter One, by actively fusing an Islamic curriculum (based upon transcultural beliefs) and a secular, Michigan-based American public school curriculum. In many ways, the mixing of the Islamic and the American (like the religious and the secular) speaks to the ways in which Islamic education shifted over time, especially during the colonial period, when Western influence impacted educational systems for Muslims. As will also be discussed in the first chapter, the presence of Islamic education in the United States, forming a social movement, emerges out of historic ties between the United States and the Muslim World, ties that took shape locally in the form and functioning of the Islamic school. As such, these dynamics are important in this study to understand how Islam and American culture informed the identities of the teachers who participated in the local Islamic school.

In considering the global and the local in relationship to the cultural processes, the production of identities, and the historical and contemporary dynamics of Islamic education, it is important to consider the work of teachers in a particular context, how experience is made meaningful there. As Dewey (1938/1997) noted, "Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into" (p. 38). In this way, experiences constitute educational life histories which entail the experiences and adaptations of the teachers who participated in the Islamic school. But beyond embodying their own experiences, all the instructors supported the embodiment of knowledge among their students, knowledge connected to Islam and American culture. The embodiment of knowledge thus supported the production of identities among the Islamic schoolteachers, the identities of their students as Muslim-Americans, all as part of the culture of the school.

As such, the school was a global and local cultural world in which the knowledge teachers brought through their journeys was built upon and adapted, producing the ways they experienced their identities. The teachers embodied their identities differently at the school, and as such, their embodiments were related to their life experiences generally, yet with Islam and American culture in particular. As such, the school was a site that drew upon their knowledge and shaped it, while being shaped by the teachers' practices, all in an effort to support the production of Muslim-American youth. This dynamic, the interaction of individuals and global Islam at the school, produced particular dispositions among the teachers, involving feelings of belonging and not fully belonging, feelings central to the ways they saw themselves in a global and local context.

Why this Study?

Little research has been done on contemporary Islamic education, particularly in the United States. The lack of knowledge of Islamic educational institutions, especially as institutions that feature an array of subject matter and activities that occur within them, has only served negative social characterizations that reduce Islamic schools to "bastions of terrorism" or simply founded upon rote-memorization—doing little to integrate students into modern society (Boyle, 2007; Sikand, 2005). While certainly some Islamic schools have sought to cultivate students for enacting political violence (Sikand, 2005), by far the majority, both currently and historically, have sought to transmit valued religious and cultural knowledge to young people. The reasons for doing so, ultimately, have been to preserve religious and cultural knowledge so to perpetuate a community of believers.

The presence of Islamic education, whether in the form of full-time schools, after school programs, or weekend sessions, signals rising levels of social diversity in the United States. As cultural groups increasingly seek to have schools that meet their desire to preserve valued religious and cultural knowledge—in fact a part of American educational history (Bradunas & Topping, 1988; Ravitch, 1974; Reese, 2005) —it is all the more important to understand why this is the case. Cultural preservation, social integration and social mobility are important goals for many immigrants and minorities who seek to articulate life-ways based upon their cultural understandings. How their institutions are organized to serve the communities in which they are embedded is an important part of educational research that deserves scholars' and policy-makers' attention.

As such, it is imperative to resist misconceptions of Islamic education, particularly by those who live in non-Muslim majority societies, as increasing numbers of Muslims are located

in lands where Islam historically was not present, or at least marginally present. Islamic education, as a social movement in the United States, serves the need of the Muslim community to preserve a way of life that's different from the secular and Christian-based forms of living that are embraced in public schools and private religious schools that appeal to secular and Christian-minded people, but not necessarily Muslims. Other social movements in education that involve schools centered on immigrant and minority communities are found among Native Americans (tribal schools), Asian-Americans (Japanese and Chinese heritage academies), and African-Americans (Afrocentric schools), to name but a few. In this way, children are instilled with a sense of understanding and respect for the cultural group to which they belong. If Islamic schools can be woven into this tapestry of institutions, with greater understanding and respect for their functioning, it may just mean a better quality of life for those who participate in such schools. This future, no doubt, could be shared with their non-Muslim neighbors and friends. In this way, coming to terms with Islamic education, either in the form of tolerance or acceptance, holds the possibility of a way to promote peace, understanding and coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States.

Method

This study is based upon two and a half years of ethnographic field work conducted at the Islamic school, from the spring of 2010 to the fall of 2012. It began as a pilot project in which I studied one teacher, Nour, to understand her experiences as a learner and teacher, but also to assess the feasibility of conducting a larger study centered on more teachers. I chose to give back to the school by volunteering as an intervention instructor, supporting individual and small groups of students who struggled in mathematics, language arts, and social studies.

The research involved a two-stage approach. The first stage included a survey of teachers at the school, in which I asked for basic information on their cultural backgrounds and learning and teaching experiences (see Appendix B). Eight out of approximately 18 personnel responded (approximate because some individuals were not currently teaching but had had teaching backgrounds and might teach at the school in the future). Based upon responses, I focused on teachers who participated in the school in different ways, representing religious and secular studies in the curriculum, as well as teachers who held varying religious and cultural backgrounds so as to get a sample of teachers who well represented the diversity of the teachers at the school. As such, I chose to focus on four participants, one of whom was myself. The second stage of the study entailed participant-observation in the teachers' classrooms. I did so to understand the daily types of content, pedagogy, and interactions they had with their students as a way to understand their personalities and identities as teachers, and how the subject matter they taught fit within the curriculum of the school. For Nour, I observed her teaching Arabic to kindergartners and second graders as well as Qur'an to first graders in the school, including, for the latter, the mosque part of the Islamic center in which the school was situated. For Arabic I observed her on five occasions and for Qur'an on three occasions. For Ayoob, I observed him teach social studies to his combined fifth- and sixth-grade class as well as his combined seventh- and eighth-grade class. I observed him teach the fifth/sixth-grade class on four occasions and the seventh/eighth-grade class also on four occasions. For Laura, I observed her teach her first grade class on five occasions. For each observation I took field-notes on their classroom teaching practices. For myself, I wrote field-notes, which were reflections on my experiences working with the students, including information about their backgrounds, our interactions, and my practices as an educator.

The second stage of the study entailed interviews (see Appendix C). I conducted semi-structured interviews with the three participants, all of which were audio-recorded. The interviews helped me to chart their educational life histories and the way they understood these, as well as to understand their practices as educators. Interviews, on average, lasted from half an hour to an hour per session, with the shortest being 10 minutes and the longest 2 1/2 hours. I interviewed each of the three teachers (Nour, Ayoob, and Laura) on four separate occasions. Field-notes were taken while all interviews were conducted. For myself, I chose to write reflections on my life and teaching experiences that eventually were organized into the self-portrait study that serves as Chapter Four.

Field-notes based upon the interview and observation data were coded to underscore the salient parts of interviews and observations, noting concepts that repeated themselves or were pointed out as important by the interviewer. These were then used to construct the four portrait chapters. Themes were gleaned from across all four portraits, themes around which the study is centered, and are discussed in relationship to the study's findings in Chapter Six.

Archival data, in the form of local newspaper articles and books that charted the social dynamics of the local area, were collected to understand the social context of the Islamic school as part of the local community, especially to understand the place of Muslims. Moreover, the school's website along with informal conversations with teachers and staff all informed my knowledge of the functioning of the school, especially as it related to local Muslims and non-Muslims in the area. These are discussed in detail in Chapter One. Lastly, all names associated with the Islamic center, school, teachers, and students have been changed.

This Study

This study centers on the production of identities among four teachers in an Islamic school. It focuses primarily on the question: How did the educational experiences of four teachers shape their teaching identities, including those they had in the context of an Islamic school? It explores the ways their educational life histories interacted with their time as Islamic schoolteachers, centering on the forces that worked to produce their identities as teachers. Such dynamics produced varying feelings of belonging among the teachers. The findings of this study, the feelings of belonging or not fully belonging as experienced by the teachers, hinge on the role Islamic and American cultures together played in their lives, a relationship which they embodied with more or less ease (see Appendix A). Their embodiments of both prompted identity shifts that became the lens through which they viewed their work. While all teachers certainly did not feel like outsiders, the subtleties in belonging and not fully belonging as hinging on Islam became apparent as I analyzed the data. This was important in considering how they fit into the organizational structure of the school, which drew upon their knowledge and which, in their varying roles, supported them teaching in ways that produced Muslim-American students. As such, the intersection of their backgrounds and their work at the school thus produced particular dispositions and practices among the instructors, dynamics that shaped their teaching identities.

In sum, the journeys of the teachers produced particular identities among them that supported the work of the Islamic school. The Islamic school wove the global and the local together (both elements having played a role in the history of education in the Muslim World), particularly based on Islamic religious and American secular cultures. The weaving of both, as part of global and local cultural flows, was supported by the ways in which the school drew upon the background knowledge of teachers while bringing about new knowledge for them. All these

elements served to support the socialization of students into their faith and into American society, yet produced varying feelings of belonging for the teachers.

CHAPTER ONE

Weaving the Islamic and the American: The Islamic School in Social Context

One of our goals is to develop the self-disciplinary skills that will enable students to be life-long learners, contribute to the betterment of human culture, and be vice-regents (caliphs) on earth.

From the mission statement of the Islamic school

The Islamic Center and School is located on a busy, tree-line road, surrounded by small houses and adjacent to a Lutheran church—a landscape typical of Middle America. It is in East Lansing: a town of approximately 49,000 during the time of my fieldwork, with a majority-White yet culturally diverse, largely middle-class population, kept economically afloat by the nearby local university, where students, faculty, and staff contribute to its economic vitality. It is not far from a mid-sized urban area, Lansing, with a diverse population of about 115,000, including lower class Whites, Blacks, Latinos, and Asians. It was hard-hit by the declining automobile industry and recent economic recession; government offices, small businesses, and weathered factories hearken back to Michigan's industrial heyday.

When I first visited the Islamic Center and School, I was struck by the students' and teachers' varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These were exhibited through their spoken languages, their dress, and their facial features. Upon entering, I immediately felt I had entered a cross-cultural space where people of diverse origins had come together through their shared faith. Over time, I learned that non-Muslims also regularly participated in the Center, particularly as teachers at the school and as curious visitors from the surrounding community. The multiculturalism I observed paralleled the multiculturalism of the surrounding community, a community that included immigrants and refugees from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa; minority groups such as Blacks and Hispanics; and students from all over the state and around the globe. As such, I was keen to understand the history and functioning of the Islamic school,

especially as situated within the local Muslim community, an important part of the multicultural tapestry of the overall population.

In this chapter I explore the question: what are the social origins and characteristics of the Islamic school that contributed to its figuring as a cultural world? Here, I trace the origins of the Islamic school, locally and globally, paying attention to its development in the past and in relationship to the local Muslim community. I also highlight its characteristics as a school for that community, particularly during my time there as a researcher. As such, this study focuses on the ways in which the Islamic school drew upon and shifted four teachers' knowledge as educators, shaping their identities to support the socialization of students into the cultural realms of Islam and American culture. To understand the Islamic school as a cultural world I will demonstrate how it functioned to weave both together.

Glocalization and Community-Based Education

I frame this chapter around the concepts of glocalization and community-based education, concepts key to understanding the Islamic school in social context. Glocalization (Robertson, 1995) broadly refers to processes associated with globalization (whether economic, political, religious, etc.) which are then expressed within particular local cultural environments. As Robertson (1995) writes: "Globalization – in the broadest sense, the compression of the world – has involved and increasingly involves the creation and incorporation of locality, processes which themselves largely shape, in turn, the compression of the world as a whole" (p. 40). At stake in these processes are the notions of the universal and the particular. While the universal has been associated with the global and the particular with the local, the process of globalization (or glocalization) increasingly collapses the two concepts. The global is thus inflected in the local and the local in the global. As mentioned earlier, Appadurai (1996) noted: "The work of the

imagination…is neither purely emancipatory nor entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern" (p. 4). In this way, the processes and practices associated with globalization take local form by virtue of the interests of locals, seeking to create spaces and practices that are negotiated, between the emancipatory and the disciplined. In this way, the cultivation of agency through schooling, for example, is a negotiated process, but one that supports community-building.

Moreover, this dynamic is not only a globalization phenomenon but also a postcolonial one. As shown in the previous chapter, the introduction of secular forms of education in the Muslim World through colonialism led to a reshaping of the educational landscape, rendering Islamic educational institutions as "religious" rather than as merely educative. This led to a rise, in many postcolonial Muslim countries, to formidable institutions of secular education, connecting diverse peoples to local and global economies, and tied to local cultures situated in newly formed nation-states. The transformation of education through glocalization processes occurred not only in the Muslim World, but also the West. As postcolonial and globalization-related migrations of Muslim peoples to the West (including the US) have occurred, diverse communities have sought and developed their own community-based education that hybridizes curriculum, connecting cultures of origin to local cultural realities. These activities produce hybrid institutions of education, such as Chinese schools, Afro-centric schools, Islamic schools, and so on. In the case of the Islamic school in this study, the process of hybridity involved the combining of Islamic and American cultures through curriculum, fusing a religious culture and a local secular culture, a negotiated process based upon cultural realities and emerging out of historical circumstances.

I define community-based education as educative practices in which local people impart culturally valued knowledge to their children. This is done to support their socialization into a specific culture or cultures, to help them survive and thrive as adults. These practices are evidenced in both informal ways (Levinson et al., 2000; Mead, 1928/2001; Spindler, 1974) as well as in formal, institutional settings (Levinson et al., 2000; May, 1999; Spindler, 1974). Community-based education, moreover, can be a negotiated process in which locals negotiate their educational desires, based upon cultural needs, with the interests of the surrounding culture (Levinson et al., 2000; May, 1999). As such, community-based education adapts to local concerns in order to preserve cultural traditions yet socialize students into cultural worlds that are deemed important by community members. As noted, examples in the US of such schools include schools related to religion, such as Catholic schools, schools related to ethnicity, such as tribal schools for Native Americans, and schools related to race, such as Afro-centric schools for Blacks. In this way, varying communities in the US seek to perpetuate life-ways deemed valuable for the next generation.

The concepts of glocalization and community-based education are pertinent to conceiving Islamic schooling as an educational phenomenon associated with a social movement (specifically, the presence of Muslims in the US), a movement that has arisen through globalization processes. This has been true in the US as the increasing presence of Muslims has taken hold, through immigration and conversion. Locally this has taken form over time through a growing community which has sought to preserve life-ways and to adapt to cultural conditions. The Islamic school in East Lansing is an example of an institution that has emerged in light of glocalization processes and constitutes a community-based form of education. As will be shown,

it is a site that has sought to socialize children into the religious culture of Islam and into local secular American culture.

Muslims and Islamic Education in the US

To place the Islamic school in social context, it is necessary to explore the global and local social conditions that gave rise to it and supported its perpetuation as an institution. In this section, I will briefly explore the history of Muslims in the US. I will then provide a short overview of Islamic education in the US currently, a phenomenon associated with the historical conditions of Muslims. In the next section I will explore the rise and functioning of the Islamic school as an Islamic and American space by situating it in the history and social conditions of Muslims in the Lansing and East Lansing area. As noted in the introduction, Islamic education initially developed in the Middle East and was shaped by local and outside forces as it spread to other lands. To understand the history of Islamic education in the US, it's important to first understand the history of Muslim peoples there, a history that stretches back to the beginnings of the nation.

The Muslim presence in the US traces its origins to the earliest Africans brought as slaves. Muslim slaves perpetuated and refigured their Islamic beliefs and practices to fit the social circumstances of slavery (Curtis IV, 2009; Diouf, 1998; GhaneaBassiri, 2010). Slave narratives of Muslims exist that shed light on these conditions, including that of Omar ibn Said, who wrote his 19th century autobiography in Arabic, a language of scholarship in his native West Africa. His narrative recounted his life, his enslavement, and his desire to return home—which he never did (Diouf, 1998; Hunwick, 2003-4). Although many Muslims did live as slaves, slavery over time did much to eradicate Muslim beliefs and practices among the slave

population, a phenomenon that gave rise (in the early 20th century) to a desire among Blacks to return to perceived Islamic roots.

In the early 20th century, African Americans sought to reconnect to an Islamic identity many saw as lost through slavery, by tapping into a global Islamic movement or subscribing to indigenous responses to it. The former movement was Ahmadiyya Islam, a sect of Islam that emphasized the teachings of Gulam Ahmad. Gulam Ahmad saw himself as the awaited Muslim messiah or *Mahdi*. Some adherents considered him a prophet as well, countering the normative Islamic tenet that Muhammad was the last of the prophets. Ahmadiyya Islam arose in British India as a missionary movement, in many ways a response to European Christian missionary activities as well as British colonialism. One Ahmadiyya missionary, Muhammad Sadiq, came to Chicago to spread his message, where the movement initially took hold. He soon found that African Americans were more responsive to his message than others, and he subsequently worked to tailor his efforts toward them, centering on their rights as a race as well as human rights, more generally, against oppression. As Curtis IV (2009) aptly pointed out, "Missionary Muhammad Sadiq emphasized his belief that Islam was a universal religion for all people and strongly advocated for social equality for African Americans" (p. 32).

While perhaps thousands of African Americans converted to Ahmadiyya Islam, others developed their own indigenous responses to the movement, namely the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam. The Moorish Science Temple religious movement was based upon the teachings of Noble Drew Ali, who viewed African Americans as Moroccans, and instead of Negro, claimed they were Asiatic in origin. His idea was to return "Moors to their original religion, create a sense of community separate from Whites, develop self-respect and self-love, follow a strict moral code, and encourage spiritual development" (Curtis IV, 2009, p.

35). The religion was furthermore based loosely on versions of the Qur'an, Bible, and Western esoteric traditions. For members, however, it was a powerful way to reconnect to perceived origins that the institution of slavery had severed. By contrast, the other indigenous Muslim American institution to rise in the early twentieth century was the Nation of Islam: a movement originating in Detroit. It was based on the belief that Black Muslims were the first people on earth and that White people were devils created by a mad scientist named Yacub. "Appearing in the person of Wallace D. Fard [the movement's founder], the Almighty selected him, Elijah Muhammad, to mentally resurrect Black people and lead them back to Islam" (Curtis IV, 2009, p. 37). Furthermore, it was understood that Blacks would separate themselves from Whites and that an apocalypse would eventually restore Blacks to ruling the earth. In many ways these movements can be seen as reactions to social conditions associated with slavery and racism.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Christian and Muslim immigrants from the Ottoman Empire, many of whom were from today's Syria and Lebanon, entered the social fabric of the United States. They came to escape poor economic conditions in their homelands and were attracted to opportunities in the US. Most did not intend to stay, but rather desired to accumulate money and then return home, which one third of them did (Karpat, 1985). Their emigration was facilitated by the presence of American missionaries in Syria, who made few converts but who "built schools, churches, and charities, all of which helped introduce and attract Syrians to the United States" (GhaneaBassiri, 2010, p. 139). Because the American missionaries held closer ties to Syrian Christians than to Muslims, it was the former group who first came to the US and existed in larger numbers than Muslims, who arrived soon after. As such, Syrian Christians became the leaders of the Syrian community in the US. Once they arrived, Muslim and Christian Syrians worked as peddlers and small business owners throughout the country, including in

Michigan. Many were drawn to Detroit by the industrialization that followed World War I, particularly Henry Ford's automobile factories, which gave rise to what is today the largest Arab American community in the country (GhaneaBassiri, 2010).

These dynamics in the Muslim community were soon met with an increase in the community's social diversity. Other Muslims had come to the US from different parts of the world, fleeing hardship in their countries of origin and/or seeking economic opportunity in the United States. Examples of such groups include Punjabis (Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs) who came to work in the fields of California (Leonard, 1992; Takaki, 1998), and Muslim Albanians, who came after fleeing a Greek invasion of their homeland amidst a crumbling Ottoman Empire, and who sought economic opportunity in the automobile factories of Detroit (Trix, 2001). In 1965, the United States government passed the Hart-Cellar Immigration Bill which revoked old immigrant quotas, effectively removing barriers for immigrants from other countries to come (Bailey, 2008). Immigrants from global regions previously unrepresented in the US came in large numbers, especially Asians and Africans—among them many Muslims. It is precisely this dynamic that gave rise to Islamic schools in the United States, serving the needs of these diverse Muslim travelers and settlers.

Today, Muslim communities represent a tapestry of varying ethnic, racial, and cultural groups. However, these communities have faced a great deal of hardship over time, as they have sought to carve out an existence as cultural minorities. Discrimination based upon skin color and religious beliefs are just some of the challenges Muslims have faced, particularly as Western cultural understandings and mass-media images have historically cast them in a negative light (Said, 1978/1994; Said, 1997). The events of September 11, 2001 only served to provide further scrutiny to a community already existing as cultural "Others" by virtue of their Islamic beliefs

and practices, dynamics not associated with dominant US culture. As such, the community has faced discrimination and suspicion due to their increased visibility, as attempts to build religious centers attest (Calhoun & Imam, 2012; Mungin & Basu, 2010). However communities have worked hard to carve out spaces, both formal and informal, to practice their religion and provide an education to their children, working to perpetuate traditional life-ways.

Islamic schools in the US (and elsewhere) are a form of schooling that support the life-ways of Muslims, both indigenous and immigrant, in an effort to preserve religious and cultural beliefs and practices within a dominant non-Muslim, secular society (Haddad et al., 2009; Hefner & Zaman, 2007; Zine, 2008). While some may argue that this negatively entails a segregated form of schooling, Islamic schools for Muslims represent the values and desires of Muslim communities across the nation. As such, these institutions represent schooling on the margins, in which Muslim minorities actively seek to reproduce their life-ways and community in a non-Muslim context, outside the purview of dominant private and public forms of schooling. As such, like other Americans, Muslims in the United States find themselves negotiating and striving for better ways of life for themselves and their children, while perpetuating their traditions and values.

Islamic schools function as a way to preserve the religious and cultural heritage of Islam—serving to reproduce Muslims as a minority community in the US as well as one connected to a global *ummah*.[3] In many ways the *ummah* functions as an "imagined community" that links Muslims in disparate locales together by a shared sense of faith. This shared sense of faith is reinforced by the flow of Islamic knowledge through electronic media and print, including the internet, satellite television, and religious writings that are circulated globally.

[3] Muslim community.

Moreover, rituals such as the *Hajj* bring believers together from throughout the world as they perform pilgrimage rituals in and around Mecca. These dynamics inform the beliefs and practices of Muslims worldwide, a phenomenon that transcends regional and national borders—effectively linking Muslims globally.

Today Islamic schools in the US function as full-time schools, after-school programs, and "Sunday" schools, all designed to help impart the faith in addition to the learning that happens at home (Haddad et al., 2009). It is estimated that there are approximately 235 full-time Islamic schools today (Haddad et al., 2009, p. 22) and any number of after-school or Sunday school type programs "with some estimates reaching as high as 60,000 children receiving parochial Islamic education in a given year" (Haddad et al., 2009, p. 11). Islam is currently the fastest growing religion both globally and in the US, and it is expected that the number of schools and educational programs will increase. One of the challenges Muslim schools face is linking curriculum and teaching to the diverse needs of families, particularly those who have differing expectations about what should and should not be taught, based upon cultural and personal interests (Haddad et al., 2009). Given the cultural diversity of Muslims in the US, this is very much a reality for Islamic educators.

The increasing presence of Muslims in the US, and their visibility in the media (often framed according to violence in relationship to 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Arab Spring), has led to prejudicial attitudes towards them. As such, Muslims emerge as a contested minority group (Abdo, 2006; Lawrence, 2004; Rosen, 2008). Fears over the increasing presence of Islam in our society have met with great reprisal, as the Qur'an burning episode (sparked by a Florida pastor's machinations) and the contested Islamic centers in Missouri and Tennessee illustrate. As such, Islamic schools are often considered, both in the US and

elsewhere, as bastions for the cultivation of terrorists (Haddad et al., 2009; Hefner & Zaman, 2007; Sikand, 2005), with events at such places as the Lal Masjid in Pakistan fueling such suspicions (Hasan, 2007).

The Islamic school as a contested site of socialization in the US is a recent development, as Muslims have been increasing in numbers through immigration and conversion throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries. However, this is not an unheard of phenomenon historically. Nineteenth-century Catholic schooling, brought about by Irish Catholic immigrants (then a contested minority group), made "natives" worry that their Protestant ways were being undermined by Catholics—a phenomenon that was especially true in New York City (Ravitch, 1974). Despite such debates, schools designed to preserve the religious and cultural life-ways of diverse peoples in the US have been part of the social and educational landscape for well over a century. In the 19th century, locals in Michigan began setting up schools for their respective cultural groups. Early schools were set up for German immigrants to preserve their heritage while schools for early African Americans who migrated from the South also developed (Glazier & Helweg, 2001). Today, myriad forms of educational institutions for minorities and others exist in Michigan as well as across the country: Catholic Schools, Jewish Schools, Native American Schools, Chinese immersion schools, Bilingual schools, and the list goes on. This diversity of schools, in many ways, represents the needs of these different communities, including marginalized and minority peoples, all constituting efforts to instill cultural beliefs and practices in the younger generation.

Muslims in the Local Community

Lansing and East Lansing comprise diverse communities. As noted, the Islamic school of this study was situated in East Lansing: a town of approximately 49,000 during the time of my

fieldwork, with a majority-White yet culturally diverse, largely middle-class population and home to a nearby university, which boasted faculty and students from around the globe. It is adjacent to Lansing, a mid-sized urban area, with a diverse population of about 115,000, including lower class Whites, Blacks, Latinos, Middle Easterners, and Asians, who came to work in local businesses as well as the local automobile industry, that in the 20th century attracted poor Whites and Blacks from the South, Middle Easterners, and Central Americans. This was augmented by a refugee population, brought in by local churches, which supported the resettling of Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans in the local area.

The school was housed inside an Islamic center which included a mosque as well as spaces for social and educational activities. As such, the Center catered to the spiritual, social, and educational needs of local Muslims. As an institution woven into the fabric of the culturally diverse local Muslim community, the school and the Islamic center it was housed within in many ways symbolized the social diversity of the greater Lansing area. The Center and school responded to the needs and desires of local Muslims as a place for worship, community activities, education, and interaction with the non-Muslim community, all in an effort to live peacefully in the United States.

The multiculturalism of the local Muslim community in many respects paralleled the larger multiculturalism that defined the social landscape of the town and small urban area where local Muslims resided. As noted, this multiculturalism encompassed a variety of ethnic, racial, and cultural groups, who lived and worked in the local area, many of whom were affiliated with the local university. Unlike the ethnic enclaves that set up boundaries between one cultural group and another (e.g., Chinatowns, Italian neighborhoods, Jewish neighborhoods, etc.), the Muslims of greater Lansing were spread out, encompassing a wide variety of districts that were not

necessarily defined by a single ethnicity or religion, a phenomenon found among different cultural groups in varying global contexts (Barth, 1969/1998; DiLeonardo, 1984; Wadley, 1994). However, a family's social class (whether or Muslim or non-Muslim) might indicate whether one lived in the wealthier town of East Lansing or the urban area of Lansing. Indeed families who sent their children to the school represented a range of classes, including poor and well-off, an important dynamic, as will be shown, for the school.

Local Muslims traced their origins to various parts of the globe, whether locally, the Middle East, Africa, or Asia. The multiculturalism that defined local Muslims, specifically, and the surrounding community, more generally, constitute a facet of globalization as a current and historical force, whereby diverse peoples find themselves together (and in varying relationships) due to a variety of political and economic reasons (Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1994/2010, Clifford, 1997; Pratt, 1992/2008). Moreover, their relationships emerged through economic and political needs, which involved strategies for surviving and thriving locally.

With these forces in mind, it is possible to say that Islam developed locally under two instances: 1) The emergence of Islam among African Americans and 2) the presence of university students and faculty from Muslim countries. In 1928, a Moorish Science Temple house of worship was founded in Lansing; however, community participation did not last long as the building was vacant by 1930 (Miller, 2012). Not long afterwards, Temple No. 16 was founded in 1934 in Lansing, representing the Nation of Islam—the same year as the disappearance of the movement's founder, Wallace D. Fard. The Nation of Islam attracted converts among local Blacks, including students at the nearby university who came to learn about Black history. While Black history in the early 21st century has become part and parcel to public discourse, only a few decades ago, it was an entirely new field that came about in the

wake of the civil rights movement. The temple remained a fixture for local Black Muslims throughout the 50s and 60s, eventually closing down in the mid-1970s with the death of Nation of Islam leader, Elijah Muhammad, and was transformed into a Sunni (mainstream) Muslim Mosque (Miller, 2012).

By the late 1970s, there were a few dozen students at the university who were Muslims, both African American and immigrant students and faculty. Following mainstream Sunni Islam, most prayed initially in the international center on campus (Lavey, 2009). However, with the assistance of faculty and community members, the Islamic Center was built in 1979—initially geared towards Muslim members of the university (Lavey, 2009). Over time, members of the surrounding Muslim community joined, a community that now included both student sojourners and permanent settlers. As such, the Muslim community at the time of my research included 1) international students and faculty affiliated with the university; 2) immigrants and refugees from varying parts of the world—particularly Somalia; and 3) African American Muslims (some of whom were converts while others were the children of converts); and to a lesser extent 4) non-African American converts, such as local Whites. The local Muslim community totaled around 3,000 people (Snell, 2002), among them professors, students, small-business owners, and other professionals who contributed to the wider community. Certain ethnic groups among Muslims, such as Somali, were more tight-knit than others, but all interacted with the surrounding society in varying ways. Students, faculty, professionals were drawn here, whether international or not, for educational and work opportunities. Others, particularly refugees, came due to the intervention of local churches, which helped to designate Lansing as a UN refugee resettlement site, a place where refugees could find solace, work, and a livelihood away from the violence of their home countries. Refugees came from around the globe, including Burma, Bosnia, Cuba,

and—significantly for local Muslims—Somalia. They were assisted in their adjustment to American society through the efforts of a local refugee development center. However, ethnic communities also worked to support their own groups, helping one another to survive in the local community. This was especially true of the Somalis, many of whom came as refugees to a place they neither chose to be nor necessarily wished to stay. As will be discussed, the Islamic Center and School became important sites for their community to gather, organize, strategize, and of course, educate their children.

The Islamic Center and School

The presence of local Muslims was represented symbolically in the architectural existence of the Islamic Center. The towering minaret, columns, and Arabic and English scripts denoted it as a center for Muslims, many of whom were seen throughout the area wearing colorful headscarves for women and long, white shirts for men. It was a central place for them to come together for worship, community activities, and for the education of their children. The Center regularly welcomed non-Muslims to visit and learn about Islam and about Muslims. The surrounding community largely accepted the Muslim presence, as noted by interfaith sessions and Ramadan dinners where Muslims and non-Muslims interacted and, of course, the very presence of the Islamic center itself. However, not all American communities have been as accepting towards their Muslim minorities, as events in Joplin, Missouri and Murfreesboro, Tennessee attest (Calhoun & Imam, 2012; Mungin & Basu, 2012). In this way, the surrounding community was different in its acceptance of culturally diverse Muslim locals.

Immigrants often seek to impart the cultural traditions and life-ways of their home countries to their children in the United States. The socialization of children into that knowledge may happen in a variety of venues, whether at home with family members, through participation

in community gatherings, or through schooling. Among Muslims in the local community, all three played a role. The Center was an important part of this process by existing as a space for members to perpetuate their religious beliefs and practices as well as support their connections to the Muslim and ethnic communities to which they belonged. These included coming for prayers (especially the Friday communal prayer), participation in community activities (such as the school's graduation, a Qur'an competition, the science fair, as well as Ramadan dinners) as well as providing a place to educate their children (see Fig. 2). Indeed, around the time of my fieldwork, nearly 600 worshippers were drawn to prayer services regularly (Lavey, 2009). These included a significant number of Somalis, Africans, Arabs, South Asians, Central Asians, Southeast Asians, and African Americans, many of whom had children who attended the school. In this way, the Center demonstrated a transnational and transcultural character, given the connections local Muslims had with other parts of the world, connections many actively maintained.

Some families, I came to know, had a missing parent or relative, many times a father, who remained behind in the country of origin to work. Community members supported the family in varying ways, including through financial assistance, as well as in helping to raise children. I learned this was true of many of the Somali families, where going back home could mean certain death. Other families, by contrast, maintained an active agenda of moving back and forth between the US and the country of origin, such as those from India and Pakistan.

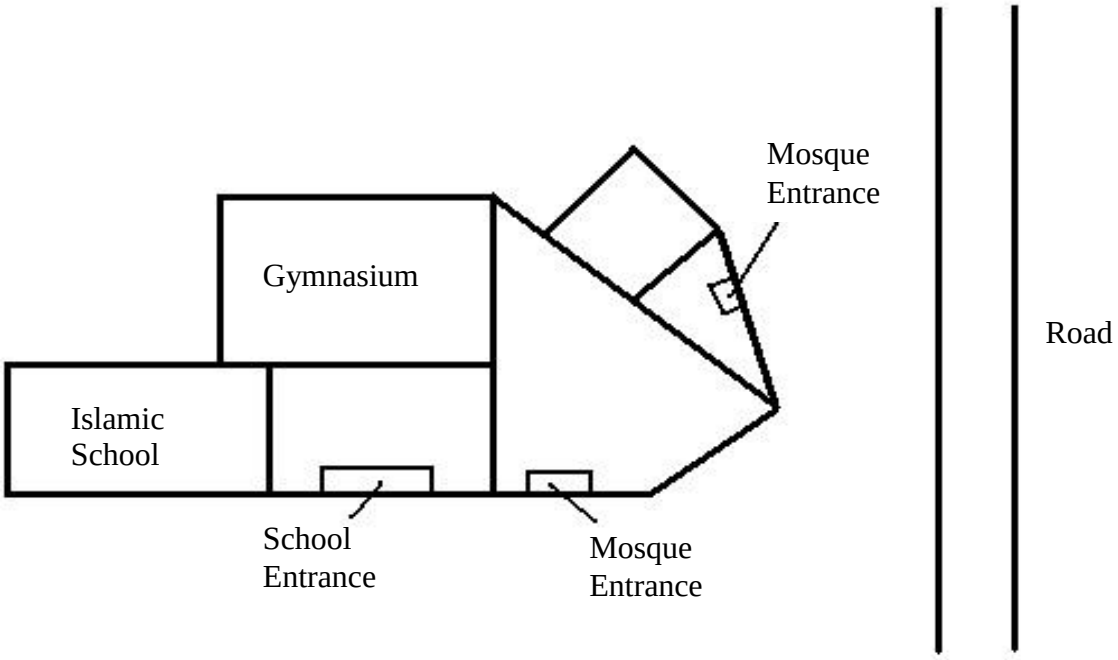
In many ways, the cultural diversity exhibited within the local Muslim community signals the United States' influence overseas. This influence comes in the form of push-pull forces that are central to human migration, as well as the United States' geopolitical interests. Given the United States' historical role in the conflicts of Somalia, Afghanistan, and Bosnia,

numerous asylum-seekers pushed from these regions have been resettled locally. Moreover, those in other regions have also successfully been granted asylum locally. As a UN designated refugee site, supported by local churches, Lansing hosted migrants from many parts of the world. An important way for the refugees to adjust to American culture was through the assistance of members of their ethnic or cultural groups who had come beforehand, the assistance of the local refugee development center (which offered English language and American culture classes), as well as, for Muslims, the support of the local Muslim community—which could be gained through networks associated with the Islamic center. In this way, the Center provided a space for Muslim refugees, as well as Muslim immigrants more generally, to adapt to American culture without losing their religious beliefs. In this way, the Center supported them in establishing networks to help the newly arrived forge life-ways in a new land.

Apart from refugees, students and faculty from foreign countries were attracted to the area because of its higher education institution. Many hoped to come, become educated, and then return to their respective countries—applying their knowledge in jobs back home. Others desired to come in hopes of finding jobs and establishing roots locally or elsewhere in the US. The Islamic Center provided a place for these individuals as well as their refugee counterparts to socialize, help one another and support their hopes and dreams for the future.

Although the Center was a site of many social functions, it did follow particular guidelines. The Center was geared towards Sunni Islam, the majority sect of the faith, to which local participants subscribed. Despite this focus, all Muslims were welcome, although presumably those of varying sects gathered and worshipped elsewhere. Whatever varying belief and cultural systems participants may have had did not appear to be represented in the activities of the Center, which focused solely on what community members considered the "basics"—the

Figure 2: *The Islamic Center and School*



five pillars of Islam. The five pillars, as Ruthven (1997) discusses, includes: 1) *Shahada*, the declaration of faith, that is, believing there is no god but God and that Muhammad is his messenger. 2) *Salat*, prayer, which involves precise ritual prostrations towards Mecca (the holy city) that occur five times each day. 3) *Zakat*, alms-giving to the less fortunate, is a compulsory form of charity. 4) *Sawm*, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, the month when the Qur'an was revealed by God to Muhammad. 5) *Hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca to be completed once in one's life, if one is financially and physically able. These were upheld as ideals at the school, and certainly were practices that most Muslim students, teachers, and families followed. However, the diverse practices of people from varying Muslim cultures shined through informally in cultural activities that were held as well as in the activities of teachers at the school. These included serving particular dishes during the fast breaking rituals of Ramadan or the use of song and music in lessons (some Muslims frown upon such activities, despite rich traditions of

music in Muslim countries). Furthermore, the Center maintained its operations through the support of donors, both locally and from overseas. A board of trustees oversaw the functioning of the Center. Participation by locals, both Muslim and non-Muslim, also helped to keep it afloat.

The Center and area Muslims were largely welcome in the East Lansing/Lansing community. This was so because of the general cross-cultural tolerance that existed in the community as well as the interfaith activities and learning opportunities members of the Center actively encouraged. One member of the Center noted that inquiries about the Center and about Islam were welcome, saying, "We would like people to know what actually happens inside the Center," as well as, "Our center is always open from the morning to late in the evening. There is nothing here that is unusual. People pray and socialize" (Lavey, 2009). While the surrounding community was welcoming, there were pockets of those who did not favor having a local Muslim population or a mosque ("Columnists," 2002). A recent letter circulated regarding a local town council meeting noted with alarm, and at the top of its agenda, the expansion of the Center for community activities. Such desire was put to a public vote, to determine whether or not a private center could increase its space.

Furthermore, a recent attack on the ninth anniversary of 9/11 in many ways symbolized the contested nature, however minor, of the Center and the local Muslim community generally. A man, apparently drunk and angry, left burnt and feces-laden pages of the Qur'an on the steps of the Center, during an *Eid al-Fitr* celebration (Domsic, 2010; Miller, 2010). The attacks on Muslims, Islamic institutions, and people perceived to be Muslim are wide-ranging and have affected various parts of the United States. The recent attack can be understood as part of a larger wave of attacks that have occurred intermittently since September 11, 2001, attacks that suggest Islamophobic dispositions among certain people and communities. During my fieldwork, several

teachers remembered attacks on Muslims that had taken place locally, right after 9/11. As such, violence against Muslims, as acts of retaliation across the nation, also occurred locally. On a final yet curious note, the attack on the Center revealed its transnational and transcultural linkages after reprisal attacks occurred on a church in Malerkotla, India, a small city in Punjab that is majority Muslim in a state that's primarily Sikh and Hindu (Lavey, 2010).

Holistically, the Center was not just a place of worship, but of gathering for local Muslims as well as a place of education, for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Community gatherings could be formal and informal. Indeed regular events were held to educate non-Muslims on Islam. For Muslims, an after-school Qur'an learning program was in place in the form of a "Sunday School" and Qur'an and Islamic studies summer classes for Muslim children were offered each year. It had a full-time pre-kindergarten through eighth grade Islamic school that was its biggest educational undertaking, to support the primary education of local Muslim children.

As such, the Center fostered community gathering and community education, both designed to support the local Muslim community and its perpetuation—as well as the education of non-Muslims. In many ways, the Center and school both served to preserve the cultural and religious heritage of Muslims, while also actively seeking to engage in the surrounding culture—producing opportunities for Muslim-American dialogue and understanding.

Islamic schools as institutions in their own right are a relatively recent phenomenon in the US (Haddad et al., 2009). I found this was true in East Lansing and Lansing, as any educational services would have historically been provided by local mosques or in Muslim homes. As the local Muslim community grew in the 1970s and 1980s, including a large Arab population of students, a school developed that was, to my knowledge, funded by Saudis, and catered to local

Arab families. This school was an Arabic-language only institution, and designed to socialize the children of local Arabs into their native tongue as well as, presumably, a Saudi-based form of Islam. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Arab population on campus and in the local community dropped. With the increase in suspicion surrounding Islamic and Middle Eastern networks of funding and education, the school promptly closed its doors.

As the local Muslim community grew, particularly in the 1990s, with increasing numbers of Asians and Africans, as well as those from all corners of the globe, a desire to construct an elementary school was felt. The school first opened in 1996 in a separate but nearby building to the Center. As the Muslim community enlarged, the Center and school were gradually more cramped and not conducive for community gatherings and educational services. Planning quickly became an issue when local Muslims petitioned for expansion in the late 90s, with some non-Muslim locals likely contesting it because of its Islamic orientation (Snell, 2001; Snell, 2002; Tato, 1999a; Tato, 1999b). With 9/11, funding that had been promised evaporated—and with donors fearful of attracting suspicion, the hope of expansion had to be delayed further (Snell, 2001; Snell, 2002). The wait would last several years, in which time fears died down among local citizens and government officials. Eventually, agreements with the town council were made and the necessary work was carried out. The Center was able to increase its space as well as open the doors to a much desired expanded elementary school.

The Islamic Center included both the mosque and the elementary school. Architecturally it was modeled on historical patterns of schools attached to mosques, a phenomenon found throughout the Muslim World, and similar to counterpart Christian schools attached to churches. The mosque boasted separate sections for men and women, conforming to Islamic norms. At the time of writing, the women's section was being expanded, as its size was smaller than the men's

section—an action based upon the needs of local Muslim women. As noted, believers regularly came for the five daily prayers—with the Friday prayer attracting the most. The Lutheran church next door allowed worshippers access to their parking area, an important support for Muslims who drove in from all over the East Lansing/Lansing area to attend services. Indeed, many of the families who attended prayer at the mosque sent their children to the adjacent Islamic school.

The school's primary role in the community was to socialize Muslim children into both their faith, Islam (the religious), as well as American culture (the secular). To that end, the school upheld a dual curriculum where religious subject matter was taught alongside secular subject matter that conformed to Michigan state standards. As such, the school prepared students for their lives as American Muslims while also, in a more immediate sense, helped to prepare them for life in public schools—where the majority would go after graduation. Although the school's curriculum was designed to serve students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, it offered grade levels according to enrollment.[4]

Its dual curriculum translated into two departments: religious studies and secular studies (See Table 2). The former involved classes in Qur'an (the school emphasized memorization; students learned recitation and memorization together), general Islamic studies (including Islamic history, rituals, and health), and Arabic, all of which were formally taught in increasing detail from lower to upper elementary grade levels. Of course, elements of these were also taught in the secular subjects. Secular studies involved four content areas: mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies, all core subjects taught as part of American public education. Elements of Islamic history and faith were infused, in greater or lesser degrees, in explicit and

[4] During the 2010-2011 school year, the school only went up to seventh grade. Also, some grades were combined, such as fifth/sixth and seventh/eighth, as occurred during the 2011-2012 school year.

implicit ways, in secular studies classes, whether through curriculum, instruction, or both. The core content areas were taught across grade levels and conformed to state standards—which involved students taking the state MEAP test and other standardized tests. In the past, students' scores were competitive and on par with their counterparts in East Lansing public schools. Extra-curricular activities, such as a Qur'an recitation competition, a science fair, and gymnastic activities were a few examples of things that went on at the school. The divide between the two curricular areas, religious and secular, was not strict. Islamic studies was infused with secular, American dynamics through the use of particular textbooks, pedagogical styles, and technology that were connected to US culture. Similarly, secular studies was infused with topics and discussions and practices that were Islamic in orientation. Faculty and students were thus enmeshed in mixtures of the two, a phenomenon important to the school and to this study.

Table 2: *Dual Curriculum*

Religious Studies	**Secular Studies**
Qur'an, Arabic, and Islamic Studies	Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science

As noted, the religious and the secular were not divided historically in the Muslim World, but became divided through the impact of Western colonialism. The experience of local Muslims, seeking to combine both, was a way of negotiating livelihoods that hinged on Islam but adapted to local cultural conditions in a Western society, a process associated with postcolonial and glocalization dynamics. Therefore the religious and the secular is an apt way to think about the school, not as a "traditional" Islamic school but as an Islamic-American School in the US, a country where the religious and the secular is traditionally upheld as separate. This constituted a cultural dynamic appropriated by the school.

As will be seen, the mixture of Islamic (religious) and American (secular) cultures was apparent in the teaching practices of the four teachers in this study, who may have emphasized explicit instruction in religious or secular subject matter, but whose implicit instruction included religious and secular components, components theoretically associated with the "opposite" department. As such, the weaving of Islamic and American cultures was a key dynamic in the school, which worked to draw upon and shape teacher's beliefs and practices as well as socialize students into their faith and into surrounding secular, American culture.

The school's student population fluctuated each year, depending on enrollment, but during my fieldwork there were around 150 students. The student population was multicultural, again reflecting the local Muslim community's ethnic and racial diversity. Families paid annual tuition fees, based upon their income. The school was heavily dependent upon tuition to finance its operations, as well as the donations provided by local Muslims, as well as those far away. Despite the support of families and donors, the school struggled to maintain its finances—none of which came from the state despite its following state standards. The majority of students had Somali backgrounds, with parents and grandparents who were refugees. Because many Muslim families (both Somali and non-Somali) were poor, the school offered scholarships based upon need, to help alleviate the financial burden of sending their children to the school.

Teaching faculty numbers fluctuated somewhat during my time at the school, but generally there were around 14 teachers, with approximately six staff members, including a principal and administrators. Teachers and staff who were Muslim were referred to as "sister" followed by their first name (for women) and "brother" followed by their first name (for men). For non-Muslim personnel, they were referred to in the traditional American public school manner as "mister," "missus," or "miss," followed by their last name. Islamic studies teachers

were mostly Muslim Middle Eastern women, while secular studies teachers were mostly women, both Muslim and non-Muslim, along with one male social studies teacher, the only male teacher in the school apart from myself. Staff included Muslim women of varying backgrounds, notably White (the principal), Indian (an administrator), and Somali (another administrator). Faculty and staff worked hand-in-hand to support the school's functioning, all of which was overseen by the board of trustees affiliated with the Center.

One salient feature related to the figuring of the school was its gendered nature. Students were required to wear school uniforms, which resembled uniforms one might expect to see in a Catholic school. Typically this involved a light blue or white shirt and dark blue pants. In the earliest grades, students usually sat at mixed-gender tables. They would do so while their teacher instructed or they worked on group or individual projects. Starting in fourth grade, students were separated according to gender.[5] In my observations, these included: boys sitting in pairs at desks on one side of the room and girls in pairs on the other; girls sitting two at a desk while boys sat two at a desk; or boys sitting together at a table on one side of the room while girls sat at a table on another side of the room. Moreover, in the early elementary grades many girls were unveiled. By the middle and later elementary grades, all girls were veiled. All the Muslim female faculty members were veiled and wore varying styles of dress that conformed to Islamic norms (typically a *hijab*, coat, and dress, or pants). Non-Muslim faculty generally wore clothes typical of teachers in public schools, neither too formal nor too informal. In this way, the gendered nature of the school upheld and applied Muslim norms to Muslims at the school, norms embraced within the local Muslim community.

[5] This was usually true of the secular studies classes I observed. However, religious studies classes and classes held in the mosque were often gender segregated for younger and older children alike.

As an elementary school, like other American elementary schools, the majority of the teachers were female. In this way, the Islamic school was similar. However, the forms of dress found at the school and the seating arrangements for students after the early grades were gender segregated. In many ways, this pattern was reinforced in the daily prayers children were required to attend in the mosque (if they were emotionally and behaviorally capable) where they would pray in separate areas according to gender. This phenomenon was patterned after adults, who would also pray in separate areas and who would adhere to varying dress codes depending upon Islamic sensibilities, cultural sensibilities, as well as their own tastes.

The Islamic Center and School exhibited many of the cultural traits found among local Muslims. This included the global and local cultures they represented, the desire to perpetuate their religious beliefs and cultural practices, and instill in their children a sense of faith as well as belonging in a new land. The support of local Muslims, as well as the Center and the school's by-and-large acceptance in the community, served well the needs of Muslims. Although setbacks occurred, financially and in terms of acceptance, local Muslims worked hard to support the Center, understanding it as a symbol of their vitality, their hopes, and their future.

Global/Local Muslims and Islamic/American Schooling

The presence of multicultural Muslims in the US led to the creation of Islamic schools—a recent phenomenon in US educational history. Although Muslims have faced a great deal of scrutiny and exist as a marginalized minority community in the US, writ large, the relatively tolerant and accepting nature of the East Lansing/Lansing community allowed them to survive and even thrive locally. In many ways, this phenomenon emerged through a history of multiculturalism locally, one that entailed times of tolerance and times of violence. Muslims fit

well within this particular pattern as they were subject to both forces, yet managed to negotiate their life-ways to continue their presence locally.

As such, the Islamic Center, including its school and community space, served as a site of cultural preservation yet integration with the surrounding society. To perpetuate their own life-ways, as well as connect with the surrounding culture, education became a powerful way to serve that need, through community-based education. Returning to Appadurai's notion of globalization and culture, the local became meaningful for Muslims by virtue of appropriating global flows of Islamic knowledge while also appropriating American educational and cultural knowledge. In this way, Islamic and American cultures, the religious and the secular, were fused together and cross-pollinated a curriculum that animated the school's culture. This was done in both explicit and implicit ways, particularly through teachers' knowledge and practices, as will be shown in the coming chapters. Moreover, a broader conception of curriculum existed, in that the Islamic and the American were woven together in the Center's functioning, allowing it to perpetuate itself through its membership and its activities. As such, the forces of globalization, and its attendant forms of multiculturalism, both historically and currently, served to support the life-ways of local Muslims. As the forthcoming chapters will show, these forces shaped the teachers' identities in particular ways.

CHAPTER TWO

"If Allah Said It, Nour Teaches It": Learning and Teaching Qur'an and Arabic in Sudan and the United States

Oh Lord, increase me in knowledge!

Qur'an, 20:114

Nour learned and taught Qur'an and Arabic in two societies: Sudan and the United States. During one of our interviews together, she fondly recalled two parents who wanted to place their child in a different school. The child, a kindergartner, was noticeably upset and wanted to stay at the Islamic school because of his love for Nour. He told his parents that Nour was a great teacher and that "if Allah said it, Nour teaches it." The parents, surprised by their child's response, chose to let him stay at the school. This chapter attempts to unravel what the child put so succinctly about his teacher, an attempt to humanize an instructor who was beloved at the school, and who actively sought to transmit culturally-valued religious knowledge to her students.

My connection to Nour began during my initial ethnographic forays. As I became familiar with my surroundings at the school, including the helpful staff who sensitized me to the local educational context, I met Nour. Nour, known in the school as Sister Nour, was a Qur'an and Arabic teacher, a Sudanese immigrant, and a life-long educator. She welcomed my desire to talk with her about her educational experiences, conversations which lead to rich insight about her family, her schooling, and her life in two worlds. It is a story that she told to me intermittently over the course of a year, through casual conversation and formal interviews. Her words provided an intimate portrait of her life—one that shifts the lens on Islamic education away from its institutional dimension towards its personal quality. Moreover, her story revealed the ways in which her teaching and learning were contingent upon time and place. As such, her life history is one that I offer in juxtaposition to the negative discourses surrounding and

penetrating Islamic education. In these volatile times, I believe such narrative portraits construct lives which serve to humanize our Muslim friends and neighbors. I believe such perspectives are warranted to facilitate peaceful dialogue and meaningful coexistence. As Islamic scholar Aaron Tyler (2008) aptly stated, "In light of the inimical international context today, coexistence and conflict resolution must be cultivated by our world's cultures and religions" (p. 164).

With these ideas in mind, I present a portrait of Nour by couching her voice in the research literature on Islamic education, life history, and hybridity. I then move into a discussion of her learning and teaching of Arabic and Qur'an in two cities in Sudan. I highlight her experience crossing borders, moving to the US, and then relearning her teaching methodology while continuing to teach both subjects in Michigan. As such, her experiences learning and teaching in two contexts provide insight into the ways in which she developed as an educator in the Islamic school.

Islamic Education, Life History, and Hybridity

The events of September 11, 2011, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the recent democratization movements in the Middle East and North Africa, have been central events in the media, events that have influenced American public opinion regarding Muslims both in the US and abroad. Islamic schooling has been the subject of scrutiny for those concerned about the development of terrorists, both abroad and more recently, homegrown (Cohen et al., 2011). As discussed in the previous chapter, Muslim schooling is criticized, at its worst, for either cultivating terrorists (Hassan, 2007) or, at its best, for its primitive-nature, focusing on rote memorization (Boyle, 2007).

Contrary to criticisms of Islamic education, studies have been conducted to show the ways in which Islamic education is subject to the historical and social forces in which it is

embedded in different societies around the world, both Muslim and non-Muslim (Brenner, 2001; Eickelman, 1985; Haddad, Senzai, & Smith, 2009; Hefner & Zaman, 2007). The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the ways in which an instructor learned and taught subject matter in two contexts, subject matter she had been associated with throughout her life as a student and teacher. As such, I trace her life history in relationship to this subject matter, subject matter central to her narrative. Her story is one that includes her formative years in Sudan and the transformative impact of time and place on her own learning and teaching. As such, I ask: How did her experiences with Qur'an and Arabic as a student and teacher shape her identity as an educator, over the course of her life history? Particularly, how did her experience in the Islamic school shape her identity? In this way, I seek to explore what she contributed to the school, how the school context shaped her, and how these dynamics influenced her sense of belonging as an educator there.

I draw upon Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) conception of narrative inquiry, particularly their emphasis on personhood: "We take for granted that people, at any point in time, are in a process of personal change and that from an educational point of view, it is important to be able to narrate the person in terms of the process" (p. 30). I argue that her narrative is one of crossing borders, and is one that reveals the ways in which cultural context and education intermingle and produce educational forms that, on the one hand, preserve and perpetuate valued religious knowledge, yet, on the other, are innovative in the ways in which teaching and learning are pedagogically constructed and experienced.

Masemann (1997) discussed the ways in which pedagogy has undergone historical change in Europe and North America as philosophical models of education have shifted, particularly from teacher-centered pedagogy to student-centered pedagogy (p. 119). While her

emphasis is on large, cultural structures of education, teaching identity in historical and cultural context (as well as teaching knowledge) influences teachers to embody or resist these shifts. As such, subject matter holds the potential for being taught in differing ways, while still preserving the basic forms of knowledge intended for transmission.

The conception of embodiment (Boyle, 2007) is apt to describe the ways in which the Qur'an is learned, a practice with deeply religious significance that cannot be reduced to simple "rote memorization."

> Memorization is a useful tool in many disciplines, but the memorization of knowledge coming from reason is not the same for Muslims as memorizing and embodying the revealed knowledge of the Qur'an. Knowledge coming from reason is not fixed—it can change and therefore does not need to be embodied or engraved upon the mind (or the heart) of the memorizer. The Qur'an, as something divinely created, is fixed and will not change. (Boyle, 2007, p. 185)

The emphasis on fixity underscores the importance of divine knowledge for the believer, knowledge that can be learned and embodied so as to reproduce the words of the text in daily life and in prayer. These words are understood by Muslims to be the exact words of God spoken to the Prophet Muhammad. By embodying the text through recitation and memorization of the Qur'an, Muslims symbolically reconnect with God in ways that transcend both time and place. However, the ways in which divine knowledge can be pedagogically imparted and where learning can occur depends entirely upon context. Arabic, subject matter imbued with both religious and secular usage, in the context of my fieldwork, also constituted a form of embodiment that allowed young learners access to the language of their faith, including the language of the Qur'an.

These cultural dynamics suggest what it means to be an "educated person." As Levinson, Foley, & Holland (1996) describbed, "…the concept of "cultural production" allows us to better understand the resources for, and constraints upon, social action—the interplay of agency and

structure." They go on to note that "a culturally specific and relative conception of the 'educated person' allows [one] to appreciate the historical and cultural particularities of the 'products' of education…" (p. 3). In this way, I argue, the teacher can be a site for inquiry, an individual subjected to the forces of both knowledge and pedagogical traditions, yet also one who holds agency over such traditions—in this case, agency over the structural forms of knowledge transmission. Indeed, Nour's stories of teaching and learning construct a picture of her educational life history, a narrative that conveys the interplay of both and that captures the way she navigated education in two cultures.

I consider life history an effective anthropological strategy for humanizing the voice of a Muslim American teacher (at a time when Muslims face scrutiny in the United States) while also speaking to the educational and social forces in which she found herself over the course of her life. Other studies have well demonstrated the relationship between an individual's life and larger cultural and historical dynamics in relationship to their education (Eickelman, 1985; He, 2002a; He, 2002b; Murphy, 1990; Shostak, 2000). In this way, life history serves to articulate the historical and cultural forces and shifts part and parcel to educative experiences.

Finally, I draw upon the notion of hybridity as a way to understand the blending of educational cultures (namely Islamic Sudan and the secular United States) in the particular context of teaching Arabic and Qur'an classes. Drawing upon Indian postcolonial writers such as Nandy and Bhabha, Young (2001) sees hybridity at one level as "the combination of cultural rootedness modified by openness to the available resources of one or more other cultures…" a dynamic that describes well "the cultural situation of the migrant" (p. 347). For Nour, this sort of hybridity was apparent in her teaching—all suggesting an implicit curriculum centered on producing respectful American citizens and religiously-informed Muslims along with an explicit

curriculum of Qur'an and Arabic understanding. Thus, Arabic and Qur'an learning and teaching as captured through a life history narrative coupled with classroom observations serves as a site to understand the dynamism of Islamic education, disrupting notions of reified and static traditional subject matter, and the ways in which they are learnt. Moreover, these dynamics, as they played out for Nour in her teaching at the Islamic school, produced a particular disposition centered on belonging.

Learning and Teaching in Sudan

Sudan was the largest country in Africa until the southern region seceded from the north in July of 2011, following elections that symbolically ended 55 years of conflict between the north and the south. The northern region where Nour originated spans the arid, Sahara desert region. It includes numerous ethnic and tribal groups, including Arabs and Nubians. This is matched by its linguistic diversity, with languages ranging from Arabic to Ta Bedawie (Sudan, 2011). Its history stretches back to ancient times, where it held strong ties to Egypt, ties that continued into the nineteenth-century when British-Egyptian authority exercised power over the country. Cultural and historical connections remain in place to this day, albeit in less state-based forms. In recent times, and prior to its split, Sudan garnered international media attention due to its civil war that plagued the country, a conflict that had been on-going since independence from Britain in 1956, yet symbolically ending with the 2005 peace accord. The accord culminated in a referendum that determined the country should divide into two: the Arab, Muslim north and the Christian, animist south. Despite these developments, warfare and famine remain key issues in the region, especially Darfur, which has experienced approximately 200,000 to 300,000 deaths as well as an outflow of approximately 2 million refugees as a result of persistent violence since

2003 (Sudan, 2011). While violence historically plagued the southern and western parts of the region, the Arab Muslim north was affected only indirectly by these phenomena.

Nour was born in Kosti, a trading city situated along the White Nile in the north-central part of the country. Kosti was a city that attracted merchants and traders. These merchants and traders were people with different religious and cultural backgrounds. The name Kosti, I learned, was derived from that of a Jewish dairy merchant who set up shop there many years ago and who attracted business, so much so that the city was named after him. The Jews of Kosti left in the 1960s and other cultural groups historically represented have remained behind or left entirely, namely Indians, Greeks, Coptic (Egyptian) Christians, all minorities among a dominant Sudanese Muslim population.

Nour was born into a well-to-do Muslim family in Kosti. Her tribe, Nubian-Denagla, spoke Arabic and was the tribe to which the Mahdi belonged.[6] Her grandfather, Muhammad Ali Hassan al-Nour, was a wealthy and well-known merchant in Sudan, a man who would be the first to teach her the Qur'an. However, the family's financial situation collapsed after her mother died, a family that consisted of four children. Her household soon grew to include more children, eventually totaling 19, particularly after her father's marriage to two wives: one Sudanese and one Ethiopian. Nour, from an early age, took an active role in helping to raise her siblings, a role she naturally performed as the eldest child following her mother's death. In many ways, she saw her journey as a teacher beginning with her experiences supporting her brothers and sisters.

[6] The division is historically a false one as the religious and the secular were conceptually intertwined. The mosque or mosque/school complex has historically existed as a community center in various parts of the Muslim World.

Her formative, pre-collegiate years were spent in Kosti, in the 1950s and 1960s. She first began studying Qur'an under the guidance of her grandfather prior to attending school. She studied ten chapters of the Qur'an as well as the biography of the Prophet Muhammad, with the expectation that such experiences would help her in school, as well as to help socialize her into her faith and culture. She attended a national elementary school, then the dominant educational system, when few private schools existed (later they were numerous and were considered better schools than the national ones). While only boys could attend a school specifically geared towards Qur'an learning, girls and boys were educated about their religion within the framework of the national school curriculum. With her knowledge of Qur'an and Islam, she did well in her studies. Nour's Qur'an education centered on reciting and memorizing the holy text. She was provided some meaning beyond learning how to recite the words—all of which was integrated into an Islamic studies curriculum known as *Din*. This curriculum focused on worship practices (*'ibadat*) associated with the five pillars of Islam, the sayings and deeds of Muhammad (*hadith*), and other Islamic subjects. The focus, at the elementary level, was learning to recite and memorize the Qur'an, as well as gaining an understanding of "a little bit of the meaning of the text," as Nour pointed out. To facilitate memorization, the teacher would recite a passage from the holy text and the students would recite it back. As difficulty in pronunciation would arise the teacher would help the students navigate through the passage. They would be tested on one *surah* for each exam. Because it was integrated with Islamic studies, one other aspect of the learning entailed instilling good manners in students as supported by the *hadith* and Qur'an.

As such, primary and secondary public school in Sudan entailed learning the Qur'an in small segments. The Qur'an itself consists of 30 sections. In elementary school, students in Nour's day learned two sections. By the time students reached the university level, they had not

covered all 30, but covered 15 or so. Curriculum planners chose which *surahs* were learned. If a child wished to learn more or if a family wished for their child to learn more, it was up to the family to decide how to impart this knowledge, by attending another school or participating in another educational arena.

Like Qur'an and Islamic Studies, Arabic was taught as a fundamental part of the national school curriculum while Nour was growing up, much like the way Language Arts and English are part and parcel to the public school curriculum in the US. Like many US students and English, she entered school able to speak Arabic, but learned grammar, syntax, and sentence structure in her classes. This process continued, with greater detail added along the way, as she progressed through her schooling. In Kosti, Arabic was the language used by the majority of the people in their daily lives, and as such, the connection between home and school on a linguistic level, generally overlapped. However, as Nour explained, people spoke different dialects and some did speak different languages. "Most of my relatives did not speak Arabic, they spoke Nubian. I don't know that language, I don't know how to speak it and I don't understand it." As such, Arabic was the language she was used to at home and in school and constituted her first language, a language that she was very comfortable using in daily life.

With her background in Qur'an, Islamic studies, and Arabic, coupled with her experiences helping to raise her siblings, Nour actively chose to become a teacher. After she finished secondary school, she enrolled in a teacher's college in Om Durman, a small city adjacent to the capital of Sudan, Khartoum. There she continued her studies of Qur'an as well as learned how to teach it. She worked with an excellent Qur'an teacher, a man who she recalled may have been a *hafiz* (had memorized the entire text), who helped her learn how to teach the holy text. She recalled,

> He taught us to teach verse by verse. On any given day, I teach one verse (*ayat*) to the kindergarten, like "*qul allahu ahad*." And then I ask them, "What is the meaning of *allahu ahad*? Allah is one. *Qul*? What is *qul*? Say! Say, Allah is one." When they say that one time they get it, it's easy and fast. When they recite an entire passage at once it's heavy, and they lose the meaning. Teaching verse by verse, stretched out over several days, it's easier.

Using script and pictures, she continued in the US using the techniques she learned during her training and experiences in the 1960s and 1970s at the teacher's college in Sudan. The differences, however, hinged on materials. In those days she used paper and colored writing instruments to help facilitate learning, much unlike the school where she teaches today, with its access to the internet as well as CDs to facilitate Qur'an and Islamic learning. She recalled her teaching in Sudan as easier than her later teaching in Michigan, particularly at the Islamic school. This had to do with context as in Sudan there was a shared sense of culture and language. As a local in Sudan she could connect with students and families on a cultural level, and she taught entirely in Arabic, her native tongue.

Her formative teaching experiences took place in Kosti and in Khartoum at the elementary level. She taught Qur'an, history, and Arabic, drawing upon her teacher education experiences as well as her knowledge of the curriculum. The learning process was largely the same when Nour learned both Qur'an and Arabic in Sudan as when she taught Qur'an and Arabic there. This included reading, memorizing, and embodying of Qur'an as well as learning grammar and sentence structure of Arabic. However, due to technological shifts, cassette tapes were sometimes used to get the students' attention and to facilitate learning and memorization. She also mentioned that she was trained to teach in Sudan as the center of the classroom, the figure whom students followed in order to facilitate their learning. However, textbooks remained part of her learning of Arabic, as it had been when she was a student. Her role as the center of the classroom was an important part of her experiences as a student and her early years as a teacher.

Although teachers held a singularly authoritative role in the classroom, collaboration in teaching did happen, and teachers would support each other by sharing ideas and seeking extra help. If teachers performed very well in their work, they would get hired to go to the university:

> If you did extra work they hired you to go to the university. They called it "mature student." I was selected and sent to the *Dirasat al-Idafiyya College* (Continuing Education College) at the University of Khartoum for two years. When they evaluated me, I was at the top in my work as a teacher. However, I didn't finish the course of study at the university. While I was there I learned about economics, social studies, history, and psychology. I wanted to learn psychology to help me deal with the kids since I was in early childhood education. More than learning to read and write, the students needed to learn how to develop a healthy self-esteem. They needed good support to help them with their education, especially since they were experiencing a separation from mom and dad while being at school. Like a doctor, I feel I should know how to treat students, diagnose issues, and work with family to support students.

Nour's experience at the university combined with her teaching experience sensitized her to issues of learning that went beyond content knowledge, and included intangible yet important teaching issues such as psychological support. These became woven into her pedagogical thinking and practices. Noddings (1995) observed that an education which is morally beneficial is one where its aim encourages the "growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people" (p. 366). In this way, Nour's desire as to be a good teacher was coupled with a desire to be a good learner, to understand ways to help impart knowledge of Qur'an and Arabic to her students, while also learning about young children, especially psychologically, and encouraging their development as caring-minded students. While some may argue this is a western or American conception of "good" teaching and learning, it appears in Nour's case to be a valued way of teaching and learning in Sudan, and one that she embodied across borders. Given her accomplishments in Sudan, it reveals the ways in which teaching and learning approaches can be both valued and beneficial in gaining cultural capital in more than one context.

In this way, Nour possessed the cultural capital associated with her education that honored her knowledge and teaching in Sudan and later in the US. The existence of educational systems that encouraged the transmission and cultivation of particular knowledge and dispositions were ones she found herself within—and where she thrived. These educational systems shaped Nour's learning and teaching and were collectively understood to perpetuate culturally shared values and beliefs. This type of cultural capital she possessed, particularly surrounding her knowledge of Qur'an and Arabic, would again bolster her career in education after leaving her native Sudan for the US.

Teaching and Learning in the US

Many Africans came to what is now the United States in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries through the slave trade. Some, indeed, were Muslims, particularly from West Africa, who did possess knowledge of Arabic—for them a language of scholarship (Diouf, 1998). Africans coming to the US by their free will is a lesser-known story. Some arrived in the early 20th century as students or as refugees fleeing harsh conditions in their home countries (Ball, 2010). Immigration intensified after World War Two and even more so in the 1970s as conditions improved more generally for people of color (Ball, 2010, p. 10).

Although quotas were in place that barred many non-European peoples from entering the country during the earlier half of the 20th century, this changed with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. This effectively ended the quota on the number of immigrants arriving to the United States from non-western countries. This event paved the way for immigrants from Asia and Africa to arrive in unprecedented numbers to the US, including Nour and her family. The peak period of African immigrants arriving was in the 1990s and,

according to recent statistics, there are approximately 1,606,914 African-born immigrants in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

African immigrants have been very successful in the United States. Many who come generally have higher levels of education than their Asian or even White counterparts. As such, approximately 48.9 percent of African immigrants hold a college diploma ("African immigrants," 2000). This is more than double the rate of White Americans and over four times that of African Americans. African immigrants, including refugees, are settled throughout the United States. Nigerians constitute the largest African immigrant group in the US and most have settled in Texas and the northeastern US. Somali and Sudanese immigrants, by contrast, have settled largely in the Midwest (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Many Sudanese have come to the US for educational purposes and as refugees from the conflicts in Sudan. East Lansing, the community where I conducted my work, is home to a sizable population of Sudanese, many of whom are survivors of conflict. Recent data show that 44,863 people in the United States were born in Sudan (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Many are from the southern portion of Sudan who came as refugees and are presumably non-Muslim, whereas others, who came either as immigrants or as refugees, are Muslims.

Nour met her husband while he was a student and a teacher at the University of Khartoum. In many ways her husband was a perfect match: well-educated, from Kosti, and a teacher. Soon, they would have three children. In the mid-1980s, Nour's husband applied and received admission to Central Michigan University. The family made the long journey from Sudan to Michigan, settling in the town of East Lansing. Nour remembered her initial time in the US as fraught with concern as her husband discovered he was not allowed to return to Sudan, his main desire after finishing his studies, because of a recent change in government leadership and

policy. She recalled sadly, "We did not return to visit Sudan until we had American citizenship, and we could only do so as Americans." The Sudanese government was unwilling to recognize or accommodate their nationals living abroad who wished to return. Thankfully he was hired to teach at a nearby university, a featured that helped to ground them locally. Moreover, they were happy knowing that there would be greater opportunities for their children regarding education and work than back home.

As a wife to a doctoral student, she supported her husband, managed the affairs of the home, as well as helped to raise their children, including a fourth child they adopted who was Christian, and raised as such. Courageously, she began teaching soon after she arrived at a local Saudi school that was Arabic-speaking—teaching the Qur'an and Arabic. The Saudi school, as such, entailed

> More memorization and more surahs. Our curriculum here [the Islamic School] is shorter and there is not as much memorization. Arabic at the Saudi school was taught as a first language. Here, we teach it as a second language or a foreign language. At the Saudi school all the students were Arab, so they were native speakers of Arabic. My own children went there and learned with them. I also used to speak Arabic with them at home. Here, however, we have students who are Somali, Pakistani, Indian, and Kenyan…and they speak Somali, Urdu, Hindi, and so on. So we have to teach it as a foreign language given the variety of linguistic backgrounds.

Nour felt a greater sense of ease in her work because Arabic was the medium of instruction. However, it required more detailed knowledge and teaching of the Qur'an because of the fact that all the students knew Arabic. The Saudi school closed after 9/11 when fewer Arabs, including Saudis, came to Michigan, especially as suspicion was cast on Islamic networks and education.

Nour began teaching in the mid-1990s at the Islamic School in East Lansing, after it first opened. As she continued her teaching of Qur'an and Arabic, she took an active interest in her own professional development. She attended workshops at Iowa State on Arabic teaching and at

Indiana on teaching Qur'an. She also attended one at Michigan State's Alif Program, on Arabic teaching. As she understood it, the workshops helped her transition her teaching from a Sudanese context to an American one.

> Allah created me as a natural teacher. I taught my siblings even though I was not that much older than they were. Throughout my childhood I was a teacher for them. I made sure their uniforms were clean, I watched them on the playground, and I helped them with their homework. My grandmother helped me but she didn't know how to read. So I was the one who helped my siblings read. All of these things are in my head and in my soul, and helped me to be a good teacher.

Nour saw herself as someone who was determined to continue her learning and teaching, despite the differences in context, whether in Sudan, at the Saudi school, or in the Islamic school. Her formative experiences as a child, helping to raise her siblings, and her experiences as a learner and teacher were the funds of knowledge that were a source of strength for her as she continued in her journey.

> As I told you, I've been teaching a long time. When I started teaching I was the center. Now, they have to be the center. I give them a clue and they have to figure it out and then they can understand. As you know, I started to teach in my own country and it's the language here that's difficult, so I have to use their resources to make it a little bit easier for them. And this we do this very well. And you've seen the class: they are reading and writing and understanding.

Nour saw her teaching as part of her soul and as something she evolved with, to the point where the teacher for her was no longer the center of the classroom, but rather the student. In this way, her continuity in journey as a teacher was met with a shift in pedagogical orientation, yet one she actively worked to embody. This new orientation was compounded by the fact that she found early childhood education fun. Playing games, singing songs, dancing and moving, were all helpful for supporting the students' learning; and in turn, she learned from them.

Nour's active approach to her own learning and teaching in the US context is not unusual among teachers. Many choose to attend professional development workshops, including ones

that focus on subject matter some may find controversial.[7] However, for Nour, this was part and parcel to her own passion for education: "My husband asks me which is my favorite class, and I tell him: the next one!"

Qur'an and Arabic: Structure and Play

Nour taught Qur'an and Arabic at the Islamic school, teaching mostly the early elementary grades. Students took two types of Qur'an classes: one focusing on learning to read and recite the holy text, the other to memorize it. Nour taught the memorization section. Recounting her previous experiences learning the text, Nour mentioned that from first grade through the end of high school in the Sudanese national school system students only learned 15 sections (*ajaza'*) of the Qur'an out of 30 that exist.[8] Moreover, at the Islamic school she taught Arabic in the early elementary grades. Like in Sudan, students would learn Arabic in increasing complexity as they advanced in their studies; however, the level of detail would be less, in acknowledgement of the fact that not all students came from Arabic speaking homes.

Qur'an. Drawing upon her experiences learning and teaching Qur'an in Sudan, in the local Saudi school, as well as her professional development in the US, Nour used a variety of strategies in her kindergarten Qur'an class to help the students with their memorization, such as reciting one verse and having the students repeat it back to her.[9] From pre-kindergarten to

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[7] In July of 2010, the author attended the Dar al Islam Teachers Institute, a two-week long residential workshop in Abiqui, New Mexico, focused on helping teachers understand and teach about Islam.

[8] The Qur'an is divided evenly into 30 sections (pl: *ajaza'*). Conversely, there are 114 chapters (sing: *surah*) in the Qur'an and are of varying length. Verses (sing: *ayah*), in the form of sentences or phrases, constitute the smallest scriptural elements of the Qur'an.

[9] In Sudan, she would've covered two to three verses due to the language similarities between the Qur'an and spoken Arabic.

kindergarten, students were expected to learn 20 short chapters (surahs) of the Qur'an. While the extent to which the students were able to memorize all of these is questionable, still, valued ways of approaching the text were articulated in the way that they worked to learn and memorize the text.

Unlike the kindergartners, the first grade Qur'an learners were expected to learn and memorize 12 to 15 short chapters of the holy text over the course of the year. After that, it was up to the family to decide if they wanted their child to learn more of the Qur'an, if not all of it. Some families wished their child to become a *hafiz* – one who has memorized the entire text. Whatever the case may be, families wishing their child to learn more decided who they wanted to teach their child or children, a decision disconnected from the school curriculum. In this way, the school imparted elementary knowledge of the Qur'an based upon shared values and understandings that connect school and community. Ultimately it became the decision of the family to determine further Qur'an learning, outside of the school. In this sense, responsibilities between the school and students' families were understood and delineated. Furthermore, the way Nour structured her memorization section entailed first listening to a CD of an expert reciting the verses—which she did because she never learned how to formally pronounce the text. This was followed by students practicing their recitation of the verses, both individually with the instructor calling on them, as well as in pairs. The students kept folders with photocopied pages of the Qur'an they used to assist them in their recitation and memorization.

Of my participant-observations in the first grade Qur'an class, I found it was often times held in the women's section of the mosque attached to the school. I was asked to sit in the men's section nearby, and look into the women's section, which featured a long, narrow carpet where

students would pray and practice their recitation, as well as a sitting area with a table and chairs. The following is an excerpt from my field notes:

> The children gathered on the carpet and started reciting the Qur'an from their folders. Nour interrupts them and asks them to start reciting *Surat as-Shams* (Chapter of the Sun). The students are focused, reciting in unison. Nour follows along with a physical copy of the Qur'an she brought with her. I notice that the boys are on the right side of the carpet whereas girls occupy the left side. As the students fumble in their pronunciation, Nour steps in and recites, leading them along.
>
> Then, she asks students to recite individually. She interrupts them to correct their pronunciation as they do so. The ritual of individual recitations continues for the next few minutes while the other students are fidgeting or talking amongst themselves. Suddenly the room is pierced by Nour's voice: "You have to practice together, okay, in groups!"
>
> The students then left the carpet and formed small groups (that were gender-based) where one student recited and the other listened; and they took turns doing this. Some kids are focused while others are distracted, jumping around. As groups finish their recitation, Nour travels to each one, helping students with their recitation, memorization, and learning.

In order to assist the students in their learning, Nour made a concerted effort to be involved with them. Using folders with photocopied pages of the Qur'an, whole class instruction, group work and individual work, these pedagogical dynamics were implemented to help students develop their Qur'anic skills, particularly in recitation and memorization. Yet these pedagogical tools also helped instill a sense of individual and collective responsibility. On the one hand, these helped students to develop knowledge of the holy text, yet on the other, it helped them to develop good individual and group behaviors. These pedagogical dynamics formed a secular, American dimension to her teaching of religious subject matter, supporting their learning of good social behavior—a quality upheld in both American culture and in the Islamic religion. As the children tended to be fidgety, these also were useful ways to keep them focused. Noise and energy levels rose and fell as Nour would tell the class to settle down and focus. In this way, Nour was able to manage her class to support its curriculum (Islamic-based but with secular,

American elements) allowing for students to be fidgety and misbehaving, but only to a degree. In this example, instead of yelling at the students she would direct them to see which ones could perform the best. This type of psychology I saw her use a number of times in her teaching, and was usually effective in transforming the students' attitudes. In short, both her students and her approach to dealing with their childish antics should seem quite familiar to observers of US classrooms. Moreover, the mixing of the Islamic and the American was apparent as well, figuring into her identity as a teacher at the school—which actively sought to combine both.

This example stands in juxtaposition to the ways in which her students behaved in Sudan. In those days students did not have televisions at home, she told me, and they tended to be quieter and paid closer attention because a teacher's teaching provided a form of entertainment. Since then, her learned child-centered behavior taught her to use teaching strategies such as group work, folders, and knowledge of children's varying backgrounds and abilities to assist her in constructing her learning environment. Moreover, she approached her teaching using both Islamic content knowledge and approaches (e.g., correcting students' recitation, the CD of the proper recitation, gender divisions) yet also with approaches designed to cultivate secular American citizenship as well as respect (e.g., use of English as the medium of instruction, group work, and individual work). This fusion of cultural elements in teaching and learning connected well with the overall mission of the school to help produce Muslim-American citizens.

Arabic. For teaching Arabic, Nour used two Arabic learning books for her first and second grade classes. The texts focused on grammar, composition, vocabulary, as well as how to read and write. As noted, Nour studied Arabic while she was a student and teacher in Sudan, the dominant language spoken, and one she used in daily life. This is a phenomenon similar to the ways children in the US study English as part of the public school curriculum, with most also

speaking English in their daily lives due to its dominance in American culture. Her teaching of Arabic in Sudan entailed Arabic (as an official language) as the medium of instruction. However in the US, her experience was different. While a teacher at the Saudi school, she taught entirely in Arabic as the students were from Saudi Arabia and other Arabic-speaking countries, however, at the Islamic School, students came from a variety of linguistic backgrounds, so she used English to facilitate the learning of Arabic. Here is another example from my field notes:

> The children sat attentively at their seats as the day's Arabic lesson began. Nour told the class they would continue their discussion of the four seasons. "*Al-kharif wa ar-rabi'a*, what do they mean?" she asked. Students responded "fall" and "spring" then, under Nour's direction, began reading passages about fall and spring in their textbooks. The discussion then shifted to weather. Nour wrote the four seasons in Arabic on the Whiteboard: *al-rabi'a* [spring], *al-kharif* [fall], *al-shita'* [winter], and *al-sayf* [summer]. She asked them, in Arabic, to describe the weather in each of the seasons. During the discussion, Nour told the class that in Sudan there are only two seasons: fall and summer. She said that she had never seen snow until she came to the United States and was very surprised. The lesson continued as students spoke in Arabic, describing the different characteristics of each season.
>
> A student who finished a homework project on the four seasons was asked to come to the front of the room and display the poster she made. It contained four brightly colored quadrants, each with its own picture of a season labeled in Arabic. She described what she drew and the different seasons represented. At the end of her presentation Nour told everyone to give her a hand. All students clapped enthusiastically.

Learning Arabic appeared to help students not only learn the language, but also reinforced their learning about their physical and social environment, and their relationship to both—elements important for instilling a sense of membership in American and Islamic cultures. Other classes I observed dealt with numbers, food, and actions. In this way, Arabic learning touched on other American curriculum areas, such as social studies, mathematics, and literacy. Nour mentioned she sometimes made Sudanese food for the students or had them learn about different Islamic holidays or rituals. Thus, Arabic learning, like Qur'an learning, entailed learning about their faith as well as their physical and cultural environment in the US.

Furthermore, the students were separated by gender at their tables, a phenomenon I noticed in the Qur'an class, where the genders were separated on the carpet as well as in their small groups. This is conducive to Islamic notions of personhood that, at one level, are gendered. In other classes I visited at the school, boys and girls were always separated physically where they sat. It would be done by table for the lower grades or side-by-side in the upper grades. For the latter, it meant that boys and girls were separated to either the left or right side of the room, or sit in pairs at desks with members of their same gender. Curiously, I never saw boys placed in the front of the classroom and girls behind, or vice-versa.

Nour explained that, for the students, learning both Arabic and Qur'an was connected, as the holy text held roots in the Arabic language. By and large, families wanted their children to take Arabic to help them better understand the Qur'an and more, particularly as Arabic is the religious language of Islam. Nour pointed to four reasons why families chose to have their children learn Arabic: 1) To learn it as a first language, 2) to learn it as a second language, 3) to learn it as a foreign language, and 4) to learn it for reading and understand the Qur'an. For Nour, she taught to accommodate these varying needs of parents, but did so in ways that engaged her young students. In my own observations, I noted her use of songs, her encouragement of students' artistic abilities, and her desire to instill a sense of respect for others—all with the intention of facilitating a compassionate and learning-based classroom environment. As such, individuality and working together formed the nexus of her classroom teaching.

These elements speak to the way Nour occupied two worlds: one Sudanese and one American, yet both colored by Islam. Her life-long journey in education taught her to take an active, open, and compassionate approach to education—dynamics that produced a woman who embodied the knowledge and disposition to assist her students in their social and spiritual

development. In a way, Nour served as a model for her students with the hope they would perform in life as she did in her classroom—with a sense of compassion, focus, understanding, as well as blending the cultural worlds of Islam and the US. As Nour demonstrated in both her Qur'an and Arabic classes, she worked to empower children so that they might take ownership of the implicit and explicit knowledge they were introduced to, from both each other and the instructor.

Teacher-Centered to Student-Centered Life History

Nour's life history, as it relates to her teaching and learning, signals the forces of preservation and change. These forces were inherent in her narrative, including her formative years learning the Qur'an and Arabic, both inside and outside of school, her learning to teach these subjects at a teacher's college, her moving to the United States, and her decision to learn different ways to teach these subjects in order to reach her diverse students. The shift in her orientation as a teacher had much to do with the cultural contexts of her teaching and learning. In Sudan, she embodied a teacher-centered model of teaching, a culturally-valued approach in that time and in that place. In the US, by contrast, she embodied a student-centered model of teaching, a different culturally-valued approach, and one that worked well in reaching her diverse students. Her adaptation to the varying cultural circumstances where she found herself as an instructor indicated her willingness to embody what was deemed the best model for teaching young learners, as well as served to continue her journey as a learner and teacher. As such, her story shows the preservation of traditional content knowledge (e.g., the Qur'an and Arabic) and the transformation of pedagogy (e.g., teacher-centered to learner-centered). In this way, her journey as a teacher is one based upon cultural shifts, particularly related to her crossing borders.

Her efforts as a teacher in Sudan and later in the US, at the Islamic School, form a process of "hybridizing" of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Returning to the quote mentioned earlier, hybridity entails "the combination of cultural rootedness modified by openness to the available resources of one or more other cultures…" constituting a dynamic that describes well "the cultural situation of the migrant" (Young, p. 347). In this way, Nour drew upon the content knowledge of her Qur'an and Arabic educational experiences in Sudan as well as the student-centered pedagogical knowledge she acquired in the US, bringing them together in her teaching of these subjects at the Islamic school. It is precisely this knowledge she wished to impart to her students in Michigan, to help them develop in their identities as Muslim-Americans. Her lifelong passion for education demonstrated her agency as a Muslim woman—combining knowledge and pedagogy in her teaching in ways that made them her own. In a sense, she empowered herself and her students by embedding her teaching style in the cultural context of the school, creatively coalescing "Muslimness" with "Americaness."

At Home in School

The process of hybridity for Nour, combining Islamic and American cultures in her instruction, produced for her a teaching identity centered on both. The development of Nour's orientation as a student-centered instructor, in a context where Islamic and American cultures were woven together, formed for her a disposition based on belonging in the school. This was true given that Nour experienced a great deal of cultural fluidity between her experiences prior to coming to the Islamic school and her experiences as a teacher there.

As noted, she was born and raised a Muslim in an Islamic context where Qur'an and Arabic constituted culturally valued knowledge. She lived in the US for nearly ten years before coming to the Islamic school, which enabled her to become familiar with the surrounding

culture. She actively appropriated American educational dynamics into her teaching, including the use of English, group work, individualized support, and work with diverse families. Her Muslim background and her active appropriation of American cultural dynamics in her teaching produced a Muslim-American identity for her as well, which enabled her to embody both American/secular and Islamic/religious cultures with relative ease. In this way, the Islamic school's culture overlapped with Nour's Muslim-American identity, a site which drew upon her content knowledge of Qur'an and Arabic, yet shaped her pedagogical style to be student-centered. These dynamics in the production of Nour's identity allowed her to experience a sense of belonging at the school, a context in which she thrived. Indeed this was verified by her words, through her actions, as well as by the many students and teachers there who felt a great deal of compassion for her.

As such, the school was not a site of violence or militancy (as demonstrated by Nour's teaching), but rather worked to cultivate Muslim-American students. Moreover, as will be further demonstrated in the coming chapters, the school cultivated teachers connected to both the cultures of Islam and the United States. Without question, Nour was a teacher in the service of Islam, the US, and her pupils.

CHAPTER THREE

"A Teacher is a Planter Who Does Not Harvest": Learning and Teaching Value

You will not enter paradise until you have faith; and you will not complete your faith until you love one another.

Prophet Muhammad

"A teacher is a planter who does not harvest," Ayoob said during one of our interviews. "He plants but he does not harvest." He continued, "You cannot look for the harvest. Most of the time you do not see what was produced from the seed." I was struck by his statement and found that, for him, good teaching was not something that was based on formal assessments or standardized tests. Instead it involved planting seeds that would grow in ways that he as a classroom teacher would not see. "The whole purpose of education is to find out how important you are in the scheme of things. If everybody is, it's a beautiful world after that. That's what I tell the students. Why are you here, in the classroom now? The reason you're here is to find out how valuable you are." In this way, Ayoob expressed the ways he saw education, as something that connected to the values that meant being both a good human being and a good Muslim.

Over the course of our conversations, he would refer to a bucket-filling activity[10] he would use in his classroom—a strategy that supported good students' behaviors. This involved adding to a bucket when students behaved well, along with the idea that they would get a reward at the end. It also meant subtracting from the bucket when they behaved poorly. The activity had a good deal of surface value, supporting positive student behavior. However, for Ayoob, it had deeper meaning. "We all carry a bucket around. This is what defines our unity. What we put in there will determine the condition of the world," adding, "This includes how I feel about myself

[10] The bucket-filling activity is based upon the book, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids* (2006), by Carol McCloud (author) and David Messing (illustrator).

and how I feel about you." For him, harmony was the essential component of human connection, and one that he could teach through helping students understand, importantly, their value.

Ayoob spent 40 years as a teacher, working in the local community to support the education of troubled youth who had struggled in their schooling, and Muslim youth, the children of immigrants and refugees at the Islamic school. Given his connection to the place where the school was located, his longevity as a teacher, and his desire to instill in his students a sense of self-worth, I found his story moving, and one that I offer to humanize the voice of yet another Muslim teacher.

As such, the purpose of this chapter is to construct a portrait of a social studies teacher who emphasized global/local knowledge and human value in his teaching. Here I will attempt to describe and explain his life history as a student and a teacher. I ask: what knowledge did Ayoob, a social studies teacher, contribute to the school? How did the school shape his knowledge? And, how did feelings of belonging figure into the way he experienced his teaching identity at the school? As a learner and a teacher, he drew upon many sources of knowledge, based upon his experiences growing up among diverse people as a child, as well as his identity as an African-American and as a Muslim. In this way, his story is one of global and local dynamics (Appadurai, 1996), especially the ways in which both are embodied for teaching.

Life History, Embodiment, and Values

Like for Nour, to understand Ayoob's educational background, I again draw upon Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) conception of narrative inquiry, particularly their emphasis on personhood. "We take for granted that people, at any point in time, are in a process of personal change and that from an educational point of view, it is important to be able to narrate the person in terms of the process" (p. 30). For the purposes of this portrait, I consider the ways in which the

instructor was shaped by his learning and teaching experiences over the course of his educational life history. It is a knowledge based upon his experiences growing up as an African-American, listening to the stories of faraway places that his father told, his time working with struggling youth, and his fascination with the history and cultures of people around the globe.

As previously noted, I consider life history an effective anthropological strategy for humanizing the voice of a Muslim teacher while also speaking to the educational and social forces which he was shaped by, over the course of his life. Other studies have demonstrated the relationship between an individual's life and larger cultural and historical dynamics in relationship to their development as human beings (Eickelman, 1985; He, 2002a; He, 2002b; Murphy, 1990; Shostak, 2000). In this way, life history serves to underscore the experiences of individuals in relationship to the historical and cultural forces and shifts part and parcel to educative experiences. These experiences included the knowledge he acquired before coming to the school, the knowledge he gained while working as a teacher, and how these dynamics informed his teaching identity, particularly as one who, like the other teachers, socialized students into their faith and into American culture.

Furthermore, I return to Appadurai's (1996) notion of global and local dynamics, in which the global is inflected in the local and the local in the global. Such dynamics were central in shaping Ayoob's cultural character as an African-American man who espoused a global consciousness (in many ways centered on Islam) yet based upon his interests and experiences. Such dynamics placed Ayoob squarely within the flows of global Islamic and American cultures. These dynamics were central to the local, especially in the ways they played out over time. Yet these flows also allowed him to take flight, traversing the globe both physically and intellectually, providing sustenance for his innate curiosity about the world and desire for human

connection and understanding. As such, the global flows of Islamic and American cultures, as they played out for him, served to shape his consciousness, support his value system, and provide the important resources from which he crafted his own teaching identity.

Furthermore, I draw upon the notion of embodiment to understand the ways in which the instructor's experiences informed his identity as a teacher and as a learner. Broadly, I use this term to refer to the idea that particular experiences are embodied actively based upon time and place. I draw upon Merleau-Ponty's (1962; 1968) conception of the way the body perceives and interacts with objects it encounters in the world.

> We say therefore that our body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees them and touches them; we say, because it is evident, that it unites these two properties within itself, and its double belongingness to the order of the "object" and to the order of the "subject" reveals to use quite unexpected relations between the two orders. It cannot be by incomprehensible accident that the body has this double reference; it teaches us that each calls for the other (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 137).

In this way, the body participates in its relationships with the world and crafts pathways for itself, a sort of subjectivity, while it is also shaped by forces it exists within, a sort of objectivity. As will be seen, the forces in which the individuals participated shaped them in ways that revealed both their subjugation and agency as people. In this chapter, I consider embodiment as the essential process that shaped Ayoob's identity as an educator. He was one who embodied the global/local dynamics of Islamic and American cultures, and who wished to transmit values that supported diversity by acknowledging and respecting others, dynamics central for being a good citizen and a good Muslim. In a sense, then, he wished to support the embodiment of social and global consciousness among his students in order to cultivate good values. His experiences, grounded in educative practices as well as his own perception, were conveyed in our conservations together and were apparent in his teaching that I observed.

Lastly, I consider the notion of care in education, one that is an important part of being a teacher who cultivates a particular kind of classroom community—what Noddings (1984) calls a "caring community". As Noddings wrote, "The one-caring comes across to the cared-for in an attitude. Whatever she does, she conveys to the cared-for that she cares" (p. 59). Moreover,

> The receptivity of the one-caring need not lead to permissiveness or the abdication of responsibility for conduct and achievement. Rather, it maintains and enhances the relatedness that is fundamental to human reality and, in education it sets the stage for the teacher's effort in maintaining and increasing the child's receptive capacity. (pp. 59-60)

This dynamic was found in Ayoob's connection with his students and was evidenced in his classroom teaching. Moreover, these efforts of care were augmented by his desire to support the cultivation of values among his students, values connected to group identities (Noddings, 2002; Wringe, 1998), in this case with caring traits central to being a good Muslim and a good American citizen. Care is embodied by the instructor who, through his own experiences, understands this as a central component to the thoughtful education of students. But care also functions as a site of personal commitment on the part of the teacher, to cultivate an ethic of care among students, helping them to see themselves as valuable. For Ayoob, these were very much elements in play for him as a teacher.

Thus, the learning and teaching of an educator as captured through a life history narrative coupled with classroom observations serves as a site to understand, again, the dynamism of Islamic education, disrupting notions of outdated and backward subject matter and authoritarian pedagogical style. Moreover, the experiences Ayoob embodied, based upon processes of inscription and subjectivity over the course of his life history, led him to demonstrate a great deal of care in his teaching and learning. In this way, his teaching practices supported the socialization and moral growth of his students in relationship to Islam and American culture. His

belief was that students should recognize themselves as valuable by caring for themselves and others.

Becoming Racial, Becoming Global

During my initial visits to the Islamic school, I met Ayoob, whom students and teachers referred to as Brother Ayoob. I was given permission to sit in on a social studies class he was teaching, a class where students were presenting books they had read on various historical topics. At that time, I recall being struck by Ayoob's appearance. He wore a simple Muslim cap that encased his striking gray eyes, framed by thin-rimmed spectacles. He had a long white beard, and wore a long, black flowing *thobe*, a traditional Arab men's dress.

As I came to know him, the school, and the nature of my research project, I was curious to learn about his life history, especially as it related to teaching and learning. As such, we spent several hours over the course of a week discussing his past. As the school's only male teacher, as well as its only social studies teacher, he occupied an interesting position. Many parents, especially the single-parent homes of the Somali students, where the mother stayed with the children while the father worked someplace else, saw him as a surrogate father, helping to support their child's education. As a teacher with a passion for social and historical consciousness, his heart was in helping students understand the past while valuing their educational development. As such, his interests were geared towards social studies, the subject matter he taught at the school, helping to cultivate a consciousness among students of social and historical topics, either related to the US, Islam, or globally, topics with which he often felt a personal connection.

Ayoob was born and lived most of his life in Lansing, Michigan. As a local, he possessed a racial and ethnic heritage that was African, White, and Native American (Chippewa and

possibly Cherokee). African-Americans, Whites, and Native Americans had been part of the local area for generations, and in many ways, the local was in his blood. Although technically, he mentioned, he could be called a "mulatto" as he looked both Black and White, his upbringing was centered in African-American culture.

Ayoob was raised in a Christian, African-American family and attended elementary school, junior high school, high school, and a community college all in the greater Lansing area. Growing up in the 1950s, he recalled the racism he encountered in school, particularly in social studies,

> I remember in fifth and sixth grade they used to call it 'Black Africa' or the 'Dark Continent' as though it was steeped in mystery. If you saw an African depicted, they looked like Black men in black face. As a Black person, looking at that, it was embarrassing. At my elementary school, there weren't many Black kids who went there. I was the only Black child in my class from kindergarten to sixth grade. The students used to sing 'Old Black Joe' while the teacher played it on the piano. Back then, my name was Joe! The teacher would play the introduction and then everyone started singing. I would be sitting there and everybody would look at me and snicker. It's amazing that even at that young age, eight and nine years old, they were developing prejudices against people who didn't look like them. It was just a product of what they heard.

His experiences with racism as a child clearly left a mark on his consciousness. Growing up as a racial minority, issues of race were not easily avoided. The racism he experienced was later met with a sort of hatred espoused by Blacks against Whites. This occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s, when he was in his late teens and early twenties, a time when Civil Rights and Black Power constituted major social movements in the US. Both of these movements involved empowering Blacks socially in the US. However, both diverged in their goals. The initial Civil Rights movement supported the integration of Blacks with Whites by non-violent means. The Black Power movement emerged out of Civil Rights, particularly as many Blacks felt social progress was not happening quickly enough or adequately enough, given the cultural and institutional forms of racism that they continued to face. As such, the Black Power movement

encompassed a variety of aims, given the diverse perspectives held within the movement. These included promoting rights across communities, in support of Black empowerment, while others espoused varying kinds of Black separatism from Whites (Van Deburg, 1992). Ayoob knew people in the Black community who espoused Black separatist beliefs and who viewed all Whites as oppressors. When it became fashionable among Blacks to hate White people, Ayoob confessed "I tried, but I just could not do it. What about Mr. Smith? What about the gym teacher? Even in our neighborhood there were a few. I couldn't just blanket hate them. Too many of them had helped me and my father. This was based in ignorance!" His beliefs were grounded in the local multicultural community where he grew up. This multiculturalism was clearly not lost on him as he grew up in a very socially-oriented household, making it difficult for him to consciously cut off people because of it, simply based on their race. Moreover, he attributed his beliefs to the impact his father had on him, a man who he viewed as his greatest social studies teacher and who had played a profound role in his education.

His father had been a custodian at a local school, and was a person that was well liked among people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. His father had served in the military during World War II. He had forged his own father's name so he could serve while underage, an act that provided him the opportunity to travel all over the world. He experienced all the major theatres of war, including Europe, North Africa, and Asia. From his travels he accumulated a wealth of information, stories he regularly told Ayoob as a child and that he continued to tell Ayoob as an old man. "He still tells stories about those days. He's 89. He does it a lot now because he can't talk to his wife, my mother, because she has Alzheimer's. He tells us what it was like back then." Indeed his experiences overseas helped to shape Ayoob's sense of the world.

However, the stories also conveyed his consciousness of his racial identity. “The services were segregated in those days. There were Black troops and White troops and the Blacks were always commanded by White officers. It was just another form of the plantation.” Racial consciousness, as such, was present in Ayoob’s experiences in school as well as at home, through his father’s stories. The prejudice Ayoob’s father experienced in the US Army overseas was matched by the racism he experienced back in the US, in both the North and the South. “He couldn’t eat in the regular restaurants, he would have to go around and eat in the back by the kitchen. That’s where they served Black people.” Learning about his father’s experiences in different cultural contexts was furthered by Ayoob’s connections to cultural others in the community. Ayoob remembered his uncle, a chief of a Chippewa tribal group, who would wear a headdress full of feathers, along with a cousin who had proven she had enough Chippewa blood so that she could get scholarships and discounts. Moreover, he held connections to Malcolm X, who had lived in Lansing, and had been associated with members of his family’s circle of friends.

As such, Ayoob conveyed in our conversations the connections of a truly local individual who embodied and appreciated the cultural characteristics associated with his Black, White, and Native American heritage. Moreover, his experiences were influenced by the global knowledge he was connected to through the stories his father told, through his interests in history, and later, through his travels.

Teacher Education and Conversion to Islam

In the mid-1960s, after finishing high school, Ayoob moved to Kalamazoo to attend college at Western Michigan University. Only a few months after Ayoob started his program, he got into a car accident, an incident that led him back to Lansing to recuperate. After recovering,

he chose to take several courses at a local community college. He soon returned to Kalamazoo, a place he would live for the next five years, recalling "A lot happened to me while I was there, including my first exposure to Islam." Kalamazoo, as will be seen, held special importance for him. However, he lamented that he always felt that Kalamazoo was "behind the times," especially in terms of the "relationships between different ethnic groups," unlike Lansing, where different cultural groups coexisted under better conditions. He was happy meeting the interesting mix of people in Kalamazoo associated with the local university, including students and professors. He smiled as he recalled "I was happy getting to know some professors well, other than just in class; I got to know them personally. That was a big achievement for me as I always viewed teachers as existing in another dimension." As such, he held strong social relationships with fellow students and teachers, all of whom supported his learning. His journey there led him to choose a major in education and a minor in religion.

As an education major, he completed his teacher preparation coursework there, at Western Michigan University. He admitted that his teacher education coursework never taught him how to teach. "It was mostly a guy standing up and philosophizing about what education meant to him. But I don't remember any skills or mechanics of teaching being taught, including how to write a lesson plan, and the importance of lesson planning. I never wrote a lesson plan until I came here [the Islamic school] and that was over 30 years later." Lesson planning was not part and parcel to most of Ayoob's career, a phenomenon that worked to shape his teaching style as one centered on a free-flowing engagement with his students.

Ayoob confided in me that after he graduated from college, he was offered a job to teach, before he had done his student teaching. His father, a custodian, had connections to local principals that helped Ayoob get his first job. One principal in particular offered him a job, even

though he was going against the rules, as Ayoob understood it, by allowing him to teach before he had done his student teaching.

> I taught in an alternative education school and I was taking my courses at Western Michigan University, but at a satellite campus in Lansing. I did student teaching at Western. I was already working in a school. I had a ready-made class. I took regular classes and the class was at one of the middle schools here. The teacher would come to observe me, and I couldn't be the teacher, it was against the rules, so the aid played the role of the teacher and I played the role of the aid. We played that game the whole term, and that's how I eventually got certified.

Ayoob continued,

> No one ever thought to check, the principal at the middle school had known me since I was twelve, and my father longer than that. That was the only way I could do it. I had a family to support—a wife and two kids! I couldn't afford not to get a paycheck. I got paid while student teaching—and that was the no, no. That's when my career started.

Clearly, Ayoob's desire to raise a family and begin his career in teaching involved the practical need for money. Through his family connections he was able to secure the work he desperately needed, even if it meant breaking the rules of his student teaching program. Although he participated in a charade for a term, it was clear that it benefited him both financially as well as professionally, and helped launch his 40-year career as a teacher.

It was in Kalamazoo in the 1960s where he was first exposed to Islam in a religion course, and was fascinated by it. The professor, to whom he became close, was not at the time a Muslim, but was very well versed in Islam, spoke Arabic, and later converted to the faith. His class, Ayoob recalled, helped inspire him to convert to Islam. It was inspiring because it made him curious, prompting Ayoob to research such things as Muslim prayers. He found that, unlike in Christianity, he did not have to treat Jesus as an intermediary between himself and God, but could pray to God directly. Although he had grown up in a Christian family, and had been a devout Christian, he came to see his faith as not answering the questions that were important for him—questions he wanted to answer for his first child, a child who had not yet been born.

> I can remember where I was when the thought came to my mind. I was on my way over the Martin Luther King Street Bridge in Lansing, close to my home. It came to my mind, if this child should ask me, 'Dad, why was I born?', 'Why am I here?', 'What's this all about here?' what would I tell him? I had always been religious, I had always been interested in religion, and I took so many religion courses as filler courses in college that I was able to get a minor in religion. I had been a very devout Christian, I had gone to church once a week. I never succinctly saw an answer to that question—why? I thought to myself that's an important question to answer for a child, that's more important than telling him his name. You can call him anything, but he doesn't know his purpose in life. It started cascading over my brain—how important it is to know your purpose while you are here. This is so you know what is valuable, values are determined in that. Use of time is determined by that. Everything is determined by understanding that. And I realized I did not know. At the time, I didn't think I would necessarily find it in religion. I had already been very religious, and there's no verse in the Bible that I ever remembered reading that said 'you were created for this.' You're told to be a good person. But, why should you be good? Then it said there's a heaven and a hell. But if you can connect it to a purpose for being here—that would be a lot more significant. Why you should be here. If you have that, that's going to determine all the other things that will happen to you in life. I have told classes or people who are interested, 'here is a light bulb, and its purpose is to give off light. Say it doesn't give off light. What's the value of the light bulb? What can you do with it? You can't sell it to anybody, you can't eat it. There's no value other than giving light. As long as it does it, then it has purpose. And, it has value. But once it stops from fulfilling its purpose, that's the end. It's kind of like us. If you don't know your purpose, your life will lose its meaning, and it will have no direction.

Ayoob's story highlights the intensification of his spiritual beliefs, in relationship to his not-yet-born child. In many ways, the process of becoming a father entailed rethinking his religious beliefs given his emotional state as he journeyed into fatherhood. His thoughts as he moved toward switching faiths supported his own journey as an educated individual as well as a way to support the education of his child. He found that understanding one's worth connected with values that formed a core part of one's identity, ideas he felt important for himself and his child. This led him to journey outside the boundaries of the religion of his parents and family members, a journey that would lead him to a new spiritual high ground. Indeed such a shift would help further develop his identity as a religious person as well as a teacher, especially one who supported the moral and spiritual development of his students. After having asked the question to himself on the bridge, a question about understanding one's purpose, he took a class in Islam, in

which students were required to read an English translation of the Qur'an. And in the Qur'an he came upon a verse that said "Allah created man to worship Him."

> I remember telling my wife: Look! Look! I had to be in my mid-twenties back then. Up until that time, I didn't know why I was here. What is worship? Worship is different in Islam than as we understand it in Christianity. Everything is worship in Islam—everything. You're working on your dissertation—that could be an act of worship. It could be what you eat, how you dress, how you conduct business, how you use the toilet. Everything is connected to worship. Because that's your purpose. If it doesn't connect to that, then it has no value to you. You have to find a way that it adds value to you. It is an interesting concept—when you leave your door in the morning you are doing worship, even if you're not on your way to a mosque. Because how I treat others is all part of the worship. How do I know how to do that? That's why God sent prophets, to let you know how to do that. Not all prophets came with a major book, but the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) we believe as Muslims was the last of those prophets, came with a book. He came with his *Sunna*, which is his way. Together you have reference for everything in life. If there's nothing specifically mentioned…you can, in your own life, in *ijtihad*, use your head, figure out how best to act. In Islam, that will suffice as though it were coming from Qur'an and *Hadith*. Not everything is specifically mentioned in both. Therefore, this concept allows for reasoning and logic, allows for regional and cultural differences to enter into Islamic practice. Education for me helps to facilitate one's purpose in life. Here, in a Muslim institution, that's already assumed, because it's in the Qur'an. It's important in education to let a child know, or a student know, his value and to show that he is valuable.

For Ayoob, the ability of Islam to connect to human life was important for him. His religious views, as expressed in the quote above, clearly influenced his teaching, helping students to understand their value, their worth, through their beliefs and actions. In this way, the mixing of religion and education was an important part of his journey as a teacher, working to support students embodying good values. Such dynamics were, again, part and parcel to the Islamic school, where Islamic and American knowledge were fused together in both secular and religious classes, supporting students' understanding of both. Good values, in this way, overlapped in both Islamic and American cultures as Ayoob saw it. Moreover, his beliefs and actions regarding religion, education, and human value—in essence the ways he spiritualized his teaching—likely helped him to cope with the demands of teaching, including the demands of preparing activities,

delivering lessons, connecting with students and parents, by seeing in such work its spiritual quality—an important way to avoid burnout.

Returning to his conversion story, the idea of Jesus as intermediary and the idea of a God distant from humanity were increasingly difficult for him to accept as he thought more about Christianity. Islam offered a personal quality to God, one that could be embraced through worship, in whatever forms it took. In later conversations he mentioned his view of Islam as a naturalist religion that connected Muslims to the created world around them, a view that allowed him to see value in everything. He mentioned his love for the film *Last of the Mohicans*, in which he fondly recalled the opening where Daniel Day-Lewis's character, Chingachgook, kills a deer, and speaks to it "We're sorry to kill you brother. We do honor to your courage and speed, your strength" (Robinson & Mann, 1992). In this way, he saw Islam as recognizing the connections between humans and nature, connections that reveal the important value both possess, and that should be recognized—and, indeed, taught.

When Ayoob made his conversion, his wife and mother were not happy when they learned about it. Ayoob recollected that they thought Islam was "some kind of cult that even involved running drugs back and forth from Detroit." In those days, he continued, "Going to Detroit was like going on a kind of *Hajj* or pilgrimage for us, because there were so many Muslims there. When you'd go there, you'd feel like it was paradise because there were a lot more facilities." Many of his friends from college were there; they had become Muslims as well.

> The number of stores and shops that were there that catered to us, catered to our way of life….was great. An entire spectrum of Muslims lived there, including those from Lebanon, Pakistan, and India. African-Americans were among the largest groups of Muslims, particularly those who were part of the Nation of Islam (which started in Detroit). Detroit was a major player for us in those early days.

The role of movement in his conversion narrative and his early days as a Muslim were important for him. Going to Kalamazoo and walking along the bridge in Lansing were both contexts where he was gradually inspired to transform his identity to that of a Muslim, and then making trips to Detroit to participate in the social and spiritual activities associated with Islam, a way to nurture that identity. The transformation in the social landscape for him as a newly-converted Muslim helped connect him to different Muslim people, increasing his understanding of his faith, Muslim peoples, and himself. Over time, his parents came to accept his decision to be a Muslim, as did his wife, a woman who rejected her Catholic upbringing, who had been suspicious of religion, and who would later convert as well. As such, conversion to Islam proved to be an intensification of faith for him, one that influenced and increased his knowledge, as well as shaped his relationships with other Muslims, family members, and students.

Influenced by Troubled Youth

When I asked him who was his greatest teacher, Ayoob responded that all his life anyone who ever taught him, at any moment, was his teacher. He counted among his most influential teachers his grandfather and father. Regarding his grandfather he said "He was an excellent teacher. If I have any patience (I don't feel like I have much at all), I learned it from him. He was the most patient man." He made Ayoob feel valued, a trait he felt was important for him to embody as a teacher, "It's important as a teacher to have that ability to make everyone feel valued," adding that "if you responded correctly to the question [as a student] that doesn't define you, because you always get the question right." He mentioned that it was especially important for him to talk with students about this at the Islamic school. This was because, from his experience, students experienced a lot of pressure from their parents to be perfect in school, to get A's. As will be discussed later, most of the students were the children of immigrants and

refugees, and families actively wished for their children to succeed in school, get good jobs, and support their families. As such, getting good grades for many families was not simply about competition, but about survival.

Ayoob's feelings about valuing students played a role throughout his career as a teacher, including in the early days of his teaching. Beginning in the early 1970s, and after finishing his student teaching, he spent the next 30 years as an instructor in classrooms with students who struggled in their education. He taught in an alternative education program that had existed in Lansing public schools, a program that supported troubled youth. It functioned as a re-entry program for middle school and high school students. The middle school track involved helping students who had dropped out to re-enter school, and to continue successfully. The high school track worked with students who had dropped out and existed as a program that they could graduate from with a GED. "The parents had given up on their kids, some of the kids were violent, some of the kids were on medication, and some were messed up. Skipping school, drugs, and violence were all issues. That was my clientele for the majority of my career." These were problems that he faced and, for him, were far more serious than the problems he dealt with later in his career, at the Islamic school. This was because the students at the Islamic school generally came from homes where their education was taken seriously by their families and, due to the support they had at home and at school, the students generally did well. The troubled youth Ayoob worked with, however, came from homes where they did not have as much support for their education and, along with their behavioral problems, struggled a great deal in their schooling.

"In the world I lived in, if the kid showed up, then there were no problems for that day, because he showed up. You could deal with everything else, as long as he showed up." As such,

Ayoob felt he really learned to teach in that environment. The program was born out of the 1960s, a time when efforts were made to increase the position of Black people in American society. This included helping disenfranchised youth, an effort forwarded during the "Great Society" of the Johnson administration. The program was underpinned by the belief that young people should not be abandoned, and that their talents should be cultivated in appropriate ways. The alternative education program he participated in for most of his career had five locations in the local area. Over the course of his 30-year teaching career there, he taught in all of them.

During the 1980s, while still a teacher with the program, Ayoob obtained his master's degree in curriculum and instruction from a local university. Although his focus was on reading, he found he wasn't satisfied with the myopic approach of the program, and found himself increasingly interested in the social and political dimensions to education, all elements he did not pursue there, yet influenced his thinking about the work he did as an educator, particularly as one supporting troubled youth—and later Muslim children.

Despite the efforts he and his colleagues made over the years, the program eventually began to seem outdated. He felt this was especially so as society became less tolerant of "intolerant" behavior and increasing budget restrictions mounted against its successful functioning. Eventually the program shut its doors. "It could have been a model program for the Lansing school district" Ayoob lamented. "I think they missed their opportunity to win the public over. If you're taking care of kids like that, you can assume everyone else is in good shape." Eventually, the program succumbed to complaints by teachers about students' behaviors. His teaching practices, including dealing with the problems presented by some students, he greeted with a sense of grace and intelligence. "Whatever style I have as a teacher, I've modeled based upon my parents—their style, their delivery." As such, he based his teaching style on

extending his self towards his students so that they felt valued, an approach that he carried through his career, from his earliest teaching days down to the present.

Return to High School

After the alternative education program ended, teachers were farmed out to different schools. Ayoob found himself teaching at the same high school he had graduated from, a place where he taught from 2000 until 2005. Despite his connection to the place, he found returning there as a teacher to be difficult. "I couldn't stand it there. There was so much unhealthy stuff going on. The school was a good place, but the games people felt they had to play in order to survive made it a bad experience. They would've made it so much better if everyone would've come together." Ayoob was very unhappy with the teachers there who, in his experience, would regularly lie, backbite, and deceive their colleagues in order to make themselves look better or to get ahead. Although he had no fondness for the teachers, he did appreciate the students.

When he started teaching there, he began working in the learning center, a place that would receive "problem" students who the teachers struggled with. As the learning center teacher, he liked working with the troubled students, whom he recalled,

> dressed like thugs, would curse in the hallways, had rough family lives, and with whom the other teachers struggled. Those kids were no problem for me, it was the same kind of stuff I had been dealing with for thirty years. I liked those kinds of kids, I could relate to them. My classroom became a hangout for the kids. We called them "tourists," because they would tour around the school, never went to class.

Ayoob's room became an escape from the other teachers for these students. Ayoob likely felt he could relate to them as one who had experienced frustrations at the school as a teacher and furthermore, as an African-American who was Muslim, knew what it was like to be an outsider.

Eventually Ayoob became a regular teacher, teaching social studies, science and economics in the school's classrooms. It was during this time that his career at the school took a

new direction. In the alternative education programs he taught in, he would make things up as things occurred, a strategy that helped him as a teacher. However, because he had not been a classroom teacher who had developed lesson plans, taught core curriculum subjects, and because he had not gained much experience from his teacher education work, he struggled greatly in his new teaching position. For economics, a class he found especially challenging, the strategy he used was to bring in presenters from the local community to talk about their professions. He found this as a way to help students think about different jobs that people have, and how their jobs related to things they were learning.

> I started calling people in from the outside about their business experiences. I called in the woman who started Sheens, a beauty product store. I called in a prosecuting attorney to talk about the economics of crime and how crime impacts people. I called in a mechanic to talk about the economics of driving.

These all worked well for Ayoob and helped him teach subject matter he was struggling with in a way that allowed him some autonomy in his instruction to connect to both the curricular expectations of the school as well as his students. Such activities helped to introduce students to the economics of the community around them and, as such, sensitize them to the experiences of others, providing them information about various jobs people held that one day they could occupy. However, the culture of backbiting, lying and selfishness he experienced there among teachers was far more difficult for him to deal with. After five years there, he officially retired—an event that prompted his teaching journey to take on a new direction.

The Islamic School

Still wanting to work after retirement, he spoke to a friend who was an administrator at a transportation company. His friend offered him a job as a bus driver, a position Ayoob was willing to take, and one that taught him the skills necessary to transport children to and from school. The position, however, came with a caveat: "All the kids were challenged in some way

who rode the bus. The founder of the company had a challenged child, and every day had to take him to school. Why do the healthy kids have a bus, but the challenged kids don't? So he developed his own company for this."

Ayoob got his own route replacing a fellow who had been ill. "All these people were expecting Bob to show up and here I show up and surprised families who said 'who are you!?'" Ayoob mentioned he really enjoyed driving the bus, obeying the rules of the road, taking kids to their various schools, and getting to know the children, the parents, and families.

While doing that job in the springtime, he became worried about having to drive in winter, with the ice and snow that defines Michigan weather in the colder months. Drawn to the possibility of teaching again, a job he clearly loved, when a position opened up at the local Islamic school, he quickly applied to it and was accepted. This commenced the next phase of his career teaching, a journey that started in the fall of 2005.

Ayoob was hired to teach elementary students at the school, to teach them secular subject matter. When I asked Ayoob to name the subjects areas he had taught, he laughed, recalling "I've taught all subject matter," including "math, science, social studies, and language arts." This included teaching fourth grade through eighth grade. For reasons unclear to him, Ayoob's teaching certificate stated he was certified to teach all subjects. The school made use of this by having Ayoob teach different subject matter, even though he did not feel confident teaching all of it. However, over time his confidence grew and he gradually became more comfortable in his role as a formal teacher, all while on the job. His confidence was evidenced in his teaching practices, his strong relationships with fellow teachers, administrators, along with students and families. From the beginning of his career at the Islamic school, the content he felt most comfortable, and most interested in teaching, was related to the social and historical, content he

could easily bring into his classes in social studies and language arts. This was so given his interests in the global and local dimensions to history and culture that defined his past experiences.

Although he taught secular subjects, he would infuse his classes with elements of Islamic thought, similar to the way Nour brought in secular components to her Islamic classes. In this way, Ayoob's position within the school's organization, like Nour's, served its mission, fusing Islamic and American cultures in an effort to socialize students into both faith and American society. This process occurred by virtue of the background knowledge he provided and the way in which his knowledge shifted by virtue of the school context. For Ayoob, he was able to bring his local and global interests into his teaching in ways that interacted with his beliefs in care, supporting student's learning to value themselves as individuals. He did so in ways that upheld the school's Islamic orientation and its cultivation of American culture, both cultures he actively embodied, allowing him to feel a sense of belonging at the school.

During my fieldwork, I observed him teach his classes on several occasions, classes where the religious and secular were woven together. These were fifth/sixth-grade social studies and seventh/eighth-grade social studies. These constituted four grade levels combined into two separate classes. In each class he taught social studies (using state standards) including, at times, a focus on Islam and Muslims. He struggled in his attempts to distinguish his instruction for each grade level in his class. This could mean that one set of students would be learning US history (e.g., fifth graders studying the French and Indian War) while the others would be learning world history (e.g., the sixth graders studying the rise of the Islamic caliphate).

I found his teaching style to vary, depending on the class. His fifth- and sixth-grade class was, frankly, chaotic in that students were often speaking out of turn, making off-topic

comments—incidents which lead to many digressions in their learning. Although students were somewhat engaged, to varying degrees, in their learning, the overall tone of the class was one of disorder. In our later conversations, Ayoob admitted that he had a hard time teaching this particular class because so many students regularly misbehaved. As such, he worked hard to facilitate a tough group of students, while attempting to support them in caring ways by drawing upon their interests, joking with them, all the while supporting a deeper understanding about things they had learned. These might include topics related to social studies, such as the topics related to the Middle East, or to life in general, such as about appropriate behavior. His struggles are not unusual among teachers who, on occasion, inherit tough groups of students they have to deal with all year long (Rogers, 2009).

I found his seventh- and eighth-grade class to be the opposite—students were generally respectful and thoughtful. They read and discussed subject matter from their social studies text, such as information related to different areas of the world that were present in the text. He would augment discussions with knowledge he learned through his past studies, through his relationships with his students (including Somalia and East Africa), and in some cases knowledge he had gained through visiting countries or regions discussed. He would include in his teaching stories about students, about the school, or about himself, often infusing his teaching with a spirit of goodwill and humor. Storytelling was something he did in his teaching—a familial practice passed down from his grandfather and father.[11] This dynamic in the classroom generated a laid-back atmosphere for students to learn in—creating a collegial environment where perhaps more meaningful learning took place.

[11] During one of our interviews at his home, his wife referred to him as a "griot"—a traditional West African storyteller, historian, and poet.

The knowledge that he cultivated among his students was a knowledge connected to the curriculum of the school, one based upon state standards and Islamic elements. However, I found his interpretation of these in his practices to not be strict, but somewhat loose and free-form, as his past experiences attest, but still based upon important knowledge for learning. As such, he sought to cultivate knowledge in the classroom that would be meaningful for students, connected to local and global forms, as well as help them feel validated in their cultures and faith.

Here are two vignettes reconstructed from my field-notes that demonstrate the variety of teaching and learning that occurred in his classes. These classes dealt with topics Ayoob felt passionate about and that wove global and local, Islamic and American, cultures together.

Spread of Islam.

In Ayoob's fifth/sixth-grade class, the sixth-grade students are learning about Islamic history. These students begin their lesson on the rise of Islam. Ayoob reads a passage from their world history textbook about it. It discusses how in the year 670 AD, new leaders of the Muslims came to power. These new leaders were known as caliphs, successors to the Prophet Muhammad, and their lands became known as the caliphate. A student then reads that they were political and military leaders. He goes on to read that one of their goals was to expand Islam—a holy mission to bring Islam to other lands. Ayoob interjects and asks, "What was the main goal of the caliphs? There is a problem here." A student responds, "To spread Islam…" Ayoob says "Actually, it was to invite all of humanity towards Islam." The student continues reading that the Muslims practiced religious tolerance and that many populations welcomed the Muslim conquerors because they hated their own religion. If they continued to practice their own religion, they would have to pay higher taxes than Muslims. Ayoob again interjects and explains why they paid higher taxes, to support the armies and administration as the caliphate expanded. A student continues reading, noting that with support from the new Muslims, the armies pushed south into Africa and east into India. The text notes that Hindus were not forced to convert during these early conquests and that in 711, Muslim forces invaded Spain, advancing along old Roman roads. He goes on to read about the establishment of Cordoba in Spain. Ayoob mentions that the city boasted 300 *masjids* [mosques] at its height, with a country with 300,000 *masjids*. He also mentions that Muslims live there now, but it's not a Muslim country. He goes on to say that Spain had 100 percent literacy back then, at a time when most people in Europe did not read, and that it was filled with libraries while the rest of Europe languished in the dark ages. He mentions that the Muslims were defeated by the Catholics, and that many Muslims stopped practicing Islam, adding "they got lax. They became weak, spiritually. So what happens when you get weak spiritually? Lots of things socially, economically, and politically happen."

This vignette demonstrates the ways in which Islamic history was infused into the social studies curriculum that was taught. It also demonstrates that, not only was Ayoob teaching a "secular" approach to Islamic history, but he was including in it a religious sensibility. Exploring the beginnings of the caliphate, which entailed the rise of Muslim religious and political power, the spread of Islam was here framed as one that didn't involve widespread "conversion by the sword"—a fact agreed upon by secular scholars of Islam (see Berkey, 2003; Hourani, 1991; Kennedy, 1986). However, the reasons for the spread of Islam, in the Arab peninsula and beyond, are subject to debate. Moreover, any kind of warfare involves the violent seizure of lands and entails deaths, indeed a part of the early spread of Islam. The textbook may have sanitized Islamic history in this way, with both it and the instructor falling within the "Islam is peace" discourse.[12] However, it did function to help socialize their students into particular versions of history, and by extension, particular understandings of their faith.[13]

This was interesting, as I discovered, given that the text the sixth-grade students were using was an American world history textbook that is likely used in public schools—and not attached to an Islamic organization.[14] In this way, the instructor drew upon the text to promote an understanding of history, but not one that was taken wholesale. The instructor departed from the text by noting a flaw—that the spread of Islam was to invite all of humanity to the faith. In

[12] Many news articles exist showing prayer leaders and their allies in the US and beyond pronouncing this. Moreover, books have been published in this genre. See Khan, 2004; Pal, 2011; and Rauf, 2004.

[13] The social studies class was a combined fifth/sixth-grade class. The fifth-graders were learning about American history while the sixth-graders were learning about world history, which included the rise of Islam.

[14] The textbook entitled, *Our World*, was published in 2005 by Mcgraw-Hill.

this way, the instructor revised the version of history espoused by the text to promote a moral dimension. In this way, the spread of Islam is framed as an invitation to join the faith—one that could serve to help the students see their faith as one that did not force conversion, and perhaps reinforced notions of seeing their religion as one of peace (despite the silence on warfare that was underneath what they were learning). In this way, a humanist-twist on Islam that validated the faith and undermined negative discourses was forwarded, against Eurocentric ones that validate the West at the expense of cultural others, including Muslims.

In this way, Ayoob worked to make Islam central in his much of his teaching of social studies, seeing that it provided many lessons, historically, socially and morally, that were applicable to the student's learning and to their development as Muslims. In this way, Islam was fused with history (allowing for alternative perspectives) to form a nexus that was conducive to the role of the school in appropriating Islam and multicultural American culture in its curriculum. Moreover, it was a discourse which conformed to the rules of the school: seeking to ensure students were socialized into a positive understanding of their faith, a faith that should be upheld despite the social costs, but in relationship to multicultural America. Going back to Ayoob's lesson, the loss of Islamic Spain due to Muslims becoming weak in their faith functioned as a way to transform history into a moral lesson for the Muslim students. This lesson, for them, was that losing faith would lead to both personal and social problems.

Slavery.

> In his seventh/eighth-grade class, Ayoob poses the question to his eighth-graders: "What was the fugitive slave law of 1850?" A student replied, "You have to run." Ayoob corrected him, "He had to be returned to his owner. A slave who ran away, he was property. The concept of slavery was not viewed this way in any part of human history. In Islam, slavery could be a way to work off a debt, the slave might stay with you, eat the same food, and was considered a human being. In US slavery, a person was owned, bought and sold." Ayoob continued, "If my puppy runs away and runs into your yard…you say you have a dog tag on him. Many times those slaves were branded like an

> animal. You knew that plantation and who the owner was. Just like you return a puppy. Just like you return a puppy to me and clean up mess they did, that's what you do to a human being. If Old Jeb was running and hid in your shed or garage, you were obligated by law to return that property to the owner. Southern states felt slaves were property, slavery was the backbone of the southern economy. Without slaves the South would've gone broke." The conversation about slavery continues, with mention made of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Uncle Tom's Cabin. Ayoob suddenly refers to his audience, consisting of students who have primarily Somali roots, "I know it's not your culture, it's my culture. Even though you appear as African-Americans, you are not in the sense that I am. You don't know this history. When I first started talking about the Civil War, people didn't understand what I was talking about. I realized they didn't understand, didn't know about Tubman or Emmitt Till. It's not your culture. It took a while for me to get that in my head." The conversation then continues about African American figures like Stowe and Tubman.

This vignette demonstrates Ayoob's effort to help his students understand how slavery functioned in the 19th century US, especially the notion of run-away slaves, all elements important to secular American cultural history. He, again, turned a historical piece into a moral story, attempting to ground it in his students' sensitivities by using the analogy of a run-away puppy, all as a way to note that slavery in the US was bad. As such, he compared the entire institution of slavery in the US to the way it functioned historically in Muslim societies, where slaves were granted rights. Again, instead of outright condemning any form of slavery, past and present, it's clear that students were again being taught a more positive version of Islam that, good or bad, helped them to see American slavery as bad (which conforms to dominant conceptions of slavery today in the US) and Muslim slavery as not as bad, from a legal and theoretical standpoint. Finally, Ayoob noted his challenge to understand that, although most students in the school had dark skin, they did not possess the same African-American heritage that Ayoob did—a kind of self-consciousness and awareness that helped Ayoob learn to distinguish between the historical understandings of African-Americans and African immigrants and refugees.

As such, this particular teaching moment implicitly worked to help students develop a sense of value towards themselves and others, weaving American and Islamic cultures into moral sensibilities. It did so by noting the problems of US slavery, how it dehumanized innocent people of color, and how this history is different from the histories associated with Somali people. By pointing out this departure, he (in a way) framed both as valuable, but also implicitly wove his Muslim Somali students into a discourse about African-American people as not monolithic in culture, but rather as multicultural. In this way, he sought to make the Black cultural experience available to Somali-American students in a way that distinguished both cultures, yet validated both as American, with overlapping Muslim components.

Ayoob's teaching was one based upon global, national, and local knowledge, much of which held personal meaning for him, and that conformed to the functioning of the school, and which supported his students' learning. As noted, students in his classes that I observed were different in demeanor—the fifth/sixth-graders were overly-talkative and distracting, while his seventh/eighth-graders were quiet and appropriately participative and thus easier to teach, Ayoob confessed, which allowed him to be more relaxed while teaching. While I found Ayoob's teaching style to be connected to the textbook, he, indeed, brought a freestyle quality to it, in which he would depart from the text by joking with his students, and talk about random topics students brought up.

While some might dismiss his teaching as too chaotic, too scatter-brained, and not following a curriculum closely enough, he demonstrated a great deal of care in his teaching. He did this through using humor in his teaching, guiding students to good behavior, discussing with them the social and personal issues they wanted to talk about—all in an effort to support their socialization into a Muslim-American identity centered on value.

Cultivating Value: Connecting Students to Islamic and American Cultures

In our conversations, Ayoob mentioned he had moved three years ago from a full-time teacher to a part-time teacher who taught only social studies in the afternoon. As the school's only male teacher, he managed to cultivate good relationships with his colleagues, families and of course the students.

His consciousness of his students centered on cultivating both American and Islamic values among them. He noted, as can be gleaned from the excerpt above, that he struggled to relate slavery to his multicultural students who were students of color, but not African-American, with the majority as Somali. He confessed it took him a while to understand this difference, that just because they had black skin, they didn't share the same African-American experience he and his community did. His work teaching those students who came from immigrant and refugee homes was key.

Families of his students, especially the Somali ones, would sometimes see him as a surrogate father. A family member, such as a father, would sometimes work in the home country and send money back to Michigan to support his wife and children. The number of single-parent families was significant, according to Ayoob, who said that for Somali mothers, having their children get A's was important, especially as they needed their children to get good jobs as a survival strategy, to gain roots and comfort in the US. While many women in the Somali community were supported by other members of the community, they still wished to see their children succeed. Somalis held various occupations in the area, such as small business owners and engineers. Given the tight-knit nature of the community, the desire to succeed, and the fact some members were doing pretty well, meant children could be under enormous pressure to get good grades. It was a fact that Ayoob lamented, but one he recognized as a survival strategy. For

him, it was clear that his own role was that of a surrogate parent for some students, whose mothers saw him as helping to support their child's development, much like a father figure. In short, his sensitivities working with troubled youth lead him to have a student-centered disposition, a disposition he put to work in helping his own students, including those who were Somali.

Ayoob felt there was more good than bad in his work at the school. While teachers in public schools have expressed frustration over the amount of standardized testing the students had to do, I never found teachers I met at the school, including Ayoob, to have this challenge. Although students were tested the same as their public school counterparts, they tended to score equivalently to students in the local public schools, which were high-achieving. This was a success that he and other teachers shared. However, despite all of the good that existed at the Islamic school, in Ayoob's view, he felt minor constraints did exist and came in the form of the school board. They had little interaction with the school, and would make decisions based upon their own interests. At the end of my fieldwork, the principal, a White woman who was a Muslim convert, who had supported my research as well as done her best to support the students and staff at the school, was asked to step down by the board. This had to do with the fact, I was told, that they were largely foreign men who disagreed with having a White, American Muslim female as head of the school. Moreover, I learned that some of the immigrant staff did not like her spending time in classrooms with the teachers and students. Instead, they preferred a "traditional" principal who would spend most of her time in the office, presiding over daily affairs. As such, she was replaced by a woman who was a Middle Eastern Muslim, and who, as far as I knew, did exactly that.

Ayoob's human-centered pedagogy that supported the development of a historical, social, and global consciousness among students, as well as supported ways to develop good values in his students, emerged not only from his own challenges and successes as a learner and teacher, but also from specific professional development experiences he had. As a teacher throughout his career, he got credit for his professional development experiences. For him this entailed taking classes or attending workshops, community service, and travel.

For the former, he attended classes at the local university or workshops generated by the local school district. All of these provided extra training for teachers, but he found them mostly boring, not providing much food for thought. However, he did participate in one after-school program, a class he led that worked with youth after school who had struggled in their schooling and who could not come during normal school hours, again, supported by his work with marginalized and disenfranchised youth. It would last about two hours, after which he would go directly go to professional development classes, which would last from 6 pm till 10 pm. He lamented not seeing his family much, "I was always at work during that period."

Ayoob also became involved in community service. "They had a drop-in center on the west side…they had programs for tutoring inner city kids. I would get involved in those things." He also served on the board of trustees for the Islamic Center; he got credit for that as part of community service. "I was on that for years, so that added up."

Ayoob viewed Islam as a religion that involved inviting people to join the faith. He was affiliated with the *Tablighi Djama'at*,[15] an organization devoted to carrying the message of

[15] *Tablighi Djama'at* is a Muslim missionary organization established in India in the late 1920s. Following the Second World War, its influence spread across the globe. It is based upon the notion of invitation (Urdu, *da'wat*) that states it is the duty of all Muslims to devote time and money to invite people to Islam. Its primary objective is to deepen the faith of people who are already Muslims, including fostering the interaction of Muslims across class divides. While it

Islam to places across the world. Every summer, groups were formed and members were sent to different parts of the US and the world, trips he would participate in.

> I went away every year for 20 years. I didn't go this year because my mother-in-law moved into our house, and my wife and her mother needed help. I was told to stay home and take care of my mother-in-law and my wife. But normally I go. I've been to nearly every state in the US.

Ayoob mentioned that he would go for 40-day periods, and stay in the local mosque where he was visiting.

> You are not being sponsored by the organization; everyone pays their own way. You invite the local people to the mosque. There are programs in the mosque that are not new to Islam…sitting in teaching and learning circles, stressing the virtues of actions—encouraging the Muslims to come back to their religion.

In this way, the organization's efforts were geared towards inviting others to Islam, as well as, most importantly, to help revive members' faith as Muslims, providing ways to better themselves. Participants would live simply in their surroundings, sleeping on the floor, eating basic foods, and performing menial tasks to support the group, including cooking and cleaning. "Every day group members come together and jobs are delegated to the people in the *djama'at*." Going on these trips was easy for Ayoob as a teacher, as he had his summers off. Moreover, the practices done there seems to have resonated with how Ayoob's conception of value.

Through the organization, he also traveled to India, North Africa, as well as Japan. Ayoob's interests and experiences in travel connected well with his sense of global thinking that his father instilled in him through the stories he would tell. In many ways, Ayoob's passion for social and global understanding was one that emerged from his childhood and connected well to his faith. This is what led him to faraway lands, journeys that forwarded his faith as a Muslim, but also his understanding of different peoples and places across the globe. It was precisely these

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does make an effort to spread the faith among non-Muslims, the overall objective of the organization is the unity of all Muslims across the world (Gaborieau, 2002).

experiences that informed his teaching, in ways that sought to engage the students, to humanize them, and to humanize the world they were learning about, cultivating an understanding of global and local cultural dynamics.

Ayoob's experiences were informed by successes and challenges. His journey in developing a teacher identity was informed by his successes in learning and teaching, as a son who loved hearing his father's stories, as a college student, as a student teacher, and as a teacher. But it was also a journey informed by his struggles, including the challenges he faced growing up as a Black man who experienced racial prejudice as well as his challenges in teaching struggling youth, who came from broken homes and who had performed poorly in school. As such, the role of race and culture in his experiences made his journey not one of smooth success, but rather of negotiated success.

More recently, he struggled to teach the students in his fourth- and fifth-grade classes at the school, where talking and distractions were a source of frustration. However, teaching those students was not so burdensome as to make him question his role in the school, or lead him to search for alternative employment. Indeed, as he had pointed out, he had experienced far more challenging students in the past. As such, on the whole, the school was a place where he felt at home, that allowed him to articulate his teaching identity in ways that conformed to his global and local social consciousness, particularly as a Muslim, as well as his beliefs in value. In this way, his time at the school was marked more by his comfort in that environment than anything else.

At Home in School

Ayoob's educational life history encompassed many worlds. As a child, Ayoob grew up confronting issues of race, while developing a social, multicultural, and global consciousness.

His appreciation for his racial and ethnic heritage, (including African-American, White, and Native American) coupled with his local and global social interests helped spearhead his consciousness of the world. His experiences and understandings of such things informed his identity as a minority.

In many ways, these experiences led him to ask questions of himself and the world around him, questions that led him to travel the path of Islam. However, his Islam was not the Nation of Islam of his Black friends and acquaintances, but an Islam that conformed to his multicultural and global sensibilities. In many ways, his conversion to Islam was not a relinquishing of his old Christian faith, but an intensification of his spirituality in ways that responded to his awareness of human value. This process of human value not only served his journey as a Muslim, but also as a teacher. His work with troubled students and Muslim students sensitized him to issues of marginalization and cultural identity—and the importance of supporting the empowerment of students and their socialization into a minority identity. As such, his educational life history entailed personal change that included his childhood, his time in college, his adoption of a Muslim religious identity, and his varying experiences as a student-centered teacher.

His experiences of tension and success as a student and a teacher, helped him to cultivate a socially-sensitive consciousness, based upon local and global cultural dynamics, which he related to in Islamic and American ways. His active desire to embody the principles that he grew up with and embrace perspectives that he found all around him allowed him to understand his faith in a similar manner. He possessed an understanding of the world that was not based upon social division, but based upon social inclusion. Through teaching his students about the world out there and all around them, he hoped to instill in them a global and local consciousness

centering on good values. As such, the multiculturalism he espoused encompassed dynamics that were also inscribed on his identity because of his experiences, producing his own subjectivity as an African-American and as a Muslim minority caught up in global and local currents.

Given his experiences, Ayoob, importantly, was one who felt at home in the school. This was due to the fluidity between his identity as a Muslim and as an American and the school's culture. His identity as a teacher who had lived and worked for most of his life in the local community along with his espousal of Islam, his global/local consciousness, and his work with struggling students, constituted the elements he embodied and that he brought to the school, and that the school actively drew upon in its functioning. Yet, the school also shaped him. It did so in ways that allowed him to learn about his Somali students while he taught them, as well as work with their families. Furthermore, the school's culture also provided a space for him to articulate his global and local historical and social interests, his desire to cultivate values among students, all within an Islamic and American idiom. In this way, he could see value (meaning students caring for one another, understanding their own value and valuing others) as an ideal disposition in both Islamic and American cultures, and that could be easily embodied together (for himself) and cultivated among students, in an effort to socialize them into their identities as Muslim-Americans. As such, he embodied his identity as a Muslim and as an American easily at the school, with such dynamics cultivating a feeling of belonging for him in a context that actively drew upon and shaped his knowledge.

Indeed Ayoob's weaving of the religious and the secular in his teaching constituted a fundamental component to his identity, based upon his own background, his desire to instill a sense of value for self and others, both in the United States and around the world. In this way, Ayoob espoused a pedagogy of caring, of historical, local, and global consciousness, to support

his students' growth, as both Muslims and as Americans. Indeed, in his own words, he was a planter who did not harvest.

CHAPTER FOUR

Traveling Insider/Outsider: Negotiating Religion and Sexuality in Learning and Teaching

I believe that education…is a process of living and not a preparation for future living

John Dewey, 1929, p. 292

During my field work at the school, I decided to become an intervention teacher. Once a week I would spend 1 or 2 hours teaching students who were struggling, primarily in language arts and mathematics. Often I would work with students individually but occasionally I would work with small groups. I chose to do this not only to give back to the school which had allowed me to conduct my research there, but also to better ground myself in the school community, to observe and participate while learning from students and staff alike. In this chapter, I shift the lens towards myself as a learner and teacher. I craft this essay as a portrait of my own journey learning about Islam in global contexts, particularly as a gay man. I connect these experiences to my work as an intervention teacher at the Islamic school, underscoring my educational relationships with students as we explored math and language arts subject areas together. Thus, this chapter centers on the question: how did my educational life history, my learning about Islam, and my experiences as a gay man overlap with my teaching at the Islamic school? Moreover, how did my experiences at the Islamic school, like the other teachers represented in this study, shape my teacher identity? And, how did my role shape the work of the school, combining the religious and the secular to produce Muslim-American youth?

This is a story of overlapping knowledge, in which my experiences of enchantment and disenchantment with Islam sit side-by-side, given my studies of religion and my identity as a gay, secular American. This was a phenomenon that shaped my identity as a learner and teacher, and one that interacted with the education work I did at the school, supporting its mission to

produce Muslim-Americans. I describe this dual process in this chapter. First, I focus my attention on the "enchantment" I experienced learning about Islam in multiple contexts. Second, I discuss the ways in which "disenchantment" wove together with my own learning about Islam, especially in relationship to my gay identity. Finally, I explore the way my negotiated embodiment of religious knowledge and sexual orientation converged in the context of the Islamic school—particularly how my teaching led to a new identity for myself as an Islamic schoolteacher.

Life History, Desire, and Dual Embodiment

I weave this chapter around cultural anthropological conceptions of life history, as already shown, in which scholars have demonstrated the relationship between an individual life and the cultural dynamics in which they were engaged (Eickelman, 1985; Menchu, Burgos-Debray, & Wright, 1984/2009; Shostak, 1981). Moreover, I consider the work of those who engaged in autobiography and autoethnography (e.g., Ellis & Bochner, 2000; He, 2002a; He, 2002b; Monette, 1992; Murphy, 1987; Reed-Danahay, 1997) as a way to narrate themselves over time, including the varying experiences they had as a result of their engagements with others, as well as larger cultural dynamics. For desire, I draw upon Clifford's (1997) conception of dwelling and travelling, where the "task is to focus on concrete mediations of the two, in specific cases of historical tension and relationship" (p. 24), aspects I argue are central to the desire to know through dwelling and travelling. The dynamics of tension and relationship (or as I call them here: enchantment and disenchantment) play out as a theme in my journey and converge in the context of my own teaching.

The convergence of such forces, namely, the desiring of knowledge about Islam coupled with my own minority condition, supported my own realization that I embodied two types of

knowledge based on religion and sexual orientation. This knowledge, then, helped produce my identity as an Islamic schoolteacher. Embodiment of these dynamics, indeed politically separate from the purview of dominant culture yet linked (Puar, 2007), then, is apt for conceiving this chapter as it relates to my personal story.

Embodiment, as I have shown, refers to the idea that particular experiences are embodied, experiences based upon time and place. For the purposes of this study, embodiment relates to Islamic and American cultures. I draw upon the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962; 1964/1968) entailing perception. Embodiment entails overcoming subject/object, mind/body dualisms, viewing the world as interrelated. Embodiment figured well into my experiences. For me, the embodiment of separate types of knowledge from the vantage point of dominant culture, in this case about Islam and about American culture as a gay man, was a dynamic that produced feelings of belonging, particularly as a teacher in the Islamic school. In this way, my experiences as a learner and a teacher produced an identity based upon both the Islamic religion and my sexual orientation as an American, and that interacted with my work as an Islamic schoolteacher.

I again return to Appadurai's (1996) notion of global and local dynamics, in which the global is inflected in the local and the local in the global. In many ways these chapters have shown how global Islam is inflected locally at the Islamic school. I argue that, like Nour and Ayoob, I rode the waves of Islam as a global force, experiencing the ways in which it played out in local cultural contexts around the world. Such dynamics were central in shaping my character, in relationship with my own gay identity. In these ways, I was able to construct a sense of self in the context of the Islamic school based upon the global and local experiences I had already had with regard to Islam. As such, the global flows of Islam coupled with my identity as a gay

American, served to shape my consciousness, providing important resources from which I crafted my own teaching identity.

As such, my pursuit and knowledge of a world religion, existing as culturally "Other" in mainstream American culture, was linked to my condition as a gay man, another type of cultural "Other". These form separate dynamics from the vantage point of dominant US culture, as Puar (2007) has shown. Yet the embodiment of these separate realms for me formed a process of both challenge and success—an unfolding as I lived and as I journeyed. This knowledge, associated with Islam and my own minority condition, motivated and influenced my teaching practices, implicitly and explicitly. This was evident in the time I devoted to the students I taught at the Islamic school, seeing in them the challenges of living as cultural minorities, challenges with which I was all too familiar.

Indeed this is all to say that I see myself as a double minority, as a gay man and as one who possess a great deal of knowledge about, and respect for, Islam. It exists as two sides of cultural personality that are often in conflict with one another, and so sit side-by-side, prompting feelings of enchantment and disenchantment towards Islam. Such identities are difficult to resolve, such as being Black and a Mormon. However, my practices at the school helped me to understand, and, indeed, at some level, resolve the tension between the two identities.

As a teacher, and like the other teachers in this study, my practices served the work of the school—to socialize Muslim-American students into secular American culture and Islam. As a teacher, my experiences working with the students were influenced by my past learning experiences related to Islam as well as American culture. My time with them taught me a great deal about their backgrounds, their struggles, and their achievements. In this way, both my past and my work with them, produced my own teaching identity in the context of the Islamic school.

Enchantment: The Art of Traveling Desire

I trace my interests in Islam to my experiences growing up in southeastern Wisconsin in the 1990s. From the beginning, I recognized the enormous cultural differences between the San Francisco Bay Area where I had lived until I was seven and suburban/rural Wisconsin. Culturally, the diversity was markedly less, the majority of my schoolmates being lower and middle-class, White, and Christian. Many of their parents came from our town or the Midwest region, whereas mine had come from culturally diverse and relatively progressive backgrounds (metro San Francisco and metro New York City). So, from the beginning, I felt a sense of otherness.

Through my mother's interest in developing friendships in our newfound home, we became close friends with the Parsons: Ken from Ohio, Sally from England, and their two daughters, Ellen and Anne. My father had taken Ken's position after he left the company headquarters, and my mother and Sally collaborated to bring the families together. Through the Parson's connections, my family became acquainted with a local British expatriate community, a community who became part of my extended family in Wisconsin. My socialization into the British expat community, with their discussions of faraway places, as well as my parents' passion for thinking and talking about such things (as well as their own lives on the coasts) fascinated me as a child. The gatherings and discussions helped to socialize me into what I shall call a White migrant community. Yet this process distanced me from the locals who did not have such experiences. For major holidays, my family would go to New York or California but rarely to local popular attractions, such as the Wisconsin Dells or Six Flags, where most members of the surrounding community would go. While my friends and classmates grew up in ways that were defined by local Wisconsin culture, I was raised in a way that leaned towards the global,

including a mix of cultural dynamics associated with Britain, California, New York, and Wisconsin. This mixture added a richness to the ways in which I thought and behaved—I loved reading about the kings and queens of England and I would often play croquet with Ellen and Anne, I would eat multicultural cuisine that my mother made, I developed a sense of humor through my father that was New York-like, celebrated holidays in full British fashion, such as Christmas with bread pudding and hats, and participated in the local Cub Scouts as several of my friends and classmates had done. However, some of these experiences, particularly the ones associated with faraway places, made it difficult to develop meaningful connections with many of my classmates who grew up with sensibilities that were understandably local—filled with church outings, lots of loving relatives around, and vacations to local attractions. At times I wished I had had similar experiences—as a way to better relate to children I knew growing up. As such, looking back, I see my experiences as producing a mixture of feelings for me centered on happiness and sadness.

The varieties of experience I encountered in my early childhood gave way to feelings of discontent and rebellion in my later childhood, particularly in high school, as many young people experience. Increasingly I saw myself as an outsider given the way I had been raised, including my distancing from the dominant culture of the local community. I found myself looking for outlets, and soon discovered music as a rebellious art form. Particularly, I was drawn to the revolutionary tunes of the 60s and 70s and playing the electric guitar. I started my own piano and guitar teaching business—which provided the sort of resistance I sought to the normative dimensions of the place I lived. It was also during these years that I became aware of my attraction to members of the same sex.

I never had a real girlfriend and the thought of dating seemed ideal for projecting an image, but not for sex. At first, I assumed I would outgrow my feelings. I had heard people refer to it as a "phase." Indeed, I thought that it was and that with time it would go away. But, instead, I found that my feelings towards other members of the same sex only intensified. Gradually, I came to have a sense that I was not a regular heterosexual.

As I came to understand my attraction to members of the same sex, I never dared reveal my identity to my family for fear of negative repercussions, particularly given how close I felt to them. Many stories of parental and familial rejection of gay people have circulated over the years, including ones of not coming out for fear of rejection (see Merla, 1996; Pew Research Social & Demographic Trends, 2013). Indeed these were stories I had heard, from friends and on television. I feared losing my family's love and support—particularly given how much they had shown me. In fact, I remained closeted to most people during that time, in my late teens and early twenties. My coming to terms with being gay happened while I was pursuing my master's degree in New York City. New York was a place that opened doors to my understanding gay people and culture, a role it has played historically as a gay cultural center (Chauncey, 1995; Kaiser, 1997/2007). However, meeting gay people from around the world, going to gay bars, and finding myself drawn to a new lifestyle brought an enormous amount of anxiety, a condition which lead me to seek therapy.

Therapy offered a space to help me work through my feelings and fears as I came to fully embrace my identity as a gay man. It helped me learn about a community that I had been taught, either explicitly or implicitly, to distrust and fear—longstanding cultural dynamics that had impacted me. However, my experiences getting to know gays and lesbians from different

countries, including the US, helped me to learn more about the global dimensions to the identity I upheld.

As such, my experiences growing up in Wisconsin, my travels around the country, and growing up gay, were experiences that positioned me as an outsider in my local community yet also, for the most part, as an insider within the small world of my family and friends. During this time a curiosity developed in me, a curiosity that began in school. During my junior year of high school, I took a course on American social history. Among the books assigned for reading were *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair, *Only Yesterday* (a history of the 1920s), and *Since Yesterday* (a history of the 1930s). These readings provided an overview of US history from both an historical and literary perspective. While most of the books were indeed interesting, the final book we read, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, I found transformative. I was struck by the changes he experienced over the course of his life history, from a hustler in Harlem, to an outspoken member of the Nation of Islam, to a person who preached unity and understanding towards the end of his life, after going on Hajj to Mecca where he saw Muslims of different skin colors, ethnicities, and creeds.

Reading the *Autobiography* had a chilling effect on me, especially as it expressed a minority position that vaguely mirrored my own minority position as the child of migrant parents, surrounded by members of a British expatriate community and, in retrospect, as a gay man. True that I had struggled, but not in the way he had—with a career in hustling, in drugs, and later joining a radical religious movement, and so on. My story was different, but was still one based upon my experiences that positioned me as an American cultural minority. The text and my own experiences as a minority led me to slowly, over time, appreciate the conditions of different minority groups.

Although I had never been exposed to the African-American community, except through television shows and music, I found his confessional moving and my curiosity about Islam piqued. As such, I decided to pursue Islam in my university studies. In retrospect, my pursuits were a form of rebellion against the dominant norms of my community. In this way, learning about a religious community whose beliefs were in the minority, as is the case with Muslims in the US, was interesting to me as a minority gay man. As members of minority groups experience marginalization and unequal treatment in the US, such as gays and Muslims, I believe my feelings of affinity with Muslims emerged from my sensitivity to their plight, mirroring in certain ways the plight of gay people.

East Coast. My parents encouraged me to apply to universities out-of-state, recognizing the importance of travel for study and for me, providing an escape from the local community I felt so separate from. After exploring several options, I chose to attend a university in western Massachusetts. I found the local community to be liberal, progressive, leftist-activist, and culturally diverse, providing all the right ingredients as an ideal place to study. Inspired by Malcolm X's work as a kind of counter-text to the dominant, White, Christian values of the community where I came from in Wisconsin, I chose to take a course on Middle Eastern history my freshman year, which emphasized Islam and the modern Middle East. I was inspired as I learned about a fascinating faith and the modern history of the region where it began. I continued taking courses in such topics as early Islamic history, Turkish and Mongol Empires, Islamic Art and Architecture, the contemporary Arab world, and two years of the Arabic language. I saw these courses as providing a particular regional and contextual focus to my major area of study, cultural anthropology, a field I found most attractive because of its emphasis on world cultures and peoples.

I was fascinated by Islam, and toyed with the idea of conversion, but found that its position on alcohol, gender and homosexuality, as captured in what I read and articulated by Muslims I met, did not conform to my own sensibilities. I did, however, find it meaningful to study, as it provided a glimpse into a world very different from the one I came from—particularly through the histories and cultures that encompass it. In many ways, the education I received on Islamic history dispelled negative stereotypes I had heard about Muslims and Muslim countries, stereotypes centering on violence and anti-US sentiment. To better understand Islam, particularly from Muslims themselves, I chose to write my senior thesis on the religious identities of five Muslim students of varying backgrounds and experiences at my university. My data were based upon interviews I conducted with them as well as my participation as the only non-Muslim staff writer for the Muslim Students Association newsletter. I came away from my study with a sense of the variety of religious and student identities my research subjects embodied, blowing apart monolithic conceptions of what a Muslim identity entails.

After graduation, and inspired by my work in Massachusetts along with my newfound identity as a student-scholar of Islam, I travelled to Lebanon. Pursuing my studies there was indeed a blessing, and inspired me to return to the US after a year and complete my master's degree in cultural anthropology. The knowledge I possessed of my areas of interest, Islam and cultural anthropology, were expanded through my coursework that exposed me to philosophy, critical studies, and courses on the Qur'an and Islamic law. However, the memories and experiences of Lebanon provided the foundations for rethinking my knowledge pursuits of Islam.

Lebanon. I spent one academic year in Beirut from 2003-2004. It was not the typical study abroad location advertised to undergraduates. It was the last place probably most American parents would want to send their child to study abroad, particularly given the region's recent

volatile history, including the country's 17-year civil war coupled with the recent US-led invasion of nearby Iraq. Despite these concerns, I was encouraged to go by my family and my professors, all of whom recognized my interest in study and travel. I continued my studies of Arabic, Islam, and the Middle East while engaging myself in the local campus culture. I befriended Arab and Muslim students from all over the Middle East and beyond, and learned a great deal about them and the societies they came from. The juxtaposition and connections between the students I met and the courses I took enriched my understanding of the Middle East, and blew apart my naïve understanding that the Middle East was largely homogeneous and culturally bounded.

For example, I learned about Shiite Islam as an undergraduate—a denomination of Islam whose leadership centered on particular male descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, and who held a religio-political stance in opposition to Sunni authority, the major denomination of Islam, as embodied in the caliphate—the center of religious and political power for centuries in the Islamic world (Berkey, 2003; Halm, 1987/2004; Ruthven, 1997). I learned through my friends and through my courses that Shiites in Lebanon were represented in the government, the political offices of which conformed to the religious divisions in the country.

During my time in Lebanon, I was fascinated to see how much power and influence Hezbollah had, a Shiite political group that is labeled by Western countries as a terrorist organization. I came to learn that Hezbollah provided healthcare, access to water and food, as well as television broadcasting to local Lebanese people. I was invited on a Hezbollah-run field trip to locations in southern Lebanon that the Israelis had withdrawn from in 2000, an act that was deemed a Hezbollah victory. They wished for me and other international students to partake in a documentary film they were making about the south, visiting sites that the Israeli army had

occupied—a documentary to be broadcast on their own television station, al-Manar. Clearly, what I had learned about Hezbollah watching the news in the US was broken apart by what I observed on the ground. Moreover, my learning about the Middle East was complicated by the fact that I met people who were represented a variety of religious, political, and cultural positions, providing for me a richer portrait of life in a particular Middle Eastern country.

Lebanon consists of varying and overlapping cultural groups. These include religious groups, such as Shiite Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Druze, Alawites, Maronite Christians, Catholics, Greek Orthodox, and Protestants. There are an array of ethnic groups (especially in Beirut and at my university), among them Syrians, Palestinians from both Palestine and the Palestinian diaspora,[16] Gulf Arabs, Egyptians, Armenians, some Africans (including Sudanese, Cameroonian, and other sub-Saharan groups) and some Asians (Filipino and others from southeast Asia). Other groupings included an LGBT community (which was only minimally visible and active at the time), a westernized liberal youth community, and conservative religious communities (including Muslims and Christians) consisting of both young and old.

The diversity of Lebanese society is augmented by the diverse countries and cultures where members of the Lebanese community have gone. Today, significant communities live in Brazil, the US, and other parts of the world (Nationmaster, 2012). I recall a Lebanese acquaintance, also a student at my university, who grew up in Dearborn, Michigan. My friends mentioned that he was fairly conservative (by Lebanese liberal youth standards) because he had been raised outside of Lebanon. When I inquired further about it, they indicated that sometimes Lebanese communities abroad can be more conservative than their counterpart communities in Lebanon. This was because, I was told, parents would work to preserve their culture and life-

[16] A significant number have lived in refugee camps since 1948.

ways by attempting to keep themselves and their children from interacting too much with the dominant culture of the host country. In this way, their children would become socialized into a version of the original society as embodied in their parents, and existing in varying degrees of opposition to the surrounding, dominant society. This process, I was told, lead to a culturally conservative disposition on the part of the now grown-up child.

I became cognizant of Lebanese politics and the larger conflicts that affected the region. I moreover could consider the ways in which the past connected to the present in the diversity of Lebanese society, in particular, and in the Middle East, generally. Two brief portraits of my student friends demonstrate well two dominant political viewpoints I encountered in Lebanon, viewpoints emerging from their experiences and understandings.

Hassan was a secular Lebanese student from the southern city of Tyre, but was born into a Twelver Shiite[17] family that followed in the religious tradition of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. His family was quite influential in Tyre. He had spent time in the mosque as a child, and certainly was versed in the tenets of Twelver Shiite Islam, including beliefs and prayer rituals that marked Shiite Islam as separate from Sunni Islam. However, he was decidedly non-conservative, and expressed a more secular outlook on life than a religious one. He loved the US given his passion for American music and culture and the fact that he had family in southern California. Although he had come from a city devastated by conflicts with Israel, economically less developed than Beirut, and a Hezbollah stronghold, his "apolitical" leanings may have

[17] There are three branches of Shiite Islam: Fivers (*Zaydis*), Seveners (*Ismailis*) and Twelvers (*Ithna 'Ashariyyah*). Believers follow the guidance and teachings of the Imams: the religious and political leaders who were descendants of Muhammad. The Fivers follow the first five Imams, the Seveners the first seven, and the Twelvers follow twelve of them. The largest sect in terms of believers is Twelver Shiism, which is the majority Shiite denomination in Lebanon and Iran. A shared Shiite identity is one of the main connections between the two countries, particularly between Iran and Hezbollah, connections that surface on occasion in the American news media.

served him well given the contention and violence associated with politics and allowed him to construct a sense of self that was cosmopolitan and well-allied with the US.

Eli, a Palestinian atheist with a Christian background from Ramallah in occupied Palestine, was among the most politically outspoken of my university friends. I met him soon after I arrived in Lebanon, and as time went on, he became increasingly angry about the US government's role in supporting the violence Israel inflicted upon his community. Despite my agreement with his belief, and understanding when he would say "Fuck your country," he became increasingly disillusioned with Americans and American governmental policy, at one point confiding in me that he wished to become a suicide bomber for Palestine, inspired by Islamic militants. However, he would also mention how Ireland (the country many of my ancestors came from) was a model for Palestine, divided, but at peace. By the time I left Lebanon, his attitude thankfully had transformed, and he realized that becoming a suicide bomber was less productive than joining a political movement. So, he joined the Palestinian Cultural Club on campus as a space to advocate for Palestine, yet also became increasingly interested in peace-minded icons, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. In the end, I was happy to notice that he had gone from my friend, to someone who distrusted me, to seeing me as embodying the goals of those who believed in peace, everywhere (which was accurate).

These portraits demonstrate the two types of political beliefs of individuals I encountered. As such, these beliefs centered on a "political" attitude towards the US and an "apolitical" attitude. In a sense, these positionalities were at the core of conflicts in Lebanon, as western-embracing and western-rejecting groups confronted each other in daily life. As such, they represented the particulars of a larger phenomenon throughout the Middle East—the diversity of cultures (Lebanese, Palestinian, etc.) and political leanings (Shiism, Hezbollah, secular, etc.) that

fundamentally shaped the social and political landscape of Lebanon, tying the local with the global.

My learning served to perpetuate my desire to understand Islam in greater detail. My seduction was due to the fact that as I went deeper into my studies—learning more and more from my courses and from those around me—I found more fascinating knowledge emerged. It was as though behind one door another door appeared, beckoning me further and deeper into knowledge about the Muslim world. This knowledge was about the diverse peoples of the Middle East, the diverse religions, and the history of such things—especially the history of Islam, which taught me about caliphs, sultans, dynasties, governments, colonial powers, and civil strife. This desire to know, to acquire knowledge, affected me deeply and helped me to become a more informed individual and American citizen. But, in truth, it was not a journey without challenge.

Disenchantment: Traveling with the Undesired, or Islam as "Other" in Global Contexts

My pursuits towards understanding Islam, as mentioned earlier, involve both enchantment and disenchantment—the two overlapping in particular ways. While the previous section focused on my enchantment, my fascination and pursuit of knowledge with regard to Islam (in view of my own minority status), this section will hone in on experiences I had whereby Islam disenchanted me as a faith system. This centered on particular events that shaped a sense of "undesire" for me, or alienation from that which I was pursuing—an understanding of Islam. Furthermore, as will be discussed, my feelings of disenchantment in some cases paralleled feelings espoused by people in the global contexts I found myself in, in both Muslim majority and Muslim minority societies.

India. Perhaps the first place where I experienced disenchantment with Islam was, curiously, in a place that fueled some of my basic, early interests in the faith. After my freshman year of college, having just taken my first class on the history of the modern Middle East, I traveled with my family to rural north India, where my parents were hired to teach courses in grammar and public speaking at a small high school in Punjab. There, 25 high school students had been awarded scholarships to pursue their undergraduate careers in the United States. During our two-month stay in rural Punjab, at a former maharaja's palace transformed into a school, my parents worked with the students to help prepare them for life as undergraduates in higher education in the US. I worked as my father's teaching assistant for the grammar course, in which students wrote papers on topics connected to their backgrounds and their own interests. After a few weeks, interested in the students and their progress, I elected to initiate a discussion section for the course, focusing on conversational English. A variety of topics popular among American youth (such as movies and cars) were introduced and students were encouraged to freely engage their opinions regarding the topics, ask questions, and learn about American culture in the process. During our time in Punjab it became increasingly apparent that Islam constituted an "Other" in juxtaposition to Sikhs and Hindus (the dominant groups within the region), and in relationship to the nearby neighboring country, Pakistan. I will present four incidents in which these were apparent.

On one occasion, only a few weeks into my parents' teaching, a man was caught trying to set books in the school's library on fire, intending to burn it down. In a separate (but apparently related) incident, one of the servants who had regularly served tea to the staff came rushing into my father's classroom, bleeding and pleading for assistance. He had been stabbed by an unknown assailant who had quickly fled the scene. We were told these acts of violence had to do

with our presence at the school and likely were committed by "Muslims." Furthermore, when I once asked the headmaster's wife about some reading I had done that indicated Sikhism had been, in part, influenced by Islam, she denied it fully (as did others) and indicated it was a "pure" faith, in and of itself, and not a product of outside influences (despite the numerous historical and religious convergences in Punjab between Hindus and Muslims that seem to have greatly influenced the Sikh faith). Finally, neighboring Pakistan was clearly a looming threat, with the then current nuclear arms race between the two nations, and its closest border only approximately 125 miles from our village. This was augmented by the memories of Partition still alive in the region, the deadly period after India and Pakistan gained independence from Britain. The school's nurse recalled walking as a child across fields of corpses as her Sikh family moved into India from Pakistan during those volatile years.

These episodes demonstrate the ways in which Muslims constituted an "Other" to us, as a family of Americans in a region historically connected to violence[18] just as Muslims constituted an "Other" to Punjab. However real or not, the rhetoric around Islam as "Other" that was in circulation during our time there, led us to believe that we might have been targeted as Americans, a possibility that did frighten us and led us to question our purposes there. We wondered whether or not our presence was causing community discord. Perhaps the perpetrators felt that American influence had to be resisted at all costs? Whatever the reasoning, Muslims became scapegoats. They fit within a cultural and national imaginary as perpetrators of violence, as those who could undermine our work with the students and staff at the school and potentially benefit as resisters, within their own communities.

[18] British colonialism, Partition, Operation Blue Star, the Sikh separatist Movement, etc.

Lebanon. Returning to my experience in Lebanon, I quickly discovered the ways in which Islamic and Arab sensibilities embraced me as outsider/guest yet also as "Other", in the sense that its social practice excluded myself, as an American, as deserving of hospitality or engagement (working against the tradition of Arab hospitality I encountered among my friends who often took me to different parts of the country and region). I had been the recipient of the hospitality of the university, in which I was invited to participate in cultural tours around the country, as well as from my friends, who regularly included me in their gatherings and invited me to travel with them to various corners of the region, including Tripoli, Damascus, and Tyre. In this way, I could see myself as an "insider/outsider"—possessed with knowledge of the region, language and religion, engaged in a tradition of hospitality through my friends and the university, however it was clear I was not a native. Moreover, the political frustration many had in Lebanon with the US (of which I was very aware and which caused me to keep a low profile when traveling outside the university gates) was clear given what I was told about the region. This became most apparent to me when I attempted to enter a mosque to conduct fieldwork for a small ethnographic study I was doing as part of my coursework at the university.

About a month before engaging in the study on religious identity, my family came to visit me in Lebanon. After a short stint in Cyprus, where we traipsed about the country amongst European tourists, friendly locals, historic ruins, and sundrenched beaches, we arrived in Beirut. Among the sites we came upon that sparked some interest was a small mosque near the restored and renovated downtown area. We were invited in, the women in our group were given veils to cover themselves and we deposited our shoes at the door. Our host was a man of small stature and kind words, whom I will call Husayn, who told us about the mosque as well as a bit about Islam—and indicated he was from Bangladesh. We all agreed it was a good decision to stop in

and we graciously thanked our host. About a month later, as I was crafting an ethnographic project on religious identity, I decided to return to the mosque to ask Husayn if he would be willing to be interviewed (or knew someone who I could speak to) about his religious identity, including his beliefs and practices. When I arrived back at the mosque on a hot afternoon, there was a couple in front of me who were clearly tourists and interested in seeing the mosque. A man I did not recognize, who had a beard and a sizeable belly, glared at us newcomers—perhaps a self-appointed security guard—and he wore a *jellaba* and a white cap. He quickly demanded to know where the older couple, standing in front of me, came from. "France," they replied tepidly. He then greeted them and allowed them to enter the mosque. He then inquired where I was from, and recognizing I was entering a potential research site and did not want to get off on the wrong foot, I told the truth, "United States." His expression grew dark as he declared "You are not welcome here. You have killed the children of Palestine, you have killed the children of Iraq." I was stunned (but after the initial shock, not surprised), and I tried to protest, indicating that the policies of my government did not represent my political viewpoint. He dismissed my protestations and waived me off the front steps.

My assumption is that he wished the Americans to remove themselves from the Middle East,[19] and it would be desirable for locals themselves to push out any and all Americans and their influences. His contribution to the effort was probably to remove me from the mosque. Of course, some certainly would have agreed with his actions—some perhaps would've gone further and beaten me (as one professor of mine later told me). The entire episode led me to rethink my research, and for reasons of access, I chose to focus on a student friend of mine instead.

[19] He clearly forgot or ignored France's role in recent wars, not to mention its historical presence as a colonial power in Lebanon.

Moreover, for some locals in Lebanon, Islam also represented an "Other" as embodied by Palestinians who had initially come as refugees after the creation of Israel in 1948, and later when Palestinian/Israel conflict spread into Lebanon in the 1970s, fuelling a 17-year civil war that pitted various communities against one another, particularly Muslims and Christians. For a contingent of Lebanese Christians, the Palestinian connection to Lebanon was horrific, and an issue that, more than 10 years after the war had ended, an issue of deep resentment, with some, I was told, blaming the Palestinian presence for the civil war that left the "Paris of the Middle East" in ruins.

China. As a doctoral student, I was given the opportunity to develop my research as well as help facilitate a relationship between a US university and Song University, in southern China, supporting graduate education. Our group included graduate students from various universities across the US and we departed with a sense of excitement and the promise of new learning. After touring the sites of Beijing, our group travelled to the southwestern part of China, where we were warmly welcomed by faculty at Song University. Spending time learning about Chinese education and culture, I soon discovered a colleague in our group, Carl, had an interest in Muslims in China as well. He had come prepared to interview Muslim students on campus about their experiences as Muslims in China and as students. Carl invited me to attend a focus group interview session that had been arranged for him with Chinese students on campus. A translator was present to assist with posing the questions to the students and translating their responses. It was clear that some felt like they were like any other Chinese person (some may have not been forthcoming however, as a culture of censorship seemed to be in place). However, one student appeared to speak honestly and openly about his feelings. He had come from Xinjiang, a Muslim-majority autonomous region in northwestern China. He noted that there were no places

for Muslims on campus to pray; most would pray in random, inconspicuous spots. Although there were "ethnic minority" dining halls for non-majority groups, which did not serve things like pork (a staple dish in dominant Han Chinese culture), he felt that the Muslims of China were not only disenfranchised on campus, but in China as a whole. At one point, he began speaking of the human rights of his people, and the need to overcome Chinese oppression, to the point of having their own independence from the country. The translator said as much, but becoming increasingly embarrassed, she soon stopped, refusing to continue. With that, the session ended.

The views expressed by the student in certain ways speak to the long-standing elements of racism in Xinjiang province against Uyghur Muslims, whose minority culture does not always reflect dominant culture (Kaltman, 2007), despite Islam being a presence in China since the earliest days of the faith in the seventh century ("Islam in China", 2002). However, evidence suggests Muslims in China have varying views on the relationship between their culture and the dominant culture, some (such as Uyghurs) espousing separatist views, yet many internal viewpoints persist among Muslims (Israeli, 2007).

In conversations with several faculty members and graduate students, they discouraged me from pursuing studies in this topic, one even suggesting I study Buddhism instead of Islam in China! One, however, Dr. Wu, an anthropologist, encouraged me to pursue my interests. She had studied the Miao (known in the US as Hmong) in China, an ethnic minority community. She encouraged me to investigate such things as their dress and other elements of their culture, including communication strategies, but stopped short of discussing political issues or conflicts in culture. This, like many of the silences I encountered regarding Muslims in China, suggested to me a culture of censorship, in which individuals would censor themselves on topics that might be deemed politically inappropriate, especially since the government has widespread authority

throughout the country. Any sign of anti-government or anti-China activity (focused on taboo politically sensitive subjects, such as Tiananmen Square), could potentially lead to arrest and/or imprisonment, as evidenced by the recent detainment and "deportation" of a Chinese dissident (Kaplan, et al., 2012).

It became clear during the three week experience in Chongqing that it would be a challenge to study Muslims in China without having the appropriate connections, and even if I had those connections, who was to say any of them would talk to me as an outsider, and how talking about it could potentially endanger them, if not myself! As such, I came away (as I had in the other contexts explored here) understanding that Islam constituted a cultural "Other" in uncertain times in which Muslim minorities are positioned culturally as a potential danger, external to mainstream society.

Embodiments

My experiences in the places I have featured here constitute the salient experiential dimensions of my learning about Islam. The list of countries and contexts is certainly not exhaustive, as my learning can be traced to far more engagements in various places, the details of which are beyond the scope of this study. However, the places mentioned here are salient for understanding my learning and identity development in relationship to the global knowledge I gained surrounding Islam. This process entailed a combination of my own privileged social status as well as my underprivileged social condition.

The resources for travel and learning in various global contexts came from my family, whose support allowed me the very fortunate opportunity to pursue my studies. These opportunities were made possible by my own membership in a White family with access to privilege and the global economy. Moreover, my experiences, like those immigrant elites in the

new global economy, are marked by a weakening tie between culture and place, effectively blurring the concept of culture as attached to a particular territory, opening up the possibility of unbounded culture that transcends national borders (Appadurai, 1996; Ong, 1999). In this way, my own privileged status as a globe trotter and anthropologist, socialized into a globally-minded family (and following the well-beaten path of Whites traveling and traversing the globe), informed my enchantment and disenchantment with regard to Islam.

My own disadvantaged status as a minority, by virtue of growing up in a migrant community and as a gay man, further underpinned my engagement with Islam, initially as an object of enchantment and desire. My pursuits gave way to a more sobering picture of Islam as I became increasingly sensitized to it as less idealized and more conservative, and as I learned in varying contexts, as constituting a culturally "Other" force. As a cultural "Other," Islam and Muslims reminded me of my own challenges growing up as an outsider, including being gay in a straight and fairly conservative context. As such, I could both understand and feel affinities with Muslims as cultural minorities as I did gays, like myself, as cultural minorities. Muslims, as mere majorities (such as in Lebanon), or as minorities in the varying global contexts where I traveled, constituted a cultural group that met degrees of suspicion (questioning their national loyalties, cultural, and religious values) from non-Muslim neighbors and/or from the perspective of the/a dominant culture, particularly at a time when Muslim networks like immigrant groups and al-Qaeda transcend national boundaries that cut across cultural, regional, and political divides (see Cooke & Lawrence, 2005).

As a gay man, and like many minority Muslims, I understood the suspicion members of dominant culture espoused, particularly being seen as a member of a community deemed threatening towards traditional notions of culture. In the past, the disempowering mode of

dominant culture rendered "abnormal" people and their ways of being and living in the world as counterproductive to societal norms. Gays have historically experienced systematic cultural disenfranchisement by their families, their jobs, and their nation (Bronski, 2011; Kaiser, 1997/2007), a phenomenon that continues today. Like Muslim minorities, gays have had to contend with a dominant culture that often perceives them as deviant, impure, threatening, and perhaps most insidious of all—amusing. The spectacle of Muslim minorities and gays as depicted in the media suggests that they are both newsworthy for a consuming public that may also disenfranchise them, providing profits and recognition that provide entertainment to public culture consisting of Hollywood-like bombings in exotic foreign lands, family-friendly shows that supposedly empower gays (a la *Modern Family*) yet reinforce stereotypes and mislead the public about the struggles gay people face. The fantasies of dominant culture project an "idealized" form of both Muslim and gay insider-outsider, who may live and work in society yet simultaneously work against its reproduction in an idealized form, at best, and who both exist as cultural terrorists, maligning the values and institutions of the past and present, at its very worst.

These tensions and overlaps between gay culture and Muslim minority culture in the West capture well the dynamics Puar (2007) underscored. Puar noted, from the vantage point of Western societies, "The Muslim or gay binary mutates from a narrative of incommensurate subject positioning into an 'Islam versus homosexuality' tug of populations war: a mutation that may reveal the contiguous undercurrents of conservative homonormative ideologies and queer liberalism" (p. 19). In this way, cultural discourses surrounding gays and Muslims position them as fundamentally opposite, discourses that see them, for good or bad, as truly different. Moreover, these are discourses upheld within the gay community, whether from conservative or liberal voices. She continued, "We are witnessing, from vastly different corners, the rise of

homonormative Islamophobia in the global North, whereby homonormative and queer gay men can enact forms of national, racial, or other belongings by contributing to a collective vilification of Muslims" (p. 21). In this way, the existence of a cultural "opposite" to the gay community, Islam, she argued, is increasingly apparent as a strategy among gays to define themselves as belonging within particular national, ethnic, racial, and secular communities that accept or tolerate them as gay, in juxtaposition to Islam, which is a religion and way of life that is perceived as not accepting.

Perhaps a way of demonstrating this is by looking to the organizations associated with gay pride celebrations in the US, often organizations based upon politics (such as the Human Rights Campaign), ethnic groups (such as Trikone dedicated to LGBT South Asians), racial groups (such as Black gay pride celebrations) and so on, yet rarely are Muslim groups present.[20] The relative absence of a significant positive discourse within the US gay community towards Muslims, serves to separate themselves from Muslims.[21] Moreover, this is reinforced by the media, which has depicted the persecution of gays by Muslims, a reality that gays face in the US

[20] Al-Fatiha, a queer Muslim organization based in the US, but with global connections, lasted from 1997 till 2011, and was not very visible within the gay community. There invisibility was due, in part, to a fatwa issued by conservative Muslim forces that targeted them and determined they were "apostates" and thus worthy of being killed. As of January 2013, a new group has emerged, MASGD, seeking to support gay Muslims. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Fatiha_Foundation and http://muslimalliance.org/

[21] Recently I observed a veiled older woman selling water and treats to people going to MotorCity Pride in Detroit. As I walked further along, I saw three older Muslim women, wearing hijabs, watching people go to MotorCity Pride in Detroit, one filming the ethnically and racially diverse participants who were lined up, wearing a fascinating array of outfits, and waiting to enter Hart Plaza.

and in other parts of the world.[22] In this way, conversations circulating in US dominant culture that separate Muslims and gays is a discourse that is also found in the gay community.

Although Muslim minorities and the gay experience can indeed be compared in many respects, I certainly do not wish to imply that they are equal on an experiential level across the board, as there are always contextual issues that may make one more or less disempowering than another. Furthermore, on a personal level, while I have pursued an academic interest in the study of Islam, it has always on a personal level existed as both part of me yet "Other" to me ("Other" in the way that non-Muslim Westerners view Islam), suggesting my own connections to non-Muslim culture, from socially charged issues, such as the ways in which homosexuality is treated in both faith and cultural practice (which can elicit a death sentence according to Islamic law), a theoretical particularity that has been manifested in human actions, most notably the hanging of two young men in Iran (Wikinews, 2005) and the ways in which women can exist as socio-religiously unequal to men, to the more mundane issues of alcohol prohibition and veiling.

These suggest a splitting between theory and practice, as many religions are not practiced by followers according to the letter of the text, particularly given the many contradictions that exist in scripture, let alone in society. Similarly, the ways in which the gay community in the West, particularly the United States, is ironically voiced in the name of human rights, contradicts itself by idealizing its own White, homonormative cultural manifestation, simultaneously working to "Other" ethnic, racial, and religious minority groups for their unusual ways of being and/or bigoted beliefs (Puar, 2007). Such similar feelings espoused by ethnic, racial, and

[22] Laws in many Muslim-majority countries criminalize homosexuality, and for those that don't, there can be a cultural stigma: http://www.religionfacts.com/homosexuality/islam.htm See also the films, *Dangerous Living: Coming out in the developing world* and *Jihad for Love*.

religious minority groups towards gays leaves little to the imagination regarding the possibility of easy dialogue and understanding across such minority boundaries.

It is this issue, the impossibility of boundary crossing between gays and Muslims in the United States (coupled with my education in Islamic studies inside and outside classrooms) that inspired me to teach in an Islamic school. It was my hope that instead of announcing my homosexuality to staff, teaching them about my community and ending up endangering my research project, that I could learn from the experience and share my knowledge as a gay man about the goings on in an American Islamic school with members of the gay and straight communities in an effort to humanize myself and the cultural "Others" with whom I interacted, creating unusual connections between two entities so different, yet so similar in terms of their cultural positioning as minorities. As such, I saw my effort as a way to understand those who were different than me, working to humanize their voices and actions, while simultaneously humanizing my own. It was my hope that my efforts as a teacher, as well as a researcher, served to empower both communities, gay and Muslim, in uncertain and impossible times. My experiences with Islam, my experiences being a gay man, constitute an embodied experience that worked to produce my identity as an Islamic school educator, particularly of Muslim youth.

The Islamic School and the Insider/Outsider Teacher

During my fieldwork, as a way to better understand the school culture, as well as give back to the community for allowing me to do my research, I chose to become an intervention teacher. Over the course of a year and a half, I would come in approximately once per week for an hour or two. I worked with both small groups and individual students on primarily mathematics and language arts (and a few times on social studies), though usually not with the same students, except for Anwar and for awhile, Mamadou. These subjects, as already noted,

were privileged in the curriculum, as the school elected to follow state standards and tests, in the hopes of helping students transition into public schools, where most would go after graduating. As such, I worked and became familiar with a number of students on an individual basis. Below I provide vignettes of my work with two individuals during my time as an intervention teacher.

Mamadou. Mamadou was a 9-year-old student who came from Senegal. His father had lived in the US and, to my knowledge, had sent money home to Senegal to provide for Mamadou's education. However, Mamadou's mother and family in Senegal did not send him to school and he ended up on the streets. When he came to the Islamic school, he barely spoke English and had a difficult time adapting to the culture of both the school and the surrounding society. He was in kindergarten during the time I worked with him, due to his behavioral challenges related to his struggles around language and culture (he also was in Laura's first-grade class the following year, even though most students his age were in fourth grade). When I first started working with him, we would sit at a large round table, in a small room attached to the main office, and work on activities related to English language learning (a language he was struggling to learn). It was clear he was an affable character, often upbeat and laughing. I would often use the supplies I was provided to help him learn English, including flashcards and letter pieces.

Sometimes Mamadou would not want to engage in the specific activities I wanted us to do, so I would sometimes let him take command and we would focus only on certain flashcards or letter pieces. Other times I would intervene when it was clear he wasn't learning or was finding it amusing to pull the same flashcards over and over again. On the whole, it was clear to me that there was quite a bit of progress he still needed to make.

I worked with Mamadou regularly between February and May, when I first began teaching. After an interlude of several months, in October, I worked again with Mamadou, and found that he was picking up English quickly. He had made great strides in his learning, and we started working on reading short story books together, although he still was struggling to read and understand particular words, such as "down" and "it". I also learned that he understood French, and having studied French, I began using it in some of our interactions to help him. By the end of the year, I found that he was regularly in the principal's office for causing trouble inside and outside classes, and although he was old enough to be in fourth grade, given his behavioral and linguistic challenges, he was in first grade. It occurred to me that he was acting up because he saw himself as different from the rest of the students, linguistically, culturally and age-wise. Adjustment without assistance from a trained specialist also made matters more challenging for him. I was told by one teacher that he was going to leave the school and attend a local public school, where he could have access to more resources to help in his education.

I understood that my work with Mamadou supported his learning of secular knowledge, knowledge appropriate for living in American society, and knowledge that was deemed important to have at the school. Like my work with the other students, it supported my learning of their personal struggles, their cultures, which I tried to meet with my own knowledge of the Muslim world and of knowledge valued for elementary students in American culture. Furthermore, this was coupled with my sensitivities to cultural minorities, wishing to empower those who, like myself, are familiar with the challenges of living as minorities.

Anwar. Of all the students I worked with, I felt most attached to Anwar during my time as an intervention teacher. Anwar was a fourth-grader who had family connections to Somalia,

from where his grandfather had emigrated. Initially, I worked with Anwar along with several other boys, eventually working solely with him.

In one episode, I worked with Anwar on a language arts assignment, in which he learned how to distinguish between proper and common nouns. Using his textbook, the lesson required he write out each sentence and note which words were common versus proper nouns. He was mostly successful at identifying both as he carefully wrote out each sentence in his notebook. The last three sentences required that he transform proper nouns into capitalized words: cape of good hope => Cape of Good Hope, nile river => Nile River, and baltimore => Baltimore. After he completed these, I noticed there was a world map in the computer lab (where I typically taught), and I used this to explain where these were. I felt compelled to turn the literacy lesson into a geography lesson, pointing out these various locations to Anwar, noting the Nile runs from south to north, where Baltimore is in relationship to Michigan, and that European navigators had sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, going from the Atlantic to the Indian Oceans. I did this because, through my own travels and learnings about the Muslim world, I desired to impart knowledge of the world to him. In this way, I felt, I was supporting his secular knowledge of the world, but perhaps, implicitly, his religious knowledge, by pointing out places that encompassed the Muslim world, places where Muslims had lived for centuries, places he would no doubt study in his Islamic classes.

In another episode, we again worked on reading. He read from his textbook a story about Martin Luther King Jr., which included vocabulary words he needed to learn. I tried, afterwards, to explain segregation and racism to him, which he seemed to understand. I mentioned how it continues today, despite the gains that had been made since Martin Luther King's time. A week later, Anwar read from his textbook part of a biography for Black History Month. He was given

an assignment to report on the biography of an African American historical figure, which he had not yet completed. Working with him on these particular topics pertinent to the African American community, I could not help but think of the implications for himself as a person of color, with roots in Africa, and as a Muslim. How much, I thought, have things changed versus stayed the same? To what extent will Anwar, his classmates, and their families have to deal with issues of racism due to their skin color, their ethnic origins, and their religious beliefs? Such issues of prejudice and discrimination were very much on my mind, as a gay man.

Reflection

My work with the students satisfied my desire to ground my presence in the community to further my research as well as support them. My experiences sensitized me to issues of language, culture, and behavior among students, as well as the culture of the school. At times, I found myself frustrated by some of the students' behavior while I was teaching. The disruptions, distractions, and the refusal to work all concerned me. However, I recognized that the linguistic, cultural, and educational environment that was impacting many of these students, most of whom came from a variety of immigrant homes, led to behavioral responses that were varied, with some who could cope better than others. Language differences, I found, could be a great burden for some students, such as Mamadou. I could hardly imagine what it would be like to move from one language and cultural environment to another at such a young age, and then be expected to adapt quickly to life in a new place. These struggles were exhibited, to varying degrees, by all of my students as they came from homes where English, if spoken at all, was never the sole language. As such, in my own teaching, as well as in my observations of others' classes, I found students could be silent and participative, loud and obnoxious, or quietly bored and distracted, depending upon the context. While in certain cultures students are expected to be passive

recipients of knowledge that a teacher shares, it was clear that the students at the Islamic school were in fact like their American public school counterparts in their behaviors (e.g., loud, quiet, participative, etc.) which are both explicitly and implicitly upheld in school (Alexander, 2000).

My teaching beliefs emerged from my negotiated identity, in which the knowledge I embodied related to Islam and American culture as a gay man, coupled with my desire to help another minority community. The school was a site where these came together for me, in my role as an intervention teacher. My own knowledge about and respect for Islam supported and perpetuated my access to the school. This was true as my knowledge of Arabic, Islam, and different Muslim societies helped to create rapport between me, faculty, and students, complementing our own shared understandings of American culture. The knowledge regarding Islam that I was socialized into, both in classrooms and informally, allowed me to better understand the particulars of the faith (currently and historically), the cultures of Islam in the world, and the ways in which Muslims embodied their religion and culture in meaningful ways. This allowed me to learn from my Muslim students at the school, to see them as social beings who had varying behaviors, challenges, and successes in their young lives.

On the whole, my socialization into a global religious and cultural understanding of Islam allowed me to consider the myriad ways in which culture (whether Muslim or non-Muslim) far from a bounded entity, is actively influenced by other cultures, connections based upon historical ties as well as contemporary politics (Appadurai, 1996; Barth, 1969; Wolf, 1982). These dynamics combine in such ways to produce feelings, emotions, and psychological states in particular peoples, in certain times and in certain places. In many ways, my own feelings regarding Islam, both desiring knowledge of it yet feeling alienated from it, emerge out of such cultural overlaps in which contradictions manifest themselves (why do Americans desire news

coverage of Islam that is violent and that we find alienating from our own experiences and indeed detestable?). My own feelings of alienation from Islam, with its religio-cultural dimensions foreign to my own cultural upbringing, included a sense of alienation towards the Islamic dimension of the school's culture. Yet, I also could see the students and community as cultural minorities, like myself.

As such, I felt I could draw upon the pool of knowledge I possessed related to Islamic and American cultures to help me make sense of the school as a cultural place, as well as understand the students as Muslim, as American, and as human beings. In this way, my role at the school meant negotiating my identity in order to fit within its cultural dynamics, working to socialize students into American and Islamic cultures. As Bruner (1996) noted,

> …education is not simply a technical business of well-managed information processing, nor even simply a matter of applying "learning theories" to the classroom or using the results of subject-centered "achievement testing." It is a complex pursuit of fitting a culture to the needs of its members and of fitting its members and their ways of knowing to the needs of a culture. (p. 43)

In my own practices as teacher, like the other teachers of this study, I supported a culturally sensitive pedagogy towards the students, working to make Islamic and American cultures available to them. It was a pedagogy that allowed me to also learn about them, and their familial and cultural backgrounds, a dynamic that all the teachers confronted and that shaped the culture of the school. Moreover, I implicitly upheld basic normative structures of Islam espoused by the school and community by sending students to prayer times, validating what they learned about their faiths, and supporting the gendered dynamics of the school.[23]

Regarding American culture, I validated basic ideas associated with it and that were part of the curriculum, where I taught them basic math and language skills, skills I had acquired in

[23] Boys and girls were socialized into their genders at the school by praying separately, wearing different kinds of dress (veils for girls), and in some classes separated by gender at their tables.

my own American education, and that were deemed culturally appropriate and part and parcel to dominant culture. My teaching was not always smooth, as noted, as I experienced tensions when students would not sit still, spoke out of turn, or would not focus on the task they had been presented with. Indeed these students were ones who struggled in their regular classes, and so I was charged with providing individualized instruction that, it was hoped I as well as the principal and the teachers, would benefit them. As such, I worked, through challenge and success, to validate their knowledge as Muslim-Americans, as the children of immigrants, as well as to support their socialization. As such I hoped to empower them as members of a minority community, hoping to give them the individualized instruction they so desperately needed, which so many children need, by working, through thick and thin, for their future.

As such, my own beliefs of cultural diversity, based upon my experiences growing up gay in a White migrant community, influenced my disposition as a teacher. Moreover, my experiences learning about various cultures, especially Muslim, entailed the acquisition of knowledge which I embodied and which inspired and served my teaching of struggling youth in the Islamic school. My identity as a teacher, based upon religion and sexual orientation, instilled in me a desire to impart a basic knowledge of respect, understanding, and global/local awareness that I hoped they would embody to support their life-ways as informed Muslim citizens in a pluralistic society. However, my identity as one who embodied his cultural disposition as an American along with knowledge of Islam was one that entailed uneasy negotiation.

Not Fully at Home in School

As an instructor, I brought to the school knowledge based upon my socialization into American culture, including as a minority, as well as global knowledge centering on Islam. The culture of the school shaped my knowledge in ways that led me to develop a student-centered

orientation in supporting the struggling children of immigrants. This dynamic led me to identify with them, by virtue of our shared status as minorities, as well as our collective embodiment of American and Islamic cultures. In this way, I saw their struggles as not far removed from my own as a cultural minority.

But beyond these particulars, I did not easily embody the secular (American culture) and the religious (Islamic culture) easily. Given that I had experienced both an enchantment and disenchantment with Islam (and by extension, American culture) it was clear that these two aspects of my teaching identity did not sit easily together. Indeed, the Islamic school for me was not a site of easy fluidity between my past experiences and my role as a teacher, but more of a site of discontinuity, as its orientation towards Islam (which is generally conservative in these times) and American culture were not based upon liberal interpretations, but rather somewhat conservative interpretations. Given this discontinuity between myself and the school, along with my uneasy embodiment of Islam and American culture, the school was not a site where I felt fully at home, unlike Nour and Ayoob. My identity as a teacher did not overlap as well with the school's culture as it did for them. In this way, there was cultural distance between myself and the school, yet my connections with the students alleviated that distance, but only to a certain degree. In many ways, both disenchantment and enchantment were part and parcel to my journey and to my experience as an Islamic schoolteacher.

My journey, in relationship to my embodied experience as an American cultural minority and as one seeking and possessing knowledge of Islam (whether enchanting or disenchanting), drove my desire to work with students at the Islamic school. It was in the context of the school that my understandings of them and myself were shaped, leading to practices that supported the achievement of students who were struggling, mainly along the lines of valued knowledge within

secular American culture, but peripherally, supporting their faith as Muslims by ensuring they stayed within the boundaries of their religion. Moreover, my position at the school, not as a regular teacher, but as an intervention teacher, indeed helped to support its overall mission to socialize students into their faith and secular American culture. Indeed, my identity as a teacher was shaped by the forces I experienced, particularly related to being gay and to identifying at certain levels with minority Muslims. For me, this combination of religion and sexuality, from a minority perspective, greatly influenced the way I viewed myself, and constituted negotiated dynamics that shaped my identity as a teacher at the school. As such, I was an insider/outsider teacher, not fully at home.

CHAPTER FIVE

"It is a World Made of Differences": The Developing Muslim Consciousness of a First Grade Teacher

I learned to observe the world around me and to note what I saw.

Margaret Mead, 1972, p. 47

"It is a world made of differences," Laura confided during one of our conversations. "We need to learn to be united, to embrace those differences." Later she reflected, "I think it's better to be more diverse, it is better for our students, for our children," continuing that she felt that "it helps them work with other people. We are supposed to be helping them get ready for the future, for the real world. Embracing diversity is the best way to help them do this." I asked her to think about how her diverse students supported her own development as a teacher. "Their culture and religion opened my eyes to a whole new perspective regarding what is broadcast on television," she continued, lamenting that the media did little to portray Muslims in positive ways. Laura had become sensitized to cultures and a religion very different from her own.

Laura never expected to teach in an Islamic school. Her journey to a career in education involved teacher preparation coursework as well as teaching experience in a local public school. Her story as a teacher began during her formative years, as a student in Michigan, coming of age in communities that shared her cultural sensibilities as a White woman raised as a Christian (in her case, a Catholic) but embodying a secular approach to everyday life. Since embarking on a career at the Islamic school, her understanding of cultural diversity increased through her work with colleagues and students, all of whom possessed diverse cultural backgrounds.

This chapter traces the educational life history of Laura, a first-grade teacher at the Islamic School, particularly her shift from a student and student teacher to a teacher who was developing a consciousness of Muslim cultural diversity. Of the teachers represented in this

study, Laura had the most recent exposure to Islam and Muslim cultures, having been exposed to such things only eight years earlier, when she began teaching at the school. In this way, her encounter with the cultural diversity of the school and with the greater Lansing Muslim community shaped her teaching identity. This shaping had to do with the knowledge she brought to the school as an American and the knowledge she learned there, particularly around cultural diversity. As such, this chapter underscores the ways Laura's identity was shaped given the way her background interacted with the culture of the school.

As with the previous portrait chapters, this chapter addresses the questions: What knowledge did Laura contribute to the school's culture? How did the school shape her knowledge as an instructor? And, how did these dynamics influence her sense of belonging in the school? This chapter investigates the experiences involved in the production of a teacher's identity, experiences related to both opportunities and constraints, both of which she encountered as she worked to support the school's functioning.

Life History, Embodiment, and Negotiated Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

To understand Laura's educational background, I again draw upon Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) conception of narrative inquiry, particularly their emphasis on personhood. "We take for granted that people, at any point in time, are in a process of personal change and that from an educational point of view, it is important to be able to narrate the person in terms of the process" (p. 30). Like the other narratives I offer, I consider the ways in which the instructor was informed by the knowledge she was exposed to over the course of her educational life history. It is a knowledge based upon her experiences growing up as a White woman in western Michigan, living and learning in places with relatively little ethnic and racial diversity. Yet her

story is one of awakening to such dynamics once she had become a teacher inside a minority Muslim community in Lansing.

I consider life history an effective anthropological strategy for humanizing the voice of an American teacher while also speaking to the educational and social forces which she was shaped by, over the course of her life, particularly the last eight years as a teacher. Other studies have well demonstrated the relationship between an individual's life and the larger cultural and historical dynamics in relationship to their development as human beings (Eickelman, 1985; He, 2002a; He, 2002b; Murphy, 1990; Shostak, 2000). In this way, life history serves to underscore the experiences of individuals in relationship to the historical and cultural forces and shifts part and parcel to educative experiences. However, life history as an educative process entails not simply the past, but also the present and future. The present encompasses the work she did at the school during my time as a fieldworker. Her classroom practices, as I came to know, demonstrated her sensitization to the Islamic-nature of the school and the backgrounds of her students, including their home cultures. In this way, she worked, like the other teachers, to socialize students into both their faith and their identities as Americans, supporting a future of achievement and success for them. In this way, dimensions of her own cultural diversity consciousness, understandings and experiences, carried forward into the ways in which she worked to support the future—her students' socialization.

As discussed, the dynamics of global flows of Islam and its manifestation locally (Appadurai, 1996) were instrumental in the process of Laura's socialization into her identity as an Islamic schoolteacher. These dynamics played out in the context of the Islamic school, and sensitized her, to a certain extent, to the cultural characteristics of the staff and students of the

school. The global and local characteristics of the school, related to Islam and American culture, the religious and the secular, were components that she embodied as an instructor.

Furthermore, I again draw upon the notion of embodiment to understand the ways in which the instructor's experiences informed her identity as a teacher. I use this term to refer to the idea that particular experiences are embodied actively based upon time and place. I draw upon Merleau-Ponty's (1962; 1968) conception of the way the body perceives and interacts with objects it encounters in the world.

> We say therefore that our body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees them and touches them; we say, because it is evident, that it unites these two properties within itself, and its double belongingness to the order of the "object" and to the order of the "subject" reveals to use quite unexpected relations between the two orders. It cannot be by incomprehensible accident that the body has this double reference; it teaches us that each calls for the other. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 137)

In this way, the body participates in its relationships with the world and crafts pathways for itself, a sort of subjectivity, while it is also shaped by forces it exists within, a sort of objectivity. In this chapter, I consider embodiment as the essential process which shaped Laura's identity as an educator, based upon both forces. She was one who embodied American culture and was in the process of embodying knowledge of Islam (including Muslim cultural diversity), by virtue of her work at the school. As such, she used dimensions of both cultures in her teaching as a way to guide her students to their learning of secular subject matter, yet also affirm their identities as Muslims. She indeed worked to support the embodiment of a Muslim-American diversity consciousness among her students. Her experiences, grounded in educative experiences as well as her own perception, were conveyed in our conversations together and were apparent in her teaching that I observed.

I consider the notion of cultural responsive teaching in education, one that is an important part of being a teacher who cultivates classroom communities of cultural diversity consciousness. As Gay (2000) wrote,

> Culturally responsive teaching acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum. It builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities…It teaches students to know and praise their own and each other's cultural heritages. (p. 29)

This dynamic was found in Laura's thinking about her teaching experiences and was evidenced in her classroom practices, although in limited ways. Moreover, I argue these efforts supported the overall work of the school, to cultivate students to be both good Muslims and American citizens. In this way, culturally responsive pedagogy was embodied to a certain extent by the instructor who, through experience, was on a journey towards understanding this as a central component to the thoughtful education of students. She further helped to cultivate an ethic of respect among students, helping them to see and understand their cultural similarities and differences as inherently valuable. Although diversity consciousness formed part of her thinking and teaching practices, her experience was also one of enchantment and disenchantment with the Islamic nature of the school, leading her to a negotiated culturally responsive teaching practice. As will be seen, she struggled in particular ways to accommodate the religious and cultural characteristics of the school in her practices as an educator. The constraints exercised upon her, while not overwhelming, did shape her thinking. In the end, she viewed Islam as encompassing dimensions of constraint, however as a force worthy of understanding.

Thus, the learning and teaching of an educator as captured through a life history narrative coupled with classroom observations serves as a site to understand the dynamism of Islamic education, disrupting notions of outdated and backward subject matter and authoritarian

pedagogical style. Moreover, the relationship between the production of her diversity-sensitive teaching identity informed her pedagogical practices as an educator, serving as the basis from which she worked to socialize her students. In this way, her teaching practices supported the socialization of students into cultural and religious identities, as well as dispositions centered on cross-cultural respect and understanding.

Growing Up and Learning Monoculturally

Laura—known in the school as Mrs. Smith—grew up in the small town of Ludington in the western part of the state, near Lake Michigan. She described herself as a "White, Catholic girl" who came from a town where many shared her cultural and religious background and sensibilities. She attended public elementary, middle, and high schools there, experiencing many of the features that define the principles of Middle America, including a loving family, good friends, and social gatherings. At the age of 18, she left home and traveled northward to attend college.

Laura attended her freshman year of college at Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste Marie, a small city with similar demographics as the town she grew up in. After she started taking classes, she met and quickly married her first husband. Deciding where to live, they chose to settle in a nearby town, which I shall call Glencairn. Glencairn was a town defined by its low socioeconomic status. She worked at a local school where "a significant number of the students had dads who were in one of the four prisons" she recalled during our first interview. "That's what the town is known for." Although she did not finish her program at Lake Superior State, it had set her on a course for furthering her educational experiences.

Five years after she left Lake Superior State she decided to embark on a two-year program to earn an associate's degree at Lansing Community College, a degree she finished in

the late 1990s. Not long after she finished, and desiring to continue her education, she started working towards her bachelor's degree, finishing it in 2004 after which she completed her master's, in 2007. Both degrees she earned at Olivet College, a small liberal arts, Protestant institution just south of Lansing.

While at Olivet, she commenced her teacher preparation coursework. She took courses in elementary teacher preparation, where she remembered learning about such things as classroom management and language arts. She happily recalled her reading class where she liked learning the ways to use guided reading in classrooms. Despite her experiences in elementary teacher preparation she, like many teachers, felt she truly learned to teach in the classroom. "I don't think anything prepares you to teach until you're in the situation," she mused, "every year you will face different issues, different students, and different personalities, so what worked last year may not work the next year."

She completed her fall student teaching semester in a second-grade classroom at an elementary school in Williamston, a small town east of Lansing. When one of the kindergarten teachers went on maternity leave, she stayed on for another semester, working as a long-term substitute teacher for half days. Reflecting on her initial experiences as a teacher, Laura commented that she remembered the differences between students she received at the beginning of each teaching semester, and the fear and excitement that accompanied the preparation she did for her work. This, she found, continued for her as an Islamic schoolteacher. Furthermore, she felt that the most profound learning she acquired in her teacher preparation experiences was "how much power a teacher has and how what they say or do can affect a student." As such, she felt the words that teachers use and the things they say can deeply impact students' beliefs.

Learning as a Teacher and Student-Centered Teaching

"I am more open-minded today than in the past," reflected Laura. "In the past I tried to stick to things. Now I like to try new things. I think teachers realize that after they've had students for a couple of years. They realize that things do not go exactly how they planned." Laura had started teaching at the Islamic school eight years earlier, a place where she was offered a good job. In many ways, the Islamic school was where her teaching style and beliefs took shape. "I found that over time I became easier on myself. I discovered I needed to not beat myself up and not get frustrated. Not everyone will learn in the same way." Laura found this to be an evolving part of her disposition as a teacher.

During my fieldwork Laura taught first grade, which I chose to focus on in my observations and interviews with her. However, she also taught a combined seventh- and eighth-grade language arts class. While a teacher at the school, she mentioned she had taught a variety of grade-levels, including fourth, fifth, and sixth grades as well. Because many if not most students tended to stay at the Islamic school from pre-kindergarten or kindergarten through seventh or eighth grade, she had the opportunity to teach many of the same students at different grade levels.

Laura, as noted, found that her experience learning to teach sensitized her to the power teachers hold and what they say and do can greatly impact students. Her journey as a teacher helped her to realize that flexibility in curriculum planning and implementation was important—that teaching in scripted ways was not helpful in supporting her students. This was evident in the way she reflected on her practices, as well as in her teaching practices that I observed.

As a student, Laura recalled sitting at a table filling out worksheets, but today noted that she used more "hands-on" approaches than when she was a student. Moreover, the technology

she used with her students was in marked contrast to what was available when she was in school. In planning her lessons, she used the Common Core State Standards that had been adopted in Michigan, and voluntarily adopted by the school. She also used, as did other teachers of "secular" subjects, the curriculum of East Lansing Public Schools for subjects and topics not covered by the Common Core.[24] Moreover, she planned according to her students' interests, backgrounds, and abilities. "If you have a whole group and the majority are above grade level, you'll gear your lessons accordingly," adding, "but you got to fit your lessons to every individual student in the room." She found her planning was more difficult if she had a wide range of ability in her classroom. "If the majority of students are lower achievers then I can add some extra stuff like centers that those other students who finish early can go to, to keep their minds busy." As such, she would plan her lessons around the abilities of students, both individually and collectively. Furthermore, she would spend more time planning for language arts because it involved more than mathematics. "There are more parts to language arts than mathematics. We have centers, reading groups, English, writing. I do writing separately—we have phonics." Given that Laura also taught seventh/eighth-grade language arts, this likely contributed to the amount of time she spent planning in that particular subject area. "For mathematics, the chapter might focus on tally marks, or basic mathematics routines. Language Arts consists of a lot more things than found in one mathematics unit."

Laura's students in first grade sat at mixed-gender tables, a more secular arrangement than observed in other classes, but acceptable because of the secular subject matter she was teaching and because the students were so young. Tables were arranged so that students faced each other, but could easily see the teacher as she worked her way around the classroom.

[24] The Common Core had not been set up for those yet.

Students followed more or less the same schedule each day, a schedule that included the core subject areas of mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies. She made connections, on occasion, both within and across subjects for the students. This might include drawing a graph to map out the elements of a story and to remind the students that they learned about graphs in math. In an immediate sense, she hoped students would come away from her lessons knowing, for example, where a capital letter goes in a sentence, and the parts of a sentence, and though she did not expect them to get everything out of each lesson, if they remembered how to do something they had done the previous day, that was indeed an accomplishment. Moreover, she worked to support their take-away knowledge by doing hands-on activities with them, "rather than lecturing at them." Laura found that the hands-on activities helped them to remember better what they had done because they were able to make a connection. In one conversation, she mentioned the way she helped the students learn how to make tally marks.

> I just taught them a poem about tally marks, and we did it in a rock 'n roll style, and we had our tongues out like Gene Simmons[25], we had our hands up and they know that poem! And they can remember it when we make tally marks! Parents probably thought I was totally crazy when their kid went home that night and made a funny face while sticking their tongue out.

Adding dimensions of play was part of Laura's teaching style, and one that connected well with the dispositions of her young, first grade students. As such, learning basic, but important things like tally marks, for her connected children to important knowledge they should possess as adults. In this way, and more broadly, she felt that her lessons would "connect students to the real world." She saw the purpose of her students' learning as to "help them go to high school, to go to college, to prepare for the work in the real world, and to make them an educated person."

[25] Bass guitarist from the hard rock band, Kiss.

To support the education of her students, implicitly as Americans and as Muslims, as educated individuals and who could respect differences, Laura would occasionally ask students to connect what they were learning to their home cultures. Although most students knew more about their lives in Michigan than about the countries their parents and grandparents came from, she would create connections through using books in the library that dealt with animals from different parts of the world, and in science might ask about weather in different countries, such as certain places that have rain or snow. She found that the students liked to talk about such things.

Another dimension to the ways she facilitated a culturally responsive classroom, Laura used Arabic in her teaching. She actively used such Arabic words as *hamdulillah*[26] and *habibi*[27] to show them praise and endearment, while also connecting with the language of Islam they were learning. She confided to me that she would regularly learn new words from her Arabic-speaking colleagues. One teacher wrote the word *jazallah el-khayr* on a sticky note for Laura to memorize. The new word Laura wanted to learn to use in her teaching. The word meant "May Allah give you something." Laura's colleague explained to her that if somebody did something good to you, then you said this word. Laura's embodiment of elements of Islamic culture, including Arabic, was also apparent in her show-and-tell work with students.

Laura organized her first-graders to do presentations on their home cultures in class. These presentations were not of the children's cultures per se, as most were born and being raised in the US, but the cultures of their parents and grandparents, cultures that greatly influenced these children at home. Although she did not do these presentations every year, she

[26] Praise be to God (said when a student did something positive).

[27] My dear (a term of affection).

found that the activity was exciting for both herself and her students. When I asked what prompted her to do the activity, she could not recall, but indicated that she felt the lesson supported respect for cultural diversity among students. Here is an excerpt from my fieldnotes:

> The students sit in front of Laura, who is sitting in her rocking chair, next to an easel that displays a poster with pasted text and pictures on it. The poster is entitled "Afghanistan" and under it is a map of the country.
>
> Laura: Farzad, are you going to come up and do your presentation? I need everyone to show Farzad the respect he deserves, like when you were up there presenting.
>
> Laura positions him to use a pointer to point to his poster.
>
> Farzad does his presentation, reading the printed captions on the poster. The captions read that he was born in the US, but his mother was born in the city of Mazar and his father in Kabul. Both cities, according to the caption, are capitals of the country. Underneath the caption are two pictures of Afghani dishes. Foods are listed, including: Qabele, kabob, and bolanee. The next caption indicates that sports in Afghanistan include soccer, volleyball, karate, and others. The main export for Afghanistan is rugs, which are shipped all over the world. The population of Afghanistan is 34,385,068. The main languages that are spoken are Dari and Pashto.
>
> Farzad reads the captions slowly, struggling in his pronunciation of words, such as Kabul, Mazar, and the population written in numbers.
>
> The students are sitting quietly and listening as he speaks.
>
> Laura: Is there anything else you would like to add about Afghanistan?
>
> Farzad: My cousins, grandpa, and aunt live there. I have never seen my country. I have never been there. But, I will go with my dad in June and we will stay two weeks. Farzad comments that he will stay with his family when he visits.
>
> Laura: What has your dad told you about Afghanistan?
>
> Farzad: I am going to see relatives.
>
> Laura: So you have lots of cousins over there.
>
> Laura invites students to ask Farzad questions about Afghanistan.
>
> Abdul asks: Is it hot there? Farzad responds affirmatively.
>
> Ahmed asks: Do they really do karate? Farzad affirms his response.

Zahra asks: Does it snow there? Farzad replies: yeah, kind of.

Sharif asks: If you go there, what will you do? Farzad says he will play with his cousins.

Hussein asks: What do you eat there? Farzad points to the pictures on the posters.

Laura: What is your favorite food?

Farzad points to a picture of a food he thinks is called “rani”.

Laura says that students can ask a couple more questions, but only those who are sitting quietly.

Ahmed: Do you have a house there? Farzad: No, I live with my family.

Rahman: Does it rain there? Farzad: No.

Laila: Does it snow? Farzad: It snows a little bit.

Moussa: Do you have any lakes? Farzad: No.

Laura points to the map and says it looks like there might be a small one as well as rivers.

Laila mentions a food that is similar to one of the ones in the picture, a type of food that she has in her home culture.

Abbas: Is there an army? Farzad: The biggest army is the American army.

Rahman: Are there any mountains? Farzad: Yeah.

Laura: Yes there are, and there may be snow at the very tops of the mountains.

Laura asks the students to give him a round of applause for his presentation. The students clap enthusiastically.

Moussa asks another question: What are exports?

Another student responds that exports are something you send to another country. Afghanistan gives other countries rugs.

Laura: Farzad said rugs are what Afghanistan is famous for. Some other countries have oil, which is gas, which is what we put in our car. Every country has exports that they ship out. Give me some knuckles on that good explanation!

Laura bumps her knuckles with the student who gave the explanation!

This episode demonstrates Laura's desire to facilitate a show-and-tell exercise in which global and local multiculturalism, as represented in her classroom, was honored. In this way, her beliefs on respecting diversity were put into practice through her planning and implementation of this activity—one that involved both parents and students. Laura pointed out during one conversation that students and parents had a role in these presentations. Students would sometimes bring in food from their home cultures that a parent had prepared. Laura would try all the food that was given to her, even if it was not appealing to her (making sure not to tell the student!).

Although Laura supported her students in this way, she possessed limited knowledge and interest in her students' home cultures (including knowing whether they were of immigrant or refugee backgrounds). Furthermore, she did not know which ethnic group was the majority in her class. Problematically, her lack of knowledge concerning her students and their families represents a sort of color-blindness that did not go far enough to support students. However, she sought to embrace, to a certain degree, the diverse cultures represented among her students, and in turn, taught them to respect the cultural similarities and differences around them. As such, she sought to support their socialization into positive versions of Islam and American culture, through cultivating a positive classroom environment, in which diversity was considered an inherent social good.

The Production of a Muslim Diversity Consciousness

Laura's educational life history involved an embodiment of American culture as well as a steadily evolving global consciousness of Muslims and their cultural diversity. It was through her experiences at the Islamic school that she was made aware of such diversity, underscoring her belief that diversity was an inherent social good, supporting a better world for all. Her exposure to Islam, Muslims, and the diverse cultures represented in the school and in her classroom helped

her to develop a basic level of knowledge about them, knowledge which formed part of her routines as an instructor. In her teaching she would use Arabic words to connect her students with the language of Islam, the language they learned at school and used in rituals surrounding their religion. She helped her students prepare for prayer at the mosque within the Islamic center, by ensuring they performed *wudu*[28] before another teacher would lead them to the mosque and through the prayer rituals. Although she formally taught secular subject matter, through such actions, she supported the religious dimension of the education her students received at the school, coupling it with efforts to have students articulate their Muslim home cultures, supporting an appreciation of cultural diversity. Furthermore, she allowed students to articulate their home cultures, both formally and informally, in other areas of her teaching (e.g., weather patterns in different countries, the show-and-tell example, etc.) which formed a culturally responsive pedagogy that engaged her students in helpful ways, tied to things that were important and relevant to their lives. However, and importantly, her knowledge and interests lacked the depth necessary for her to holistically understand her students, their families, and their cultural sensibilities. In this way, I argue, Laura was in the process of developing a consciousness of her students, taking small steps along the way.

Laura's learning about Islam and Muslims sensitized her to the ways in which both, in her view, were often portrayed negatively in the media. The relationships she formed with her Muslim colleagues and her students taught her about Islam, Arabic, and a little about the customs and cultures of varying Muslim peoples. Although Laura did not possess an in-depth knowledge of these subjects, or even of the particular cultures represented among her students and colleagues, her willingness to learn from them was important for her. The students at the school,

[28] Ablutions performed prior to prayer. The students would do these in the bathroom, which at times could be chaotic.

as noted, had a mixture of socio-economic backgrounds, mostly lower and middle class. Yet Laura was not quite sure about many of the details concerning their cultural backgrounds. Commenting on this, she reflected, "I'm so ignorant of that stuff. I just take them as they are, it's like I was telling you yesterday, which ones are from Somalia, I don't look at that, I look at the kid in front of me." At best, this represents her inability to distinguish particular ethnic and cultural dispositions among students and at worst, problematically represents a kind of color-blindness on her part, a phenomenon which involves approaching all students in the same manner, rather than tailoring teaching to their specific cultures and personalities in ways that support their collective achievement. As such, she taught students in many ways that treated them similarly (and problematically) as individuals, without much in-depth attention paid to their cultures. The dynamic of treating students in similar ways was evident in both her thinking and teaching practices.

Despite these concerns, the students in Laura's classes did perform well on the whole, just as their counterparts did in other classes at the Islamic school. They were supported by caring teachers, staff, and families who sought to support their academic achievement, and by extension, their success in life. Among her first graders, she found that testing was not a constraint generally, unless it fell during Ramadan.[29] Because her students knew English well, generally better than other languages, the language of the test and of classroom communication was often easy for them. For those who did not have a good command of English, they struggled, particularly the student Mamadou, with whom I worked as a volunteer teacher. As earlier noted, Mamadou should have been in fourth grade but because of his linguistic and cultural challenges, coupled with behavioral problems, he was assigned to Laura's first grade class. During my

[29] Only students in third grade and up took the MEAP test. Ramadan is the month of fasting for adult-aged Muslims and also a time of evening fast-breaking parties for families.

observations, I found him to have problems staying out of trouble. He would generally distract the class, bother other students, and so on. Although Laura and other school leaders, including the principal, recognized his problems, the lack of resources at the school meant that students like Mamadou did not get the full attention they needed—a problem of many under-funded educational institutions.

Laura's work and learning in the Islamic school, she confided, was not without tension. She noted that there was a clear line that existed with regard to religion, and that it was important that she not cross that line, imparting ideas that might be deemed counter to normative Islamic values upheld in the community, generally, and in the school, in particular. "I grew up in the country where there were farms, I had no relationship to the diversity I have faced here in Lansing," noting, "That has been the biggest thing [for me], understanding diversity and confronting it, making sure I am not crossing the line." She noted (as others had) that some school personnel were more conservative in their beliefs than others. She generally found that the younger generation of Muslim teachers and staff at the school were more "Americanized" than the older generation. The older generation tended to be immigrants, while the younger generation were the children of immigrants, and had spent their formative years immersed in an American cultural environment. Although the Lansing community was small, compared to larger Muslim communities in Dearborn and Flint, she found that, despite the differences, the community was generally supportive of its members. Moreover, she believed local Muslims were pretty well integrated in the overarching community, working in local hospitals and stores.

Given that she was not a Muslim, and certainly not one from a foreign country, Laura found that some individuals at the school looked down upon her. While this was not a major issue for Laura, she thought it may have been related to a lack of understanding from some

members of the older generation. In this way, they likely did not fully understand or appreciate her way of interacting with others, particularly as a White, American female. In certain Muslim cultures, women are not to be unveiled and are prohibited from freely interacting with adult members of the opposite sex. These were, of course, basic things she did and that were central to her cultural sensibilities. Moreover, cultural celebrations that felt normal for her and that she wished she and the students could participate in, but that weren't allowed at the school, included Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, and even birthdays. "I want to bring everybody something, but you really cannot do that." She noted that some students celebrated their birthdays at home and some families did not celebrate birthdays at all. As such, the school negotiated these differences in culture by not celebrating such events, so as to not offend particular families. Furthermore, Laura mentioned, given school norms and values, she could not show students pictures of her dog or her daughter in a strapless prom-dress.[30] Again, these were not major issues for Laura, but were things that did affect her learning and her teaching at the school.

Indeed, her struggles represent an important part of her journey to understand not only her students and their families, but to fit into the Islamic nature of the school, a site where her teaching identity was negotiated. However, despite these tensions, the overarching feeling for her as a teacher was a positive one. She felt that learning about another religion was an important part of her journey. In these ways, it was clear that Laura negotiated her desires in her role as an Islamic schoolteacher, all in an effort to support her own learning and teaching at the school. However, she clearly was not as fully at home in the school, in contrast to Nour or Ayoob, by virtue of her non-Muslim identity and the fact that she came from a place where her upbringing

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[30] Dogs were religiously viewed as unclean and it was taboo for women (or men) to show too much flesh.

as a White female in a monocultural community was different than their experiences. As such, she brought together American and Islamic cultural elements into her classroom in ways that were negotiated and that accommodated both.

Not Fully at Home in School

Laura's life history entailed a journey from a local, monocultural community in western Michigan to a culturally diverse community in a different part of the state. It was there that she devoted eight years of teaching at the Islamic school, a place where she learned a relative amount about Islam and Muslim cultures. The production of her Islamic and Muslim cultural diversity consciousness centered on the ways in which her past educational experiences met her experiences at the school. Her shift from a woman with a monocultural sensibility to one who cautiously navigated multiculturalism and displayed such beliefs in her practices, however basic, was part and parcel to her journey. In this way, she embodied both American and Islamic cultural elements.

Laura brought to the school an understanding of secular subject matter and local American culture, by virtue of her learning and teaching experiences. The Islamic school shaped her by providing her knowledge of Islamic culture and diverse Muslims, however basic. Such dynamics she embodied as she developed an understanding of the school's culture, specifically, and of Islam, more generally. This lead her to initiate a culturally responsive pedagogical practice as a teacher, particularly one that attempted to validate the home cultures of her students as well as forwarded the school's mission of socializing students into both American and Muslim cultures. The shift in her learning that her journey at the school afforded was not without tension, particularly as she struggled to accommodate the Islamic nature of the school in her practices. This dynamic, negotiating the American and the Islamic in her teaching, produced for her

feelings of not fully belonging at the school. In this way, the culture of the school did not easily overlap with her own sensibilities as a White, American woman. She experienced more of a discontinuity with her experiences prior to coming to the school as she interacted with the school's culture. Whereas Nour and Ayoob experienced more of a fluidity between their prior experiences and the school's culture, by virtue of its Islamic and American nature (cultural dynamics they more easily embodied), Laura was similar to myself, as both of us as non-Muslims and as Americans held a somewhat uneasy relationship with Islam, a relationship that we negotiated. That said, she and I both held a great deal of respect for Islam, which afforded us an openness to learning about and interacting with the faith. These dynamics, of respect for and negotiation with Islam, formed the basis of how we navigated the school's culture as teachers.

Islamic school exposed Laura to an American minority community, particularly their religious beliefs and cultural practices. As such, she felt that, as a community, they deserved both a respect for, and understanding of, their culture from a wider American public, especially non-Muslims. Her own learning and experiences at the school entailed the negotiation of her teaching identity to fit the culture of the school. Despite her challenges, she worked to uphold its basic Islamic and American cultural tenets, with the understanding that by negotiating her own beliefs, she would serve the needs and desires of the school and the local Muslim community.

CHAPTER SIX

Identity Production and Belonging

Dialogic relationships are reducible neither to logical relationships nor to relationships oriented semantically towards their referential object…They must clothe themselves in discourse, become utterances, become positions of various subjects expressed in discourse, in order that dialogic relations might arise among them.

Mikhail Bakhtin, 1981, p. 183

This study has broadly addressed questions of culture and identity in an era of globalization, of the way in which individual subjects come to embody aspects of their world, and of the creation of local forms from global flows. In this concluding chapter I would like to address the way culture figured into the experiences of my participants. To do so, I will conceptually unpack the terms *identity production* and *belonging* as they pertain to this study, terms central to the ways in which I sought to understand and represent my participants. For the former, I explore the production of identity as constituting a journey for each teacher, a journey they navigated to craft teaching selves. For the latter, I explore the notion of belonging as hinging on fluidity and discontinuity, elements that defined the teachers' experience of the Islamic school's culture.

Identity Production as a Journey

"To form my accounts of change, in my towns, my profession, my world, and myself," wrote Geertz (1995) in his autobiographical and socially reflective work, *After the Fact*,

> calls thus not for plotted narrative, measurement, reminiscence, or structural progression, and certainly not for graphs…It calls for showing how particular events and unique occasions, an encounter here, a development there, can be woven together with a variety of facts and a battery of interpretations to produce a sense of how things go, have been, and are likely to go. (p. 3)

In many ways this study has treated the journeys of participants in such a light. It has shown how participants made sense of their past experiences, their current work as teachers, and the future

direction of their experiences, towards supporting the socialization of students into their faith and into American society. This process, or journey, as I prefer to call it, has constituted both positive and negative experiences for each participant, but exists as one that informed their senses of self as professionals and as human beings.

To understand this dynamic, I used the term "life history," preferring it to autobiography, seemingly too personal, and social biography, which risks subsuming the individual in pursuing the social. Life history (like identity) as a journey, then, allows for greater freedom of movement, both educationally and conceptually, that indeed captures the experiences of my participants. It conveys the ways the social and the personal interacted, and how each participant made sense of experiences related to both. Moreover, terms such as pathways or routes are terms that evoke determined boulevards or strict social and institutional guidelines that lead in set directions. The concepts of journey and life history, however, work against such notions, and are true to the stories of the teachers.

The work of capturing a life history, like narrative inquiry, "is one of trying to make sense of life as lived" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 78). Indeed, life history encompasses both the conscious and important events in the lives of participants and the taken-for-granted ones. For this study, it has centered on the educational experiences, over time, of individuals, and the meanings we (they and I) made of them. In this way, the interpretation of experience is not relegated solely to them, but is at moments actively constructed by researcher and researched, together in conversation, and separately as the researcher writes and thinks. In this way, life history as reconstructed through dialogue and interaction, as it exists here, constitutes the multiple voices of the anthropologist and those he studied. As Eickelman (1985) noted, "An awareness of multiple voices is, I think, essential to the anthropological encounter today" (p. 15).

This involved avoiding the roles of the omniscient and textually-absent objective researcher, on the one hand, and the highly solipsistic and naval-gazing one, on the other. As such, life history, as supporting the notion of journey, based upon *their* experiences, both conscious and taken-for-granted, is key to unlocking the ways in which teacher identities were produced. Constructing life histories, based on the observations and words of participants, moreover, served to paint richer, more detailed portraits of each, supporting a deeper glimpse into the world of the Islamic school.

But life histories, as experience-based, are not enough to fully constitute the way I deploy the term journey here. Beyond life histories, the journeys of the teachers entailed the embodiment of experiences. Embodiment, another key concept, involved the relationship participants had to their educational life history experiences. These experiences constituted ones in which they were inscribed by forces that determined their social positions in society. As a "culturalist" position, this involves "identities that form in relation to major structural features of society: ethnicity, gender, race, nationality, and sexual orientation" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 7). Yet, there are personal dynamics that come into play. The social "constructionist" position posits that individuals are "subject to positioning by whatever powerful discourses they happen to encounter" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 27). Somewhere between these two extremes most individuals' identities reside, which was certainly the case among the teachers in this study. Life historical experiences, then, are shaped both by the structural features of culture, as well as by the forces that influence them and take on personal dimensions, or even are personally produced. Such forces, structural or personal, are then actively ignored, embraced, or resisted, and constitute key features to the workings of embodiment in relationship to experience.

As we saw in the case of Nour, her position as a woman and Muslim in Sudan afforded her certain experiences that could be read as normative for Muslim women in Sudan to have, such as helping to raise her siblings in the role of a surrogate mother, becoming a teacher of children, and so on. Similarly Ayoob, as a Black man growing up in Michigan, experienced racism directly as a student and saw the impact of racism in society on members of his racial group as well as on his Muslim co-religionists. I, like Ayoob, experienced challenges associated with growing up as a gay man. Laura undertook a journey leading her to become an elementary school teacher, a common role for women in US society to occupy. In these ways, the structural forces related to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation were all ones in play and that shaped the teachers' journeys.

Yet, their experiences also involved components not determined by the structural forces of culture, but that were connected to powerful occurrences in their lives that they responded to and actively took on based upon their own interests and beliefs. For Nour this involved coming to the US, teaching in two schools, and taking an active role in her professional development. Ayoob, by contrast, loved his father's stories, which inspired him to travel around the world, to learn about different histories and cultures, and to impart such knowledge to his students. For me, this involved pursuing knowledge that involved the study and understanding of Muslim peoples globally. For Laura, this involved taking an interest in learning about Islam and the Muslim cultures surrounding her at school and in the local community, resisting media forces that stereotyped Muslims. As individuals, they encountered powerful forces in their lives that they actively took on or they were influenced by, allowing for individuality and choice in their journeys.

As such, cultural position and individual agency were key components to the teachers' lives. Both were part and parcel to their experiences as they journeyed as educators and as human beings. As such, the teachers sought to bring these together in their teaching, extending senses of cultural position and agency among their students, as Muslims and as Americans. Given these dynamics, elements of American and Islamic cultures were embodied by all the teachers, embodiments that shaped their knowledge and practices as Islamic schoolteachers. In this way, the school's culture drew upon their backgrounds and shaped their knowledge to fit its curricular orientation.

Belonging

This study has focused on the ways in which Islamic and American cultures were woven together, through the experiences of the teachers, as well as in the school, through both curriculum and instruction. Yet, the teachers in this study embodied Islam and American culture differently given their individual and cultural experiences in relationship to both. As seen with Nour, she embodied an Islam based upon her life in Sudan as a Muslim woman. Yet, she also embodied American cultural elements, particularly in her pedagogical style that was student-centered in order to connect to her culturally diverse students. Ayoob embodied a form of American culture in ways that were connected to his African-American upbringing and experiences. The form of Islam he embodied connected well with his global and local multicultural interests. For me, I embodied a form of American culture connected to my experiences as a gay man, yet as one who held diverse experiences in global and local places. This coupled together with my pursuit of learning about Islam, learning that allowed me to embody knowledge of a world faith. Laura, by contrast, embodied a form of American culture based upon her sensibilities as a White woman who had lived in small towns in Western

Michigan, yet was shaped by the global forces of Islam she encountered and embodied in her teaching. As such, the ways they did this proved that both existed in a relationship of either fluidity or tension, yet to some degree, were negotiated for all the teachers of this study. For Nour and Ayoob, both American and Islamic cultures were more easily embodied than for myself or Laura. These dynamics held great implications for how all the teachers experienced their identities at the school.

The teachers' prior experiences interacted in the context of their teaching at the Islamic school, a dynamic that informed their identities as educators. This is to say their experiences can be divided into two temporal frames: their time before coming to the Islamic school and their time as teachers at the Islamic school. All the teachers had differing experiences prior to their arrival at the school: Nour's life in Sudan and later in an all-Arab Saudi school in Michigan, Ayoob's experience as an African-American and his work with troubled young people, my own learning about Islam as a gay American in global contexts, and Laura's educational experiences in small communities in Michigan. These experiences were linked to their work at the school, work which greatly influenced and reshaped their educational capacities, as well as the school's culture. This dynamic hinged on combining Islamic and American cultures in curriculum and instruction, all drawing upon and influencing the teachers' experiences. The ways the teachers experienced the school produced feelings among them based upon belonging. Belonging for them hinged on *fluidity* and *discontinuity*, between their backgrounds with Islamic and American cultures and the school's culture, where both were combined.

As I have attempted to show, feelings of belonging in a place have largely to do with the ways in which the interactions between body and visible object occur, that belonging is in a sense "…the return of the visible upon itself, a carnal adherence of the sentient to the sensed and

of the sensed to the sentient. For, as overlapping and fission, identity and difference, it brings to birth a ray of natural light that illuminates all flesh…" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 142). For the teachers, this entailed the ways in which their pasts interacted with their time at the school, producing for them dispositions as teachers that they negotiated, to varying degrees. The extent to which they did signals the degree to which they felt at home in school.

Fluidity. Nour and Ayoob were teachers who experienced a great deal of cultural overlap between their past experiences and the ones they had in the Islamic school. While the latter was an American who became a Muslim, the former was a Muslim who, in a sense, became an American. They were able to embody, with relative ease, their Islamic and American identities. In the case of Nour, she appropriated American cultural dynamics to fit her role as an educator. In the case of Ayoob, he appropriated Islam (by converting and immersing himself in the religious culture), which allowed him to fit into the dynamics of the school. As such, the school's orientation as a site for Muslims sat well with the lifestyles that Nour and Ayoob embodied as members of the faith community. In this way, Nour and Ayoob experienced a strong sense of belonging in the school, given the ways in which their cultural experiences overlapped with the Islamic-American culture of the school. While at some level, both had negotiated their experiences with American culture, they were able to mold it to serve their identities as Muslims, particularly as Islamic schoolteachers.

Discontinuity. Unlike Nour and Ayoob, Laura and I did not embody Islam or American culture as easily. Both of us were Americans and, given our cultural sensibilities and journeys within American culture (as we experienced it), we struggled with Islamic culture. Both of our dispositions, hers as a female and mine as a gay man, did not embody Islam easily. However, we held a strong appreciation for the faith. In this sense, given that we did not embody Islamic and

American cultures together easily, there was a discontinuity between the culture of the school and our own cultural identities. As such, we negotiated the cultural differences between Islam and the ways we embodied American culture (e.g., as a White female and as a White gay man). While certainly there was a certain degree of fluidity, in that the school drew upon our knowledge by virtue of our American identities, the Islamic nature of the school did not fully fit our cultural sensibilities. As such, we were not fully at home in the school, and negotiated our teaching identities to fit the culture of the school, in both curriculum and instruction.

The dynamics of fluidity and discontinuity in the ways the teachers experienced the school in many ways hinged on the ease at which they embodied both Islamic and American cultures together. Embodiment is linked to the notion of the body as a site that is socialized to perform and function in particular ways and in particular contexts. As Mauss (1935/1992) observed,

> These "habits" do not vary just with individuals and their imitations; they vary especially between societies, educations, properties, and fashions, types of prestige. In them, we should see the techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason rather than, in the ordinary way, merely the soul and its repetitive faculties." (p. 458)

These dynamics are not singular but rather constitute a social, biological, physical, and psychological assemblage. In this way, one is not more important than another, but rather, all function to support the habits or techniques of the body among individuals and societies, across places and times. As such, body technique is an "action that is effective and traditional. There is no technique and no transmission in the absence of tradition" (Mauss, p. 461). At some level, the teachers taught what they had been taught, both content-wise and pedagogical-wise, shaping the behaviors and dispositions and knowledge of their students. Yet their individual journeys and agency enriched the school and moved it beyond merely serving as an agent of mass production.

The educators' participation within the structures of the Islamic school shaped their students' educational experiences as well as their own. In this way, the school functioned to shape the teachers' identities, through their experience before coming to the school and after. As participants, their teaching identities shifted towards an understanding of, and working within, the culture of the school. This included a consciousness of their diverse students. This was apparent in Nour's shift towards student-centered Qur'an and Arabic classes, Ayoob's consciousness of his Somali students and his articulation of global and local cultures in his teaching, my awareness of and response to students of varying cultures, and Laura's learning about Islam and her diverse Muslim students. Their commitment to their own learning and teaching allowed for their dispositions as Islamic schoolteachers to be cultivated, dispositions that supported the figuring of the Islamic school as a cultural world, and indeed produced for them varying feelings of belonging.

Culture of the Islamic School

The Islamic school was indeed a site to which participants were drawn, and in which they performed in particular roles that shaped their behaviors and understandings as learners and as teachers. It was a site that supported the academic achievement of students, as well as their development as Muslims and American citizens through cultivating a curriculum centered on Islamic and American cultures, the religious and the secular, and the global and the local. Ultimately, through the practices of teachers and students together, the school was a cultural context that produced and reproduced itself over time, all while drawing upon the individual experiences of participants, which served as resources in which to shape and constitute the present.

With a high level of cultural diversity among teachers and students, a curriculum that drew and built upon teachers' and students' backgrounds, the Islamic school shaped the production of identities among the teachers, along with the socialization of students. Moreover, the curricular organization of the school appropriated state standards (including the Common Core State Standards) and testing practices, holding teachers and students accountable to both, and in which they performed successfully. Flexibility was valued in not tying teachers tightly to standards and strict accountability measures, but allowing teachers certain degrees of flexibility in the ways they planned and enacted curriculum, content-wise and pedagogy-wise. Such flexibility honored the practices of teachers and students, supporting the success of all.

Such a curricular organization, moreover, intertwined religious and secular knowledge, which beyond forming two departments in the school, was interlaced within classrooms. This was evidenced in the Qur'an and Arabic teaching I observed, encompassing "secular" practices such as group work, drawing upon examples of seasons, and so forth. This was moreover evidenced in the ways in which the other teachers of secular subject matter drew upon the religious language and practices of Islam in supporting students' development. Just as the school supported the socialization of teachers into student-centered practices and global identities, all centered on Islam, the school's figuring, through the practices of teachers, supported students' socialization into a minority religious community in a secular society. Their understandings supported their knowledge of a dominant culture as well as their knowledge of a minority community—yet one connected to global patterns of religion and education centered on Islam. Such learning, in a more immediate sense, prepared them for life in public high schools in the local community, where most would go after eighth grade graduation. As such, the Islamic school, in many ways, was a hybrid world that fused dominant and minority cultures (through

global and local dynamics) together in meaningful ways. Returning to Homi Bhabha's quote at the beginning of this study, it was through hybridity that agency was authored by the local Muslim community, figuring for itself a world that allowed for their perpetuation, on secular—and for many—foreign soil. This supported refiguring notions of cultural belonging and citizenship for parents and children, in ways that were twofold: remaining true to their cultures as minorities and their desire to place themselves within American culture. As such, teacher identities were key features around which this educational world was organized, allowing for its perpetuation over time, through the production and reproduction of the experiences upheld within its walls, building upon and transforming identities.

Significance

The teachers' identities, based upon their journeys and experiences, formed connections, along with their students and colleagues that produced dialogical relationships, dynamics that were central in binding all together in the world of a private elementary school in a Midwestern town. This constitutes a central tenet of the Islamic school as a cultural world. Yet, why study teachers in an Islamic school? How does this serve the field of education? Other ethnographic studies have shown the relationship between minority and marginalized communities and education (Fletcher, 2010; Fordham, 1996; Hall, 2002; Teranishi, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1981). Further research has been conducted on Muslims and education, both in the US (Haddad, et al., 2009; Sensoy & Stonebanks, 2009; Sarroub, 2005) and abroad (Hefner & Zaman, 2007; Keaton, 2006; Noor et al., 2009; Sensoy & Stonebanks, 2009; Sikand, 2005; Zine, 2008). Yet none of these studies have explored the everyday realities of Islamic schoolteachers, particularly in the West, providing snapshots into their lives and into their classrooms.

This type of research is relevant to the ways in which globalization processes are impacting US schools and society. Although the Islamic school is more ethnically and racially diverse than most schools in the US today, it provides a glimpse into the future of education. As increasing social diversity continues, as immigrants travel from contexts around the world, as Islam continues to spread, attracting converts among individuals and families representing cultures not traditionally associated with Islam, as social identities shift and new identities are forged out of local and global processes, communities across the US will only continue to be impacted by these changes in their social landscape. As such, schools and communities will have to respond and adapt to these changes. But it is not enough to say that this is just a concern of the future. It is also a concern of the present, as teachers struggle to adapt their content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to the diverse students in their classes, both in public and private schools.

Now, arguably more than ever, it is important to have studies that showcase the lives and experiences of teachers, to understand their successes, their failures, and their negotiated professional lives. This is important given the era we live in: of Common Core State Standards adoption, testing regimes, and accountability measures that tie job performance with student test scores. The lessons of this study show the inner worlds of teachers and how these have shifted according to time and place. The portraits of teachers serve to do what Franz Boas long ago intimated: to historicize is to humanize. In this way, by investigating the lives and teaching practices of teachers, I have consciously sought to dispel the negative discourses in American media and society around teachers. This undeclared "war on teachers" serves not to help them cope with the constraints placed on their lives, but rather to further undermine their professional knowledge and practices, adding insult to an already marginalized profession, "Othering" them

on a scale perhaps unprecedented in American history. To blame teachers for the problems of our educational system is not enough. Surely to find alternative pathways, where outsiders and insiders in education strive to honor the enormous work of our educators and learners, as well as support them in their future journeys, is what is needed.

As this study has shown, the Islamic school was indeed what Douglas Foley (2001) termed an "alternative site of educational achievement." It functioned as a community-based form of education, in which members of a minority Muslim community came together, drawing upon the resources of a surrounding culture, both in practices and in personnel, to support the education of Muslim youth, and centered on an ethic of care, respect, and support. Perhaps because these individuals so valued the education their children were receiving, understanding how important it was to support their child's development in American society, that they actively sought to perpetuate its functioning. If public schools, including those well-off and those which are under-resourced, received such support from Americans, whether minorities or not, actively supporting the work of teachers and students, perhaps new trails could be blazed, providing a brighter future for all.

Lastly, I hope this study has blown apart monolithic conceptions of Islamic education, which consider it as a site of rote memorization, grooming terrorists, and irrelevant to the conditions of the modern world. To the contrary, the Islamic school functioned as a figured, cultural world bounded by its own internal logic and rules, yet unbounded in the ways it figured into global and local cultures. If anything, the school provided alternative ways of educating students that not only supported their academic achievement, but also their spiritual development. Living in a secular society, in which public schools function under the guidance of the state, little is done to support the spirituality and mindfulness of our young people. As

students regularly would go to prayer, learn the sacred language and text so valued by their ancestors, these provided spaces were helpful, I would argue, to their reflection and development as formally educated individuals, as Muslims, and as human beings. Cultivating spaces of difference, outside of standards and testing, then, supported the educational achievement of these students.

The journeys and practices of the teachers, I believe, well demonstrate the knowledge and experiences the school drew upon as well as transformed. As such, the Islamic school was a site of identity production, of care, of cross-cultural learning, of success, and of challenge. All these dynamics and contradictions within the Islamic school are not unlike those of public school, where successes, failures, and valued forms of achievement are upheld. Perhaps acknowledging and validating such dynamics and contradictions, with their accompanying socio-cultural and globalizing changes in our society, will provide educational professionals the knowledge and insight needed to steer education into an uncertain and ever unfolding 21st century.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Overview of the Study

Table 3: *Overview of the Study*

Teacher	What school drew upon/what knowledge contributed from past experiences?	How school shaped them/how they adapted?	Fluidity and Discontinuity in the Embodiment of Islamic and American Cultures	More fully at Home in the Islamic School	Not fully at Home in the Islamic School
Nour	Knowledge of Qur'an and Arabic. Worked with Muslim students, including in the local area.	Pedagogical shift from a teacher-centered to a student-centered orientation.	More fluidity. Born and educated as a Muslim. Lived in the US for nearly ten years before joining the Islamic school. Appropriated American/secular cultural dynamics into her teaching, particularly given her diverse students and their families' interests. Islamic and American cultures embodied together.	School culture overlapped with her Muslim-American identity, her knowledge of Qur'an and Arabic, and her regard for her diverse Muslim-American students.	

Table 3 (cont'd).

Ayoob	Worked with students in the local community, including marginalized ones. Knowledge of Islam and secular, multicultural American society. Also global knowledge through father's stories, his studies, and his travels. He also brought his sense of human value, which he worked to impart to his students.	Understanding of students and families at the school, particularly the Somalis. School allowed him to articulate his social local/global interests, centering on Islamic and American cultures and the overlapping sense of human value he found associated with both. He drew on this in his teaching to help students understand their own value in the world.	More fluidity. He was born and lived all of his life in the US and converted to Islam there. His multicultural consciousness carried over and increased at the school and was expressed through his belief system as a Muslim and as a socially conscious American. Islamic and American cultures embodied together.	School culture overlapped with his Muslim-American identity, based on his experiences with Islamic and American, religious and secular, cultures. School was a space that allowed him to exhibit his social and global knowledge and interests. These were all connected to his desire to instill a sense of value among his students.	

Table 3 (cont'd).

Patrick	Knowledge of Islam (as a non-Muslim) and knowledge of American culture, along with a global consciousness tied to education as a student and a teacher in various cultural contexts.	Produced a student-centered knowledge, a sense of cross-minority identification as a gay man teaching Muslim-American students.	More discontinuity, especially between Islam and own American, secular cultural identity as a gay man. Islamic and American cultures not easily embodied together.		School culture did not overlap smoothly with his identity as a student of Islam and as an American, secular, gay man. He felt a sense of cultural distance given his identity. Yet, he felt a connection with his students by virtue of their shared minority status.

Table 3 (cont'd).

Laura	Knowledge as a local American, knowledge of education from her experiences as a student and student teacher.	In the process of learning about Islam and Muslims, including some Arabic. She experienced surface level learnings of these at the school, part of a process of developing a deeper understanding. She was cultivating a culturally responsive pedagogy. Yet, she negotiated her teacher identity.	More discontinuity, especially between Islam and own American cultural identity. Islamic and American cultures not easily embodied together.		School culture did not overlap smoothly with her identity. Learning about Islam as a non-Muslim, supported her knowledge, but recognized and negotiated cultural differences. However, she appreciated her learning about Islam and knowing her Muslim students, even if only superficially.

Appendix B

Survey Instrument

Consent Letter for Teacher Background Questionnaire

Dear Teaching Staff Member:

I volunteer on Wednesday afternoons at the Greater Lansing Islamic School and teach individual and small groups of students who are struggling in Language Arts and Mathematics. As you may know, I am also a doctoral student in education at Michigan State University who holds an interest in Islamic education. For my dissertation study, I hope to conduct research among teachers here at the school. As such, my study is conceived of this way:

My dissertation study will address the question: how does the curriculum of an Islamic school, based upon Michigan standards and Islamic subjects, connect to the global and local teaching and learning backgrounds, identities, and practices of teaching personnel who represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the Greater Lansing Muslim community? To this end, I will administer a questionnaire that will ask basic background questions of teaching personnel and, based upon responses that best fit this question, I will select three individuals to interview further about their educational backgrounds, practices, and students as well as conduct participant-observation in their classes. I will, moreover, consider my own teaching and learning background, identity, and practice as a teacher of struggling children of immigrants in the school—adding to the texture of narratives my study will focus upon. I hope to demonstrate the ways in which curriculum, transcultural education life histories, and educational practices of teachers contribute to the production and reproduction of the Islamic school as an educative space. My study will culminate in a doctoral dissertation that will eventually be published in the form of an academic book or scholarly journal articles.

This letter is a consent form for participation in the questionnaire portion of this study only. Attached is the questionnaire to be filled out by you, the teaching staff, that will help me understand your educational backgrounds and then, based upon responses I receive, I will select three individuals who wish to participate to focus my study upon. As indicated, I am particularly interested in individuals who represent the ethnic and racial diversity of the Lansing Muslim community and who have learned and taught in various global contexts.

Please note that your privacy will be protected to the fullest extent possible. Because this is a study of individuals, I cannot guarantee anonymity, but I will do everything I can to hide your identity. All information obtained will be attributed to a fake name you are welcome to choose for yourself. Parts of the data collected will likely be published in the form of an academic paper or book; however identifying details will be switched or omitted altogether (e.g. masking grade level taught). Thus, all information observed and recorded will be used for research purposes only; any identifying characteristics about yourself, your students, and the school will be changed for protection purposes. The data will be accessible only to myself and my doctoral advisor (Kyle Greenwalt), and the Human Research Subject Protection Committee at Michigan State University.

Risks may include potential problems with family members or colleagues who have learned from you about your participation and disagree with your willingness to participate. Benefits may include an added voice to the literature on the humanization of Muslim peoples in the United States. This is a particularly volatile time for Muslims; my hope is this research will help dispel negative myths and stereotypes non-Muslim Americans hold toward their Muslim neighbors. As such, your voice can potentially help promote understanding between Muslim and non-Muslim peoples in the United States.

Finally, your participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you decline participation you need not provide a reason with no negative consequences to you. You also may withdraw from your participation after consenting, again with no negative consequences. Please also know you have the right not to answer any question if you do not wish to, without any negative consequences. If there is any aspect of the responses you provide you would specifically not like included in any presentation or write-up, please let me know as soon as possible and I will be sure to omit that information.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, your participation in it, or to report a problem, please contact myself, the researcher:

Patrick Leahy

Ph: 262-853-3599
Email: leahypat@msu.edu
Mail: 301-E Erickson Hall
College of Education
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824

If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this research study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, Michigan State University Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, FAX 517-432-4503, or email irb@msu.edu, or regular mail at: 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824

Again, your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study it will have no effect on your well-being including any services you are currently receiving.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print):_____

_____ _____

Signature Date

____ I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications without using my real name and any major identifying information.

Teacher Background Questionnaire

Please fill out and return to the main office no later than May 10th

TODAY'S DATE:

FIRST NAME:

LAST NAME:

ETHNIC/RACIAL GROUP:

TITLE OF POSITION AT SCHOOL (E.G., MATH TEACHER):

GRADE LEVEL TAUGHT (E.G., FOURTH GRADE):

SUBJECT MATTER TAUGHT (E.G., MATHEMATICS AND SOCIAL STUDIES):

WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

WHERE HAVE YOU LIVED?

IN WHICH COUNTRY(S) WERE YOU FORMALLY A STUDENT?

IN WHICH COUNTRY(S) HAVE YOU FORMALLY TAUGHT?

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THE UNITED STATES? WERE YOU FORMALLY EDUCATED IN THE UNITED STATES?

HOW LONG HAVE YOU TAUGHT IN THE UNITED STATES? WHERE HAVE YOU TAUGHT IN THE UNITED STATES?

THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

Patrick N. Leahy
Doctoral Candidate
College of Education
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824
USA
Email: leahypat@msu.edu

Appendix C

Observation and Interview Protocol

Consent Letter for Participant-Observation and Interview

Dear Teaching Staff Member:

Thank you for filling out the questionnaire as well as your interest in participating in my study. Based upon your responses, you fit the description of a teacher that I would, if possible, like to interview as well as conduct five separate participant observation sessions in your class. Please let me know if this would be possible.

If so, please let me know which days and times would be acceptable for me to observe your class. Generally, Wednesday, Thursdays, and Fridays would work for me. Also, the interview will last approximately four hours but, as I imagine you are quite busy, I believe we can meet on approximately four separate occasions. Please note that all interviews will be recorded while I take notes. If you do not wish the interview to be recorded, please let me know, and I will be sure not to record our interviews. Moreover, if you wish recordings to be deleted soon after the interviews and not used in my study, please let me know as soon as possible.

Here again is an outline of my proposed study:

My dissertation study will address the question: how does the curriculum of an Islamic school, based upon Michigan standards and Islamic subjects, connect to the global and local teaching and learning backgrounds, identities, and practices of teaching personnel who represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the Greater Lansing Muslim community? To this end, I will administer a questionnaire that will ask basic background questions of teaching personnel and, based upon responses that best fit this question, I will select three individuals to interview further about their educational backgrounds, practices, and students as well as conduct participant-observation in their classes. I will, moreover, consider my own teaching and learning background, identity, and practice as a teacher of struggling children of immigrants in the school—adding to the texture of narratives my study will focus upon. I hope to demonstrate the ways in which curriculum, transcultural education life histories, and educational practices of teachers contribute to the production and reproduction of the Islamic school as an educative space. My study will culminate in a doctoral dissertation that will eventually be published in the form of an academic book or scholarly journal articles.

Please note that your privacy will be protected to the fullest extent possible. Because this is a study of individuals, I cannot guarantee anonymity, but I will do everything I can to hide your identity. All information obtained will be attributed to a fake name you are welcome to choose for yourself. Parts of the data collected will likely be published in the form of an academic paper or book; however identifying details will be switched or omitted altogether (e.g. masking grade level taught). Thus, all information observed and recorded will be used for research purposes only; any identifying characteristics about yourself, your students, and the school will be changed for protection purposes. The data will be accessible to myself, my doctoral advisor

(Kyle Greenwalt), and the Human Research Subject Protection Committee at Michigan State University.

Risks may include potential problems with family members or colleagues who have learned from you about your participation and disagree with your willingness to participate. Benefits may include an added voice to the literature on the humanization of Muslim peoples in the United States. This is a particularly volatile time for Muslims; my hope is this research will help dispel negative myths and stereotypes non-Muslim Americans hold toward their Muslim neighbors. As such, your voice can potentially help promote understanding between Muslim and non-Muslim peoples in the United States.

Finally, your participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you decline participation you need not provide a reason with no negative consequences to you. You may withdraw from your participation after consenting. Please also know you have the right not to answer any question if you do not wish to, without any negative consequences. If there is any aspect of the interviews or the observations you would specifically not like included in any presentation or write-up, please let me know as soon as possible and I will be sure to omit that information.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, your participation in it, or to report a problem, please contact myself, the researcher:

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Ph: 262-853-3599
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If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this research study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, Michigan State University Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, FAX 517-432-4503, or email irb@msu.edu, or regular mail at: 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824

Again, your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study it will have no effect on your well-being including any services you are currently receiving.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print):_____

_____ _____

Signature Date

____ I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications without using my real name and any major identifying information.

Interview Questions

In-Depth Interview Questions for Three Participants

This interview will last approximately four hours per participant

Guiding Question: How does the educational life history of a teacher (including their learning and teaching) connect with their current teaching practices and the school's curriculum?

*) When were you born? Where were you born? How long did you live there? Did you live in other places?

*) Do you belong to a particular ethnic or tribal group in your place of origin? How do you identify yourself religiously and culturally?

*) Can you describe demographically, educationally, and culturally the place(s) where you've lived?

*) Which place(s) did you attend school? What did you learn about the subject matter you currently teach? What materials did you use?

*) Where did you learn to teach? What sorts of things did you learn about the subject matter you currently teach? What materials did you use?

*) Where have you taught? What subject matter have you taught in that place/those places? What memories resonate with you when you think back? What did you learn? What materials did you use?

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*) How is the way you teach today similar and/or different from the way you taught in the past? (Please provide an artifact that best demonstrates this from your perspective which we could discuss). Could you talk about material differences (e.g., use of White board and markers today versus chalk and Blackboards from past?)

*) How are the ways in which students in your classes learn today similar or different from the ways in which you learned this subject matter in the past?

---

*) Where are the students from who attend your classes today? Were they born in the United States or overseas?

*) What ethnic or racial backgrounds do your students have?

*) What socio-economic backgrounds do your students have? Are they low class, middle class, or upper class?

*) Why, in your view, do parents enroll their children in an Islamic school?

*) How do parents afford to send their children to this private, Islamic school?

---

*) What are the ways in which you structure the classes that you teach? Is there a basic way in which you plan and order your teaching?

*) If you teach multiple subjects, how do you differentiate among these? Are there curriculum connections among these? What do you see as the purpose of these subjects? Why are they important for students to learn?

*) Why, in your view, do students study the subjects you teach? What do you hope they will learn? What do they typically come away with from your classes?

*) What constraints do you see in your past learning/teaching and current teaching? NCLB? MEAP? Standards?

*) To what extent, if any, did 9/11 impact your teaching?

*) What are the similarities and differences you see between your generation of Muslims and the younger generation, particularly at the school?

*) How do you see yourself in relationship to the larger American-Muslim community? Do you see yourself as fitting well within that community? Do you see yourself connected to that community – as defined by faith, work (teaching) and family? How do you see the school (including teachers, staff, and students) in relationship to the larger American-Muslim community?

*) How do you view the Muslim-American community in relationship to dominant culture in the US? Is it a good relationship or a strained one? Why? Are Muslim-Americans, in your view, stereotyped?

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