

2019-01-01

Unveiling Veiled Voices: Understanding The Experiences Of Muslim Women Who Wear The Hijab In Public Spaces

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UNVEILING VEILED VOICES: UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIM
WOMEN WHO WEAR THE HIJAB IN PUBLIC SPACES

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Mohammed Sakip Iddrisu

2019

DEDICATION

To my mother and all the women in my life who have supported me in diverse ways

UNVEILING VEILED VOICES: UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIM
WOMEN WHO WEAR THE HIJAB IN PUBLIC SPACES

by

MOHAMMED SAKIP IDDRISU, B.A.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals have contributed immensely to this research. I am grateful to my committee members, Dr. Jennifer Clifton, Dr. Kate Mangelsdorf, and Dr. Maissa Khatib, for their careful reading, useful suggestions and their encouragement. I am particularly appreciative of Dr. Clifton who accepted to not only direct my thesis, but to also be my academic mentor on that fateful day when I asked if she was willing to mentor me.

Also, I am sincerely thankful to the participant-researchers who trusted me with their experiences, dedicated their time and energy and inspired me to undertake this project. They have become dear to me and I hope that readers can appreciate their challenges, bravery and triumphs throughout this work.

Thank you to my family and friends who supported me directly and indirectly.

ABSTRACT

In view of the invisibility of Arab(ic)-Islamic rhetorics and the dominance of scholarship on Christian rhetorical traditions in rhetorical studies alongside an increased visibility of public rhetorics about Islamic women in American politics, this research explores the experiences and performances of veiled Muslim women in public spaces. While much of rhetorical scholarship on public spheres focuses on public talk or the circulation of public texts, in this study, I, together with six veiled Muslim women in El Paso, Texas, explore how veiled Muslim women navigate the hijab's visibility as a marker of difference with strangers—simultaneously performing and provoking performative public rhetorics of spatialization. Using Michel Foucault's theories of biopolitics, discipline, and technologies of the self in conversation with Hubert Herman's dialogical self theory and Dorothy Smith's feminist standpoint theory as theoretical lenses, I theorize rhetorics of public spatialization around the Islamic veil as a way of understanding the biopolitical and disciplining rationalities underpinning such rhetorics as veiled Muslim women encounter strangers in public places in the U.S. Not only do I analyze and visually represent the injurious, overlapping and conflicting discourses that veiled Muslim women encounter in public spheres, I also attend to how the women exhibit rhetorical dexterity in (re)constructing subjectivities that enable them to assert their agency and freedom, to resist strangers' attempts to define the women's ontological realities and to espouse standpoints that challenge dominant discourses about the Islamic veil. I conclude by inviting scholars and educators in rhetorical studies to adopt pedagogical practices that include the experiences of veiled Muslim women in rhetorical discourses and to enact rhetorical invention that frames differences – religious, cultural, racial, sexual – in public life as sites of deliberation and intercultural knowledge building.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A Backstory

My full name is Mohammed Sakip Iddrisu. Throughout my life, I have been known by my middle name. When I decided to pursue graduate studies in the U.S. I projected my first name, Mohammed, in all my application processes. I decided to use this name during my stay in this country because I want people to assume, upon meeting me at first, that I may be Muslim. I hope that they may start a conversation about Islam. Using Mohammed at a time when Islamophobia is heightened following the election of Trump is a rhetorical choice towards inviting discourse about my religion with those who care to engage in such interactions. So far, the experience has been great, and I have had the opportunity to clear a few misconceptions and have answered questions about Islam to both friends and strangers.

I have also experienced a few negative responses for being Muslim and expressing an Islamic identity in public; for example, while dressed in a garment typically worn by Muslim men in the Arab world, I went to one of the grocery stores in El Paso. At the entrance, a worker approached me and started a conversation with me. Upon hearing my name, he asked if I had any weapons in the plastic bag that I was carrying. When I answered in the negative and expressed discomfort about his question, he claimed he was joking. I knew he wasn't. He was acting on his prejudice against Muslims.

Before my visa interview, a good friend of mine advised me to shave off my beard because it might be a reason for me to be denied an American visa. At the time, I was living and working as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in Saudi Arabia, an ally of the U.S. I turned a deaf ear to that advice and my reasons were two: one, my request for an American visa isn't a reason to discard an aspect of my religion and the advice of our Prophet Mohammed (peace be

upon him) that I personally like following; two, any American embassy official in Saudi Arabia should be used to interviewing men with long beards. Visa approved, I left Saudi Arabia to the U.S., via Paris, France, to Atlanta, Georgia, and finally to El Paso, Texas.

With regard to sanctioning public expressions of Islamic identity, France has been the most forceful European country, banning the burqa, a loose garment covering the entire body, in public. After spending six hours of stopover in Paris, I got onboard a plane operated by Delta Airlines and seated beside me was a Muslim young lady wearing the hijab. As the air hostesses began to serve food to passengers, one stopped by me and asked, “Sir, did you request Muslim food?” Just before I could respond, I saw a few passenger faces turn in my direction, curious. They seemed to be wondering, “Is there a Muslim on the plane?” As our journey continued, the Muslim woman wearing the hijab mentioned how difficult it is negotiating public life in America while donning the hijab. This is where my interest in this topic emanated from.

To situate and contextualize a study to further explore and better understand the experiences of Muslim women wearing the hijab in public spaces, I first review literature in the discipline to highlight the state of religious pluralism in rhetoric and composition studies, the need for further research on Arab(ic)-Islamic rhetorics and the significance of religious discourse in public spheres.

Literature Review

Religious Pluralism in Composition Studies

Though religious diversity may be at times contested in public spaces, religious identity and religious practices are an intellectually relevant asset to the rhetoric and composition classroom. Arguing for the need for composition instructors to recognize religion as a valuable

resource in the classroom, Hairston (1992) in “Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing” asserts that:

It’s worth noting here that religion plays an important role in the lives of many of our students—and many of us, I’m sure—but it’s a dimension almost never mentioned by those who talk about cultural diversity and difference. In most classrooms in which there is an obvious political agenda, students—even graduate students—are very reluctant to reveal their religious beliefs, sensing they may get a hostile reception. (191) (qtd. in Lynch & Miller, 2017 p. 1).

Hairston’s claim that instructors ignore religious discourse and its consequent result of causing students to hide their religion is challenged by Paul Lynch and Matthew Miller (2017) who surveyed about 200 scholarly works on religious scholarship in rhetoric and composition from 1992-2017. They highlight that the field for the past twenty-five years has been positioning itself to engage religion. Despite the fact that “religious discourse has presented many challenges to our field’s pedagogical and civic projects, the majority of scholars have refused to dismiss religious concerns and attitudes as mere impediments. Instead, our religious encounters have led to productive rethinking of dominant attitudes and familiar assumptions” (Lynch and Miller, 2). They further argue that this productive rethinking emanating from the field’s engagement with religion has resulted, in recent times, in scholarly research that views “religion as a call and a resource for rhetorical invention” (2).

Undoubtedly, the literature shows much evidence that the field has not stifled religious discourse. However, what seems obvious is the reality that the field, in the last quarter of a century, has overemphasized and focused on Christian rhetorical traditions (Lynch & Miller, 2017). In their initial survey of the engagement between rhetoric and composition and religion, Lynch and Miller

(2017) note that “[t]he vast majority of literature on religion in composition has focused on Christianity. To a certain extent, that’s to be expected. Given our nation’s particular history and politics, along with our initial focus on classroom encounters, it’s not surprising that Christian traditions would manifest itself first” (p. 7).

Similarly, Darsey and Ritter (2009) in “Religious Voices in American Public Discourse” argue that despite the increasing plurality that America is undergoing in an era of “postmodern unraveling,” religious pluralism still remains underrepresented in rhetorical studies. Consequently, they highlight the absence of other non-Christian faiths, traditions and persuasions in rhetorical studies particularly the intersections of gender and religion. It follows then that it is important to expand religious discourse to include other faiths in any rhetorical project because the individuals who occupy and interact in our classrooms and public spaces are not only diverse culturally, socially and economically, but they are also multi-religious. As Lynch and Miller argue, “For the foreseeable future, religious literacy will appear to be a basic requirement for civic life. Cultivating that literacy cannot fall to composition alone, but nor can composition remain religiously illiterate” (p. 9).

In response to the need to attend to other non-Christian rhetorical practices, I will dedicate the next two sections to discourse related to Islamic rhetoric and other knowledge practices that have strong connections with Islamic rhetorical traditions. I will mark and connect Arab cultural and linguistic practices with Islamic practices while also being cognizant of the fact that knowledge about rhetorical practices are always negotiated, contested and unstable across different areas. This is no easy task. I will pay particular attention, although briefly, to terminologies that scholars have highlighted as crucial to understanding the term “rhetoric” within Arab(ic)-Islamic contexts.

Arabic Rhetoric, Arab-Islamic Rhetorics and Islamic Rhetoric

According to Philip Hallden (2005), Heinrichs makes the claim that defining rhetoric within the context of Arab(ic) and Islamic traditions needs to be treated cautiously because the term could have different meanings. Despite this, Heinrichs indicates that within Arab-Islamic contexts “science of eloquence” (*‘al-balāgha*) is the closest to “rhetoric”. This complication becomes more compounded in view of the adjectives—Arab(ic), Arab-Islamic and Islamic—that precede the term rhetoric. These are not just words modifying a noun but they have different implications regarding what can be included or excluded in each strand.

In the study of Arabic rhetoric, scholars such as Barbara Johnstone Koch (1983) in “Presentation as Proof: The Language of Arabic Rhetoric” and Mushin Al-Musawi (2001) in “Arabic Rhetoric” center the Arabic language and explore rhetorical elements inherent within the language and employed by its speakers to persuade their audiences. For example, following the Arabic saying that, “enough repetition will convince even a donkey,” Koch highlights that repetition is an Arabic rhetorical strategy that enhances effective communication and persuasion; she asserts, “Arabic argumentation...persuades by making its argumentative claims linguistically present: by repeating them, paraphrasing them, and clothing them in recurring structural cadences” (47). On his part, Al-Musawi emphasizes the science of eloquence, an area that includes “rhetoric, eloquence and *fasaha*, or the perfection and purity of language” (29). Thus, Arabic rhetoric emphasizes linguistic rhetorical tools and practices at the core of the Arabic language and central to its use for argumentation and effective communication.

In “What is Arab-Islamic Rhetoric? Rethinking the history of Muslim oratory art and homiletics,” Hallden (2005) points out: “In the dictionaries, two different words are generally given as translations in Arabic for the word rhetoric: *al-balāgha* and *al-khatāba*. As

metarhetorical concepts, these terms are prefixed by *'ilm* (episteme/scientia) or *fann* (techne/ars), as in the compounds *'ilm al-balāgha* and *fann al-khatāba*" (20). He further indicates that *al-balāgha*, the science of eloquence, has been the focus of much of the scholarship in Arab-Islamic rhetoric because Islamic scholars considered the Qur'an as the quintessence of linguistic inimitability and as such the science of eloquence was intended to facilitate critical interpretation of the Qur'an and was more connected to Islam. On the other hand, *fann al-khatāba*, which was associated with Greek rhetoric, was considered to be more related to philosophy (*falsafa*) and was unrepresentative of Islamic theology and sciences. Similarly, Al-Musawi (2001), commenting on the term *'ilm al-balāgha* or the science of eloquence, notes that, "While its Western origination as a term 'is linked to political notions of debate and dialogue' (Smyth, 1992, p. 243), its growth into an Arabic science of eloquence, *'ilm al-balāgha*, is closely tied to Islam as religion and culture in a specifically Arabic context" (29). It follows then that Arab-Islamic rhetorics pertain to rhetorical practices that are situated within Arab contexts and have Islamic religious underpinnings. Thus, it centers Islamic religious rhetorical practices within an Arab cultural milieu.

From the foregoing, it is worthy of mention that although there is a close connection between the Arabic language and culture and Islam, ethnic Arabs are diverse culturally and religiously and their distinct rhetorical and cultural practices cannot be referenced as being necessarily Islamic. Consequently, given that Islam has spread across different geographical locations and transcends cultures, Islamic rhetoric could be framed, broadly, as rhetorical traditions and knowledge practices traceable to the Islamic religion and practiced by Muslims of various cultural, racial and geographical backgrounds. My focus on the phenomenon of the hijab in this

study is thus limited to its practice as an Islamic rhetorical tradition by Muslim women irrespective of their ethnic/cultural/national background.

The Invisibility of Arab-Islamic Rhetorics

Despite calls for more studies of non-Christian religious rhetorics, Philip Halldén (2005) and Rasha Diab (2016) have noted the continued invisibility of Arab-Islamic rhetoric. Situating the study of Arab-Islamic rhetorics within cultural rhetorics, Diab explains in her award-winning book focused on Arab-Islamic peacemaking rhetorics:

We are collectively building bodies of knowledge on African-American rhetorics (e.g., Atwater; Jackson and Richardson, *Understanding*; Pough; Richardson and Jackson, *African American*; Royster, *Traces*); Asian-American rhetorics (e.g., Mao and Young); Chinese rhetorics (e.g., Mao, “Studying”); American-Indian rhetorics (e.g., Lyons; Powell; Stromberg); rhetorics of the Americas (e.g., Baca and Villanueva); and Near East rhetorics (e.g., Lipson and Binkley). Among the work on the rhetorics of the Near East, there has been limited work on Arabic/Arab-Islamic rhetorics.

Further, the available scholarship to date sheds light on only a small portion of Arabic-Islamic rhetoric (Diab 2016). According to Diab, much of it focuses on medieval times and does not represent an expansive approach that accounts for the “complexity, richness, and longevity of Arabic/Arab-Islamic rhetorics” (Diab 10). Among these less visible Arab-Islamic rhetorics are the performative rhetorics of Islamic women and their ways of *knowing*, *doing*, and *being*. Thus, the focus of this study on the rhetoricity of Muslim women wearing the hijab in public places within the American context is a response to this invisibility as I follow one of the many paths that the relationship between rhetoric and religion opens.

Types of Muslim Veils

Although hijab is the generic term for veils worn by Muslim women, there are different types of veils. Following Soni (2003), I will explain three of the most common ones: hijab, niqab and burqa.



Figure 1.1: Three common types of hijab. Retrieved from <https://www.channel4.com/news/from-hijab-to-burqa-a-guide-to-muslim-headwear>

Hijab. The hijab is the type of veil that mainly covers the hair, ears, neck, and around the chest but leaves the facial area bare. It is the most common type of veil in both Muslim majority countries such as Turkey and Palestine and Muslim minority countries such as the United States.

Niqab. This type of veil covers all of the head area and face leaving only the women's eyes. It is common to find niqabs that flow down to the mid-chest and back or even to the waist area. It is usually a combination of a long headscarf and an extra piece of fabric mainly used to cover the face beginning from right below the eyes. The headscarf covers the forehead as well.

Burqa. As regards the burqa (also burka, burkha), it is mainly a single-piece full veil that covers the entire body of the women. It is usually loose and has mesh-like holes in the face area that allows the women to see through.

Unveiling the Hijab Mystery

In relation to a long, rich history of Islamic rhetorics; heightened visibility of Muslims given anti-Islamic rhetorics post-9/11; and the subsequent activism of Muslims to counter inaccurate and harmful narratives, the relative invisibility of Islamic rhetorics within the discipline is especially perplexing.



Figure 1.2: We the People illustration at the Women's March. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/23/womens-march-poster-munira-ahmed-shepard-fairey-interview>

Louise Cainkar (2011) highlights that, following 9/11, Muslim men were considered as a security threat and government agencies mainly handled them while hijab-wearing Muslim women became the cultural threat whom the American public managed. For example, Wendy Hesford

describes the ways in which the second Bush administration employed “terror spectacles” to enforce a nationalistic othering of Muslims and Iraqis sent to Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib (61). She argues that the contextual creation of “terror spectacles” was generated through the repeated use of images portraying the collapse of the World Trade Center along with the “iconic figure of the hooded detainee standing on a box with wires attached to his body” (72). The anonymity of the cloaked figure created a spectacle in which Western viewers superimposed derisive cultural stereotypes of Muslims. Muslim women, however, were constructed as a different kind of threat.

Following Cainkar (2011), Ali (2017) argues that the mission of the American public was geared towards integrating and assimilating (“Americanising”) Muslim women into American culture. Since the hijab makes Muslim women more visible in public spaces, Ali further notes that “this cultural management operated differently on Muslim American women based on their dress code” (para. 5) and this visibility made them easy victims of hate crimes. Likewise, Haddad, Smith and Moore (2011) assert that the American public conceptualizes the hijab in three ways: as an inferior representation of cultural difference, a threat to secularism or an expression of deep religious beliefs and identity. Therefore, they contend that the hijab-wearing Muslim occupies a symbolic position in the “clash of civilisations” and her life in public “has far-reaching political and social implications” (p. 39).

The socio-political implications of being Muslim and expressing that openly through the hijab in the era following the 9/11 caused Muslim women to engage in socio-political and religious activism across the United States (Ahmed, 2011). Mansson McGinty (2014), citing Cainkar (2009) and Naber (2008), indicates that due to the suspicion, discrimination and racialization in the aftermath of the attacks, Muslims in America, especially those of Arab and South Asian descent, actively participated “in anti-war movements as well as in public discourses on civil and racial

justice, immigrant rights, and integration. Or differently put, previously ‘invisible citizens’ have become ‘visible subjects’ (p. 683). All of these led to a heightened level of consciousness, dedication and sense of belonging among the Muslim community in America (Ahmed, 2011) as they face both state institutions and the public in dealing with discrimination, hate crimes and isolation.

Muslim women, whether in Europe or America, have consistently been subjected to some form of punishment for both their gender and religion (Ali, 2017; Benhabib, 2013). In Europe, for example, Benhabib highlights that Belgium, The Netherlands and France have all banned the wearing of the hijab in public areas and those who defy that ban risk paying a fine. On the political regulation of the hijab in different contexts, Mansson (2014) looks at feminist geographers such as Go“kariksel and Mitchell (2005) and Secor (2005) who have analyzed veiling practices from spatial perspectives and she concludes that they:

have primarily looked at veiling through a poststructuralist perspective, analyzing veiling as a site for ‘the disciplinary administration of bodies’ (Go“kariksel and Mitchell 2005, 150) and ‘the regulation of population’ (Secor 2005, 204). Drawing on Foucault’s theories of ‘biopower’ and technologies of power and of the self, these important contributions describe the body and subjectivity as discursively constructed and situated and the meaning of the veil as something inscribed on the body through spatial practices and discursive powers. (p. 684)

These perspectives thus emphasize an understanding of the hijab as being grounded in specific locations to the extent that spatial practices become the entity that determines the meaning of the hijab. Against this importance of space as a factor that influences the meaning of the hijab, Mansson makes the argument that the hijab is also an embodiment of “psycho-social space” that

is “a symbol with both personal/psychological and social and political meaning” (p. 684). Despite the fact that the hijab has some religious significance for those who don it, the hijab also has multiple meanings associated it (Benhabib, 2013; Droogsma 2007; Mansson McGinty, 2014).

In “The French and the Hijab. The Never-Ending Story,” Benhabib (2013) highlights the symbolic politics associated with the hijab and the extent to which political entities have gone to control Muslim women’s exercise of religious freedom in public spaces. She further outlines the meaning of the hijab among women’s rights activists, security theorists, democrats and republicans and concludes that “Very often missing in all these interpretations are the young girls’ and women’s own voices.” Similarly, Droogsma (2007) and Mansson (2014) lament that research on the veil tends to be focused on Muslim majority countries and/ or Arab countries, neglecting veiling practices and experiences of hijab-wearing Muslims in Muslim minority countries such as the United States. From the foregoing, an epistemological question needs to be asked: Can we understand the hijab without exploring the voices and lived experiences of the women who actually don it?

Citing Cankar, Roaa Ali (2017) indicates that the post-9/11-era framed the “Muslim woman as an Other, and in defiance of the American concept of freedom” (para. 5). However, the post-Trump election era is beginning to mark the hijab-wearing Muslim woman as a different Other, one that is American, free, a symbol of resistance and feminism. As Benhabib (2013) asserts that wearing the hjab has no singular, stable meaning, as evidenced in the symbolic shift of the image of the hijab from a security threat in post-9/11 to its emerging image as a sign of inclusion in the light of the Women’s March in post-Trump election era. Given these tensions and complexities related to the hijab in public spaces in the American cultural landscape and the absence of research on the rhetoricity of the hijab, especially from the perspective of those who

wear the hijab, this study seeks to understand the lived experiences and performative rhetorics of Muslim women who wear the hijab as they negotiate public spaces in El Paso, Texas.

Religious Discourse in Public Spheres

Commenting on the crucial role that religious practices and discourse play in public spheres, Habermas, whose theories of public spheres had previously been critiqued for their lack of attention to religion, argued in 2011 that religious practices and perspectives are significant sources of the morals and ideals that promote and sustain “an ethics of multicultural citizenship, commanding both solidarity and equal respect” (5). As these practices and perspectives take shape and gain visibility in public spheres, they are also part of what Judith Butler calls “radical vulnerability” in light of the unpredictable ways people may encounter the “ritual of interpellation—the means by which social agents recognize themselves as being constituted as particular kinds of people, “called into being—named, addressed, and ushered into a subject position” (7). Butler argues that as people are called into particular subject positions, the possibility of being interpellated in “injurious, disquieting, and unsettling ways” may be unavoidable (7). In her work on “spectacular rhetorics,” Wendy Hesford echoes the risk of harmful ideologies and interpellations, noting the ways visual images and discourse work to create a “visual vernacular,” framing some populations and individuals as recognizable representations of poverty, illness, war, genocide, or rape in order to appeal to Westerners, chiefly Americans. These “staged spectacles,” Hesford explains, also “scripted citizens of the United States as both victims of terrorism and agents of a newly imagined, ultranationalist state entrenched in stereotypical representations of the Muslim other and scenes of cultural subjection” (61). While Hesford primarily attends to these scripts as a response to the construction of Muslims as a security threat in the media, the hijab’s visibility and its associations with a cultural threat also produce normative

scripts through universalizing narratives. In both instances, there is a need to “call into question the normative frameworks that govern subject formation” and to draw attention to “visual politics of recognition, and to the formation of ethical engagements” (Hesford 199), especially for Western audiences and people in privileged positions in order to avoid “celebrat[ing] difference” in a way that re-centers themselves.

Despite these universalizing narratives that constitute Muslims as different kinds of “terror spectacles,” several intersections of class, gender, religion and even citizenship status characterize the lives of people expressing Islamic identities and these complexities and differences deserve to be explored. Further, the complexities and differences experienced by those of Islamic faith also need to be part of everyday public life and put in conversation with the experiences of others who may be secular or differently religious. Indeed, “[v]ery fragile experiments in democracy could well depend on not just the character and virtue of the citizens but also the ability to be multicontextual in the various frameworks and reason-giving activities in public spaces” (West 94). That is, “fragile experiments” in democratic public life depend on how people understand and navigate each other’s deep differences—a notoriously difficult task. Cornel West poses the question this way: “How do we mediate that kind of conflict?” (94) How do we engage the volatility and vitality of differences in both public and private spaces? Further, how do we do this without bracketing differences, including religious practices and expressions?

Public Spaces v. Places

To conceptualize public space, I combine the activity and mobility and contingency of “space” with notions of the public sphere as characterized by difference not homogeneity, conflict not unity; as a rhetorically constructed phenomena among strangers; as premised on ideas of publicity, visibility, and recognizability; *and* as in need of discourse, broadly construed,

to be called into being (Warner; Flower; Hauser). This study will, therefore, attend to the activity of the hijab as Muslim women encounter or construct stranger-relationality marked in various ways by difference, conflict, visibility, and recognizability.

To understand the spaces in which public rhetoric is enacted—in this case, in relation to the hijab—it is important to understand the differences between “space” and “place.” Philosopher Michel de Certeau (1984) defined places as “an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability” (p. 117). A building, with its seemingly stable materials is, according to de Certeau, a “place.” The materials of the building—stairs, bathrooms, hallways but also classrooms, departments, offices, labs, and programs—order particular functions. In other words, places are geographically bound, locatable sites.

In contrast, De Certeau theorized the instability of “space” as it is “composed of intersections of mobile elements” (p. 117). De Certeau claims that places are different from spaces because places are “ultimately reducible to being there” while spaces are specified “by the actions of historical subjects.” Consider De Certeau’s example of people walking on the street. While the “place” of the street is stable and static, the “space”—or spatialization—of the street is about “potentially anarchic movement – when you take routes that aren’t time-efficient or cost-effective, for instance, or if you skateboard or do parkour, creating your own, alternative path where there wasn’t one, expressing your own spatial ‘slang’, if you will” (Vermeulen 2015, para. 3). A space is defined by the interactions that individual agents have with it, not by its physical features. Or to use de Certeau’s words: ‘Space is a practiced place.’

What is it, then, that makes space as “practiced place” *public*? Rhetorical scholarship of public spheres has theorized the communicative practices of publics, recognizing that publics are not ready-made groups but rather are called into existence by discourse itself. Here it is important

to distinguish between *the* public and *a* public. Unlike *the* public in the sense of “the people” as pre-existing in a public sphere, *a* public—and a public sphere—stems from and is contingent on discourse, and it is for this reason that a public is self-organized around discourse (Warner, 2002b). And yet publicity, while central to public spheres, is in and of itself insufficient for creating a public. It is insufficient for the different issues and conflicts that characterize public spheres to be publicized, made visible, circulated or made public; *response* constitutes publics defined by their rhetorical functions (Clifton, 2017; cf., Asen, 2000; Flower, 2008; Hauser, 1999 & 2002).

Gerard Hauser notes that public spheres emerge as discursive spaces “whenever two or more persons engage in serious discussion of a public issue” (Hauser, 2002, p.88), marking a deliberative orientation toward issues that are public—issues deemed by citizens to somehow not be the sole or primary jurisdiction of the state or the market or the home (Habermas; Fraser; Benhabib). In this estimation, public spaces are not limited to the visibility or publicness of a place; rather places are spatialized as *public* when common affairs are raised as political concerns in interactions among citizens. And yet not all public spheres are deliberative spaces; they may invoke other models of political life that uphold other models of discourse (Fraser; Flower, 2008; Long 2008; Roberts-Miller, 2008). Even so, the interaction of public spheres—deliberative or otherwise—is poetic and performative in its orientation toward strangers (Warner, 2002b, p. 82; cf Clifton 2017). As Michael Warner (2005) puts it: “Public discourse says not only, ‘Let a public exist,’ but ‘Let it have this character, speak this way, see the world this way,’...” (p.14). This poetic world-making—this performative place-making—does not assume a romanticized homogeneity but instead assumes contestation and difference and the need for negotiation (Fraser p. 116)—even the negotiation of what constitutes a public issue and who constitutes a public polity

interdependently “stuck with one another” (Young)--opening itself up “in principle to the possible participation of any stranger” (p. 82). While much of rhetorical scholarship in public spheres focuses on public talk or the circulation of public texts, in this study, I aim to explore how veiled Muslim women navigate the hijab’s visibility as a marker of difference with strangers—simultaneously performing and provoking performative public rhetorics of spatialization.

This attention to the hijab in rhetorically constructed public spaces extends a rhetorical focus on religious expression as suggested by Pernot (2006). In undertaking this rhetorical project, I document “critical incidents,” which I explain further in the methods section, attending both to what is seen and heard—what Ellen Cushman calls the “public transcript”—and also to the multiple, potentially conflicting hidden logics (Higgins, Long, & Flower 21) informing people’s actions—what Cushman calls the “hidden transcript” (227-28; cf., Long, 2008, 100; cf., Clifton, 2017, p. 84-86). With regard to critical incidents related to the hijab in public spaces, these public and hidden transcripts can be mapped onto Foucault’s notion of biopolitics, which functions through governmentality, linking technologies of power and of the self with political rationalities underpinning them. Therefore, this study 1) makes an inquiry into the hijab as a symbol of religious expression marking a difference of religion for Muslim women from diverse racial, cultural, educational and economic backgrounds in public spaces (Mansson McGinty, 2014; Droogsman, 2007) and 2) considers how Muslim women *experience* and *perform* the hijab in public spaces—marking these experiences and performances as important sites for understanding biopolitics, dialogical selves as technologies of the self and veiled Muslim women’s standpoints on the hijab.

Chapter 1 Summary: Introduction / Literature Review

I begin this chapter with a backstory that recounts my experiences as a Muslim in my early arrival in El Paso, Texas and a conversation I had with a hijab-wearing Muslim in a flight from

Paris to Atlanta as I traveled to El Paso from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, I review literature in the field to highlight the exigency of exploring further research within Arab(ic)-Islamic rhetorics. Further, I discuss three common types of Muslim veils together with research on how the Muslim veil (hijab) has been perceived and represented in American public discourse while also highlighting the absence of the voices of veiled Muslim women in such discourses. At the end, I distinguish between place and space and delineate scholarship around publics/public sphere/public space to theorize how Muslim women's encounters with strangers around the Muslim veil constitute performative rhetorics of public space (spatialization).

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGIES AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Participatory/Transformative Paradigm

This study's work documenting the experiences of Muslim women who wear the hijab in public spaces situates this study in the participatory/transformative paradigm. Pasque (in Brown et al., 2014) notes that institutions of higher education occupy a crucial position that mandates them to be active in "researching and addressing inequities in the world today, including health care, educational and economic inequities...and other issues of social justice" (p. 227). Per her assessment, universities and colleges have failed in performing this function. My research seeks to explore the lived experiences of a marginalized community in a border city, El Paso, employing the transformative paradigm (Chilisa, 2012). This paradigm provides an avenue to investigate "important social issues of the day, issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression and alienation" (Creswell, 2003, p. 10) and this helps to challenge dominant "myths and empower people to change society" (Chilisa, 2012, p. 40). The guiding research questions in this study are: 1) How do Muslim women in El Paso *experience* the hijab in public spaces? 2) How do Muslim women in El Paso *perform* the hijab in public spaces?

It follows then that my onto-epistemological assumptions are embedded in this paradigm in the sense that knowledge building from the research would be co-constructed with the participant-researchers; effectively, we would work together as co-researchers. The participant-researchers' individual experiences could possibly result in "co-created findings with multiple ways of knowing" (Creswell, 2012, table 2.3; cf., Flower 2003; cf. Chilisa 2012) with regard to the hijab. This co-construction of knowledge will mainly be achieved through interviews that focus on participant-researchers' experiences and through member-checking to involve participant-researchers in verifying or countering or jointly venturing alternative interpretations of the ways I

have summarized, represented and analyzed their views, feelings, and experiences. This process is iterative and deliberative, recognizing that multiple realities may be influenced by different levels of religious understanding, cultural, race and ethnic values. This methodological orientation accentuates Benhabib's (2013) assertion that wearing the hijab does not represent a single meaning. In essence, this onto-epistemological perspective creates a joint and practical space that furthers community research *with* hijab-wearing Muslim women rather than *on* or *to* them (Creswell 2003; Chilisa 2012). For it is against this background as co-researchers in knowledge building that our research will be able to unveil the veiled and invisible voices of participant-researchers, correct any misrepresentations of their experiences, and highlight their agency in negotiating public spaces in their everyday lives. Since the beginning of this research, I have established good rapport and mutual reciprocity with the participant-researchers; given my position as an instructor in First-Year Composition and a former tutor at the University Writing Center, I consistently review, proofread and provide feedback on their written assignment drafts. This reciprocity has enhanced the participant-researchers' availability and dedication towards this study.

Undoubtedly, my interest in this topic stems from my religious identity as a Muslim. Therefore, I recognize that my positionality will be crucial in undertaking this research. My Islamic identity gives me a religious ethos to have some access to the participant-researchers and build rapport with them during the study. However, this Islamic identity positions me as an "insider/outsider" in this study (Brayboy and Deyhle, 2000) and this comes with its own challenges. Prior to my research when I volunteered at the mosque, the Islamic Center of El Paso (ICEP), I developed some rapport with some of the older women at the mosque. Although, we rarely talked, whenever we did have any conversations, it was on general issues about life such as

how my family was doing back home in Ghana and I would usually ask about their families as well.

As my research began and it became necessary for them to participate in it and share their lived experiences of the hijab with me, there was some little “tension and misunderstandings” about why a male would want to conduct research about the hijab with Muslim women. As Brayboy and Deyhle note, “Sometimes researchers are ‘blocked’ by participants who decide they are unworthy or not to be trusted with local ‘insider’ information. The political motives of the researcher can be questioned by research participants” (163); and indeed, I was asked questions such as “Why are you doing this research?” (163) and how it might be useful to them as participants. My responses to such questions included the fact that I was amazed at and inspired by their continuous wearing of the hijab despite its potential of exposing them as targets of hate crimes and that I wanted to honor my own mother, a hijabi (hijab-wearing Muslim) herself, by getting their voices out there regarding their experiences.

The co-construction of knowledge, through member checking and engaging in conversations to gain feedback on data interpretation from my participant-researchers, is one of the strategies that I am employing to keep this rapport and to assure the participant-researchers of proper representation of their experiences in this study. At the participant observation section below, I further indicate how my positionality will influence the nature of my observation.

Also, it is worthy of mention that discourse about the hijab in Islam has significantly been dominated by the perspectives of male Islamic scholars, so the fact that I am a male researcher constructing knowledge with female participants on this topic has the potential of creating epistemological tensions. Thus, considering my participants as co-researchers in order to pay critical attention to any power relations in the study is crucial. Central to the transformative

paradigm is the need to empower marginalized people by working with them to refute popular myths that characterize their experiences (Chilisa, 2012).

The Study Participants and the City

The study takes place in El Paso, Texas, a city on the southern border of U.S and Mexico. The U.S. Census Bureau (2017) estimates its population to be 840, 410. The racial composition of the city is 80.7% Hispanic, White 3.1%, Black 3.6%, two or more races 0.9%, American Indian 0.2%, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander 0.04% and other race 0.01%. According to Texas Tribune (2013), El Paso has been consistently ranked one of the safest cities in the U.S. Muslims make up about 3,000-4000 of its total population, making them a very small minority (Borderzine, 2017). The Islamic Center of El Paso (ICEP) located on the west side of the city serves a diverse immigrant community, a majority of whom are of Middle Eastern/Arab descent.

There will be six participants in this study. The participants will include younger women ages 18-21 and other women who are 30 years of age and older. All the participants will be hijabis who don the hijab in public. This is to provide an avenue to gather experiences of both young adults and older adults. Phenomenological studies involve studying a small number of participants (Creswell, 2003) and the decision to involve six participants for the interview points to this study's focus on the situated experiences of veiled Muslim women; and although it does aim to explore the patterns of experiences, the particularities are of primary interest in theorizing rhetorical performance of the hijab in public and of documenting women's experiences as sites for intercultural knowledge-building following Flower's "think tank" model (2003). To solicit experiences that cut across a diverse population, the participants will belong to different nationalities and cultures including a Palestinian-American, African American, Malaysian, and some American-born citizens. My selection of participants will bear in mind Hycner (1985) who

asserts that “[i]n fact, part of the ‘control’ and rigor emerges from the type of participants chosen and their ability to fully describe the experience being researched” (p. 294).

With the collaboration of ICEP, the women’s liaison at the mosque is helping me to identify and select participants (the older women) for the study. By working closely with the ICEP and the women’s liaison at the mosque, I am trying to ensure that the participants in the study can provide detailed description of their experiences and insightful knowledge regarding the hijab. I have also built a good rapport with the leadership at the mosque. I volunteered at the mosque’s kitchen during the entire Islamic holy month of Ramadan and through this I have secured a letter of collaboration with authorities of the mosque.

As regards the younger participants, I personally approached them on UTEP’s campus and discussed my research interest with them. I gave them my contact information and asked them to provide me with feedback regarding their decision to partake in the research or not. Upon receiving confirmation from them to partake in this research, I have been assisting them in different ways such as proofreading their essays and offering feedback as a way of developing mutually beneficial research-participant relationships with them. The participants in this study include Miss D, Hawa, Nura, Rahma, Aisha and Miriam (all the names are pseudonyms).

Miss D is an African-American Muslim revert. She is energetic and participates actively in the activities of the Islamic Center of El Paso. She has a master’s degree and used to teach at a college. She lived in Alabama before relocating to El Paso several years ago. She wears the full-face veil and has been the liaison between the older participants at the mosque and me.

Hawa has been living in El Paso for the past twenty-six years. Originally, she is from a country in Southeast Asia. She has been wearing the hijab for the past ten years and spends a significant part of her day at ICEP, where she works. She is friendly and chatty.

Nura is a young Palestinian-American in her second year of college. She is very outspoken and an active member of the Muslim Student League at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). She spent much of her childhood in Saudi Arabia and came to El Paso in 8th grade when her family immigrated here. She has been living in El Paso for the past eight years. Our first meeting was at the University Writing Center.

Rahma was born in Atlanta, Georgia and she spent a significant part of her childhood attending an Islamic school in Atlanta. She is politically active and interested in leadership. She is a talented spoken word artiste and dreams of becoming a renowned lawyer and activist. Rahma is passionate about engaging the youth at the mosque in activities for them to develop their talents and build a strong community. Nura told Rahma about my research and the latter expressed interest in partaking in it.

Aisha is a sophomore college student. She was born in Malaysia. She is easy-going and conversational. She currently serves as one of the executives of the Muslim Student League at (UTEP). She currently lives in both El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico. I first met her when I served as an election commissioner for SGA's spring 2018 elections.

Miriam was born in Saudi Arabia but raised in El Paso. She considers herself a Mexican-American-Arab. She is a college student and very engaging community activist. She serves different leadership positions within the El Paso community and UTEP. She aspires to run for public office in the future. She has a very lively and friendly personality and is always ready to provide support to different groups and individuals.

Methodologies and Methods

Methodologies

In this inquiry, I will combine phenomenological research and critical incident methodologies:

Phenomenological Research.

Creswell (2003) explains this type of research as investigating the “essence” of people’s lived experiences with regard to a particular phenomenon. Citing Moustakas (1995), he further indicates phenomenological research “involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning” (p. 15). In view of this study’s focus on understanding the lived experiences a particular phenomenon—that of wearing the hijab in public spaces, this methodology will be employed for the inquiry.

Critical Incident Methodologies.

This study will involve critical incident methodologies. These methodologies combine what John C. Flanagan (1954) refers to as the *critical incident technique* with methods of intercultural knowledge building (Flower 2003) for public and private inquiry (Higgins, Long & Flower 2006; Flower, 2008; Clifton 2017). The critical incident technique is an interview protocol often used to better understand problems in high-order performances like landing an airplane or making a medical diagnosis. I will use this methodology for the purposes of “collecting direct human behavior” and “observed incidents having special significance” in exploring the hijab as an activity “performed” by hijabis. Lorraine Higgins, Elenore Long, and Linda Flower (2006) indicate that critical incidents produce contextually grounded narratives of people’s experiences of a particular problem. They describe the critical incident as a resource for subsequent joint inquiry and deliberation among people who otherwise have few occasions to listen and to learn from one another: “Yet personal stories alone don’t necessarily support intercultural inquiry. The challenge is harnessing narrative’s capacity to dramatize the reasons behind the teller’s values and priorities (Young, 1997, p. 72) and to illustrate the rich contextual background and social conditions in which problems play themselves out” (p.21). Flanagan explains, “In summary, the critical incident

technique, rather than collecting opinions, hunches, and estimates, obtains a record of specific behaviors from those in the best position to make the necessary observations and evaluations.” As purposed in intercultural knowledge building, critical incident methodologies involve not only documenting incidents worthy of further public dialogue but also designing data-driven documents capable of calling people from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to engage in deliberate and productive discourse with regard to a common issue (Clifton & Sigoloff, 2013; Clifton, 2017). While it is beyond the scope of this study to scaffold joint deliberation, this study does aim to produce data that can support public dialogues in the future, after the completion of the study, and will draw implications with regard to future efforts to support public and private inquiry.

Methods

Qualitative research is messy and people’s lived experiences are complex. Although Hycner (1999) argues that “there is an appropriate reluctance on the part of the phenomenologists to focus too much on specific steps” (p. 143) because to enforce methods regarding a phenomenon “would do great injustice to the integrity of that phenomenon” (p. 144), I will use the following methods to gather data for the study:

Semi-structured and critical incident interviews: In congruence with the transformative paradigm, the use of interviews in this inquiry means “participants may help design questions” (Creswell, 2003, p. 10). I will have a series of interviews with the participants as a way of responding to the directions that the data that emerge from initial interviews will point to.

Initial Interview

1. Tell me about your childhood memories of the hijab.
2. How did you come to wear the hijab?

3. Do other members of your family wear the hijab?
4. What factors influence your choice of veil colors?
5. When we first met, you said you lived in (I will mention the name of the city here) for some time; how does wearing the hijab in El Paso differ from wearing it (name of city)?
6. Can you tell me about your experiences or how you feel wearing the hijab:
 - a) In and around the mosque
 - b) On the university campus/in class
 - c) While driving around the city
7. If a non-hijab-wearing immigrant were to ask you about how it feels to wear the hijab in El Paso, what would you tell her?

Critical Incident Interview

1. As a hijabi, what are some of positive experiences you have encountered in this border city?
2. Can you narrate one of such incidents.
3. When you think about yourself as a hijabi, what are some of the problems, or struggles you face in public places in El Paso? Think about a time you experienced any of these problems. Can you tell me exactly what happened?
 - a. *Possible prompt for specifics:* What was the setting or situation? What happened? What did you or X or Y say? How did people respond to each other? What was the outcome of that? What were you *thinking* when you *said xyz*? What did you think that X and Y were thinking?

- b. *Possible prompt for interpretation:* Looking back, *why* do you think this happened the way it did? What do you think made this an *example* of good (or bad) decision-making?
 - c. If they generalize, such as “she always thinks ahead,” I may focus on their term and ask: How so? Help me understand, how did that work in this situation?
 - d. *Possible prompts for alternative interpretations anyone else might have of this situation:* We are trying to understand ____ from multiple points of view: Can you imagine what someone else might say, or how he or she might interpret this particular incident?
-
- 4. Some people think that hijabis face discrimination in their everyday lives. Do you agree or disagree with this idea? Can you tell me about any personal example?
 - 5. Some people think that to avoid facing any discrimination, hijabis should not wear the hijab in public spaces. Do you agree or disagree with this idea?

Participant Field Observations: I will undertake participant field observations at the mosque at the Islamic Center of El Paso. The center was established in the 1980s at a rental space in downtown, El Paso. In 2004, it was relocated to its current location at 143 Paragon Ln, 79912, El Paso, Texas. As the only center that deals with the affairs of Muslims in El Paso, the mosque is frequented by Muslims five times daily, albeit in small numbers. However, on Fridays, large members of the Muslim community go to the mosque in the afternoon for their congregational Friday prayer. This makes it the most appropriate place to undertake field observations and I already have a letter of collaboration with the mosque granting me access to it. Given that the participant-researchers are inter-generationally and culturally diverse, this observation will be

useful in this study because it will provide data in regards to sartorial nuances in the wearing of the hijab among them at different places.

As indicated earlier, my positionality as a male Muslim conducting research with Muslim women comes with its complications. Given that Islam discourages contact, physical and conversational, or permits minimal contact between males and females outside one's immediate family (Attum & Shamoan, 2019), I will be conducting my observations from a distance at the mosque and on the university campus. That is, I will not be able get closer or participate in activities involving the women especially at the mosque and simultaneously observe them. As regards, the university campus, I will limit my observations to days when I conduct interviews with the participant-researchers and during the Muslim Students League meetings. This distance is to honor my "insider" position as a Muslim while collecting data to fulfill my "outsider" obligation as a researcher.

Theories and Methods of Analysis

Standpoint Theory

Benhabib (2013) notes that different socio-political groups have their own dominant discourses regarding what the hijab represents. For example, she highlights that while the hijab, for Republicans and Democrats, relates to the "end of Enlightenment and modernity," advocates of women's rights and security theorists regard it as a representation of "female oppression" and "manifestation of radical Islam's growing influence" respectively. Droogsma (2007) notes the dominant discourses defining the hijab and proposes the use of feminist standpoint theory as a framework for evaluating hijab-wearing Muslim women's perspectives on the hijab.

Following Droogsma, I will use this theory of analysis in my study. Dorothy Smith's feminist standpoint theory is a theory that contends that knowledge emanates from a social position

and that people who are marginalized occupy a special standpoint from which knowledge can be explored. Her work is concerned with epistemology and seeks to advocate a sociology of knowledge that is embedded in the everyday life experiences of women. Her methodology values women's daily practices as important sites of knowledge construction that deserve to be discovered. As Luxton and Findlay (1989) highlight, "Dorothy Smith's work has been important in revealing the ways in which women, women's experiences and women's knowledge have been systematically excluded from the realms of socially legitimated formal knowledge" (p. 184). Given that Muslim women occupy marginalized positions in America, the standpoint theory provides important frameworks in analyzing their perspectives of the hijab which "may encourage them to critique these dominant definitions and to formulate unique standpoints based on the knowledge they gain in their everyday lives" (Droogsma, 2007, p. 295).

Biopolitics

Biopolitics is a concept developed by Michel Foucault to highlight ways in which individuals and groups become subjects of control and regulation. It deals with a political rationality that seeks to control bodies for the purposes of ordering those lives to conform to the desires of an external regulating power (Foucault, 1976; Nilsson & Wallenstein, 2013; Adams, 2017). As individuals participate in public life, power relations become an integral part of the contact and interactions among such actors. Thus, I will situate and analyze the experiences of veiled Muslim women negotiating public spaces using Foucault's biopower and the concept of panopticism. The panopticon is a mechanism of surveillance that imbues in an individual a sense that they are constantly being watched by an external authority and this self-consciousness "assures the automatic functioning of power" (p. 197); that is, it internalizes in the individual a feeling that they are always under observation and as a result that individual becomes the "bearer" of the power

that watches over themselves. In its deployment, the panopticon functions to locate the bodies of individuals in spaces and distribute them relationally. Foucault (1995), in reference to the panopticon, asserts, “Thanks to its mechanisms of observation, it gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men’s behaviour” (p. 199).

A Foucauldian power analysis in this study will help to explain the different ways in which power is exercised in public life and its effects regarding how “the subject is constructed through social relations and cultural practices” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. 49-50). As veiled Muslim women encounter strangers and enact spatial performances of the hijab, this power analysis will bring to bear how spatializations represent people’s “local reactions and responses, even struggles and resistances, and are temporarily embedded within specific, and shifting, relations of power” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. 49).

Analytical Coding

Initial Coding. To do this analytical work, I will transcribe all interviews and code the interviews and field observations. The coding process will constitute identifying initial interests or concepts related to the experiences of veiled Muslim women in public spaces. Such concepts include the hijab as a site of tension and competing discourses; hijab as control and regulation of bodies; hijab as a cultural and security threat; hijab as a resistance; hijab as self (re)definition; and hijab as self-other (re)definition. These “sensitizing concepts” will only serve as preliminary concepts “to look at data, listen to interviewees, and to think critically about the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 17) helping me to develop and expand my ideas as I engage in coding and analyzing data. Although my coding process will begin with initial guiding concepts or sensitizing concepts, those concepts will not be immutable in the face of the data from the interviews; I will remain open to

other concepts and themes that show up and that my participant-researchers name as pertinent in their experiences.

Focused Coding. The next step after sensitizing concepts and attending to other themes identified by the participant-researchers will be focused coding. Charmaz explains focused coding as “using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely” (p. 57). Not only does it put a check on previously held conceptions about the topic of inquiry but it also helps to code data in a language that synthesizes the salient themes from the participant-researchers’ shared experiences. Using active codes in the form of gerunds (-ing words) based on the data, focused coding will help me to “compare people’s experiences, actions and interpretations” (p.59) and understand “participants’ standpoints and situations, as well as their actions within the setting” (p. 46). Focused coding that incorporates gerunds will also provide insight into the performance of the hijab in/as public spatialization.

Memo Writing and Member Checking.

After developing focused codes, I will engage in memo-writing as an additional process in the data analysis. Memo-writing involves informal reflective and analytic personal notes that a researcher writes down as he or she begins to learn about the data. Such analytic notes become the researcher's spontaneous ideas with respect to the codes and they may be free and flowing, captured in shorthand or any form that represents the researcher’s own ways of making meaning out of them. Nonetheless, it is important for a researcher to engage in memo-writing because "Memos catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections you make, and crystallize questions and directions for you to pursue. Through conversing with yourself while memo-writing,

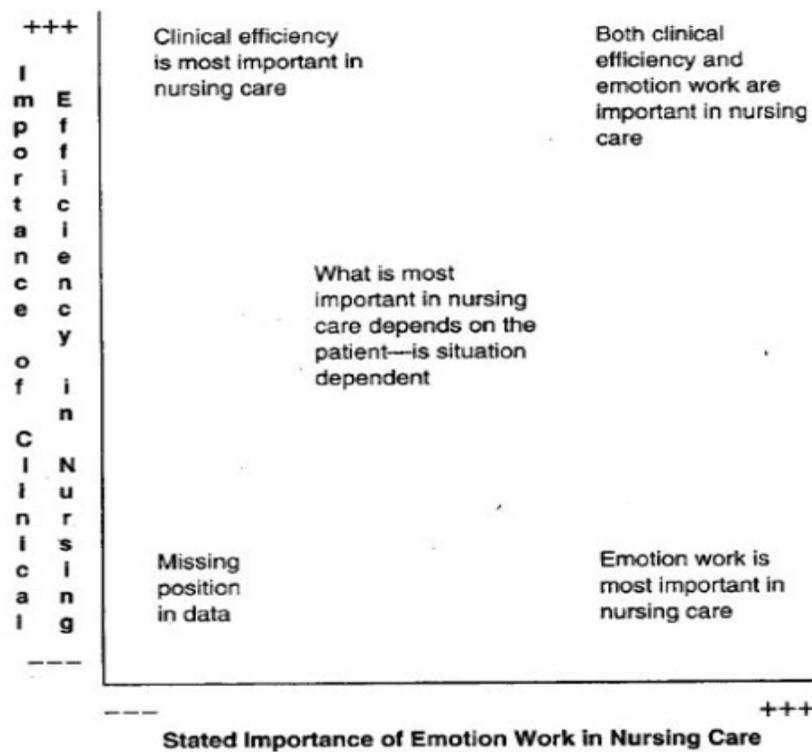
new ideas and insights arise during the act of writing" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). This practice creates a space for a researcher to not only be actively involved in the analysis of the codes, but it also helps the researcher to compare and explore relationships between data, codes, categories, and concepts slowly, reflectively and methodically. Given that ideas captured in memos are spontaneous, reviewing them later with a critical eye can reveal gaps in the data and new insights that will determine further steps in the analytical process.

Another further step in the analytical process is member checking, a way of co-constructing knowledge with the participant-researchers to ensure that my interpretations of their experiences reflect their realities. Member checking involves returning data or results to participant-researchers "to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences" (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016, p. 1802).

Situational Analysis

To provide an analytical tool that is viable in attending simultaneously to the messiness of the data about the situated experiences of the veiled Muslim women and to the material and performative structure of power dynamics in public spaces, I will use Adele Clarke's (2005) "situational analysis" framework. As Clarke notes, "Situational analysis allows researchers to draw together studies of discourse and agency, action and structure, image, text and context, history and the present moment to analyze complex situations of inquiry broadly conceived" (p. xxii). This analytical tool enhances researchers' abilities to analyze varied perspectives and discourses and people's actions and positions within intricate situations. Clarke suggests three types of mapping approaches that can be adopted for situational analysis; in this study, I will use two of them: positional maps and a variation on social worlds maps, which here I will call discursive positioning maps.

Positional Maps. Positional maps depict the stances adopted and not adopted by individuals in respect of their different perspectives, concerns, and arguments about the issue under investigation or discussion. Thus, through positional maps, a researcher will be able to articulate the points of view taken by individuals or groups within a particular situation so as to better identify and analyze consistencies, contradictions, commonalities and complexities. A positional map may look like this:

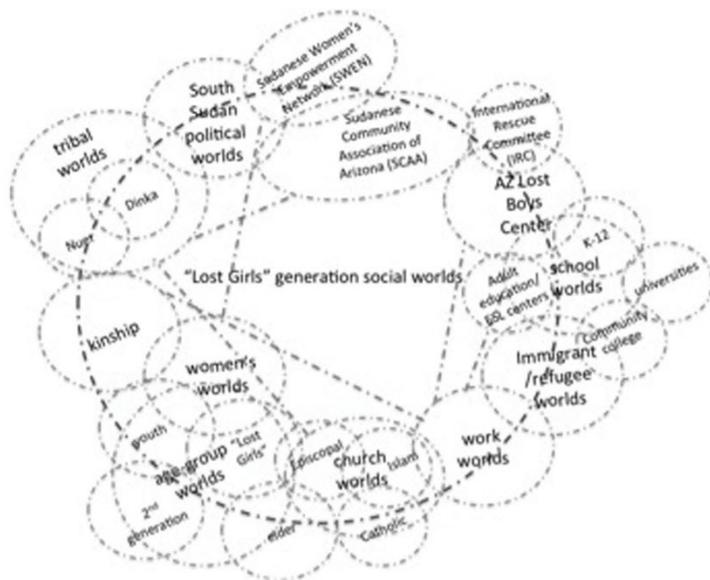


Map 2.1: Clarke’s positional map on the stated importance of emotion in nursing care

It is important to note that positional maps show a spectrum of positions and, thus, suggest that not only is identifying the positions essential but also the points where those stances are expressed or captured matter.

Mapping Biopolitics: To gain perspective beyond the personal, it is helpful to draw on situational analysis (Clarke) to see people as persons-in-systems rather than isolated actors. This is in keeping with standpoint theory and biopolitics as well as the premise and practice of Flower’s

intercultural knowledge-building. Social worlds maps, as conceptualized by Clarke, focus on meaning-making social groups—collectivities of various sorts—people “doing things together” (Becker) in “universes of discourse” (Strauss). Social worlds maps typically show the various ways people organize themselves as well as the broader structural situations they find themselves in, must come to grips with, and learn to navigate. Below, for example, is a social worlds map of South Sudanese women in Phoenix in 2012 (Clifton 2015 p. 129).



Map 2.2: A social arena map of the “Lost Girls” of South Sudan in Phoenix 2012 (Clifton 2015).

This map ranges from local kinship networks to national organizations like the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to local community colleges to dispersed Nuer and Dinka tribal affiliations across the U.S., Kenya, Egypt, and South Sudan. As Clifton explains:

Social worlds mapping shifts the figure-ground relations of specific people in relation to multiple social arenas and systems. The social worlds map offers a sense of multiple systems and social arenas that shape a person’s options. The map of

social worlds explodes myths of rugged individualism and makes visible the ways people act simultaneously as individuals and as members of social worlds. (p. 129)

In trying to understand the multiple mechanisms of surveillance and political rationality surrounding the hijab that veiled Muslim experience and navigate, I will adapt social arena mapping to map the human and non-human agents that constitute technologies of power and of the self as women perform the hijab in public spaces.

Using these maps as analytical tools together with biopolitics and standpoint theory as theoretical frameworks will serve to:

1. delineate and evaluate the discursive and epistemological standpoints about the hijab expressed by veiled Muslim women and strangers within any given situation
2. account for the sources of power, its deployment and effects on bodies within situated spaces
3. attend to the performative rhetorics of spatialization enacted by hijab-wearing Muslim women as they interact and participate in public life
4. highlight the complexities of how space – “composed of intersections of mobile elements” and “actions of historical subject” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 117) – and place – stable material elements – condition discourses and portray individuals’ positions.

CHAPTER 3: BIOPOLITICS, DISCIPLINE AND TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF: A CASE STUDY OF NURA

Over the last decade, scholars across disciplines have explored how the hijab in the post-9/11 era has been represented in mass media or social media as well as how non-Muslim Americans, particularly White Americans, perceive Muslims (Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2011; Lean, 2012). According to Haddad, Smith and More (2011), the hijab—arguably one of the most visible signifiers of an affiliation with Islam in the American public space—is conceptualized by many Americans on three levels: as an inferior representation of cultural difference, a threat to secularism or an expression of deep religious beliefs and identity. Indeed, much scholarly attention of anti-Islamic rhetorics has tended to focus on the perceptions of non-Muslims rather than the impact of these rhetorics on Muslims. This study seeks to flip this script and turns instead to Muslim women who wear the hijab in American public spaces in order to better understand the experiences and perspectives and performances of those who wear the hijab. This chapter, in particular, explores, as a case study, the hijab experiences and performances of Nura, one of the participant-researchers in this study, in relation to Michel Foucault’s conceptualizations of *biopolitics*, *disciplinary power* and *technologies of the self*. While biopolitics marks techniques to control bodies and disciplinary power focuses on mechanisms of surveillance deployed to produce docile subjects, technologies of the self attend to ways in which subjects know themselves and construct personal subjectivities to assert their agency. I will unpack these ideas in the subsequent paragraphs and analyze the data through these lenses.

These concepts, biopolitics, discipline and technologies of the self, are intertwined and my analysis of Nura's individual experiences within these power dynamics that she negotiates will reflect such a nexus. I believe this approach to the data performs a rhetorical work of attending to

the multifaceted mechanisms of the deployment of power and its effects as a way of understanding Nura's intricate experiences and not merely retelling them.

Despite interviewing six participant-researchers in this study, my decision to focus on one as a case study is to create a space to have an in-depth analysis of the complex experiences that characterized the donning of the hijab in public places. Although there are patterns of experiencing and performing the hijab among the participant-researchers in this inquiry, this case study will not be an attempt to generalize Nura's situated, individualized experiences as applicable to all hijab-wearing Muslims. Rather it is intended to accentuate the intricacies and complexities of the power dynamics that confront and construct Nura as she navigates public places given how her Islamic identity is visibly marked and to further attend to the ways in which she navigates such power dynamics to assert her agency.

Introducing Nura

Nura is a young Palestinian-American who has lived in El Paso since eighth grade when her family immigrated to the United States from Saudi Arabia. Nura has lived in other countries such as Jordan and Palestine and sometimes visits those places during summer vacations.

She is a freshman college student at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and an active member of several student organizations. In addition to her participation in these organizations, she regularly volunteers for other community organizations whose mission include supporting under-privileged members (homeless people, abandoned pets, etc.) of the El Paso community. I have had the opportunity to talk to some of her friends and they described her as being cheerful, lively and compassionate. This winter she collected donations by way of blankets, socks, pomade, gloves and other items to be given to homeless people within El Paso.

In view of her passion to support others, she dreams of becoming a therapy psychologist so that she, in her own words, “can understand people’s actions, behaviors, and emotions, and be able to help them when they are undergoing psychological problems” (Nura, personal interview, April 19, 2018). Throughout this chapter I will quote Nura abundantly in my analysis not only to highlight her voice as a participant-researcher as *we*—she and I and readers—make sense of her experiences but, also because I am convinced that nothing can be more powerful and telling than the actual words of Nura.

Biopolitics and the Hijab

Biopolitics is one of the concepts Foucault develops in discussing issues of governmentality and power and it has generated large bodies of literature and schools of thought in different disciplines (Nilsson and Wallenstein, 2013; Adams, 2017). Rachel Adams (2017) defines biopolitics as a “political rationality which takes the administration of life and populations as its subject” and the rationality underpinning this control of bodies is, as Foucault (1976) notes, “to put this life in order” (p. 138). The concept is useful in discourses relating to “forms of governance and modes of subjectification” of groups and populations (Adams, 2017). In the Foucauldian conceptualization of biopolitics, the “governing” of others through the regulation of bodies manifests itself through social relations (Nilsson & Wallenstein, 2013). At the core of this idea of biopolitics is not only how bodies are regulated, but also how bodies are constructed as certain kinds of subjects deserving to be treated differently.

In *Dress and Gender; Making and Meaning*, Ruth Barnes and Joanne Eicher (1992) stipulate that dressing is a cultural practice that indicates that “a person’s identity is defined geographically and historically, and the individual is linked to a specific community. Dress serves as a sign that the individual belongs to a certain group” (p. 1). Nura, as a hijab-wearing Muslim

woman, is visibly recognizable as a Muslim within any public place. Non-Muslims frequently attempt to regulate Nura's body—where she is allowed to be and under what conditions—and to construct her as a particular kind of subject deserving to be treated differently. Sometimes these biopolitics are manifested when non-Muslims construct Nura as a security threat, as someone dangerous, as someone suspicious who needs to be questioned or corralled or banished. These regulatory performances by non-Muslims also construct public places as spaces where Nura is not welcome.

She narrates an incident that occurred during her first year in college, where such rhetorics of public spatialization producing her as a security threat became evident when she and her friend visited the office of a UTEP teaching assistant:

Last semester, I was here on campus and I was with my friend and we wanted to talk to our TA for a class...So, we knocked on the door and we waited and this guy opens it a bit and peeps through. So, it's open this much (she makes a gesture with thumb and index finger) right, and he peeps through and he just looks at me and asks if I have any weapons on me before letting me in; and when I said no, he was like okay and opened the door (Nura, personal interview, April 19, 2018).

In this encounter, the kind of stranger-relationality—ways of dealing with strangers—(Warner, 2002b) that is manifested shows how Nura is caught up in a power relation with a stranger who performs his own body as one that belongs in a public institution while simultaneously framing her body, her being, as a potential security threat and subsequently subjects Nura to scrutiny before granting Nura and her non-Muslim friend access to the office. According to Foucault (1994), power relations exist in “a relationship in which one person tried to control the conduct of the other” and “power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free” (p. 292). Although

there were two women seeking to have access to the office, the decision on the part of the stranger at the TA's office to direct his questioning to Nura stems from a biopolitical rationale that constructs certain subjects—hijab-wearing women—as representations of threat and regulates such subjects based on that identity.

It is instructive to note that it is the fact that Nura was clothed in a hijab that accounts for this public spatialization of biopolitics that is enacted around security and weapons. Nura, not her non-Muslim friend or both of them, is the target of the security scrutiny. When individuals encounter each other, Shirazi Faegheh (2000) argues that a person's dressing expresses a cultural identity "and visual communication is established before a verbal interaction even transmits" (p.114). The need to exercise power by initiating a discourse around security and safety with a hijab-wearing Muslim within a space where such a discourse is unexpected not only underscores the stranger's question as regulatory in a way that enacts Foucault's biopolitics but also complicates the gendered binary threats that have been highlighted in the literature on post 9/11 construction of Muslims. For example, Louise Cainkar (2011) in *Homeland Insecurity* notes that whereas Muslim men were perceived by the American public as a security threat, veiled Muslim women were framed as a cultural threat. However, the rhetoric evinced in the encounter between Nura, her friend and the stranger at the TA's office shows a shift in perspective: one that also interpolates a hijab-wearing Muslim as a security threat. The control and regulation of Nura's bodily movement, by way of giving or denying her access to the office, thus reinforces the idea of a manifestation of biopolitics in that social and power relation in a public place. That the stranger only opens the door after Nura responded in the negative to his question about weapons also highlights the asymmetrical power relations and negotiations between Nura, the subject desiring access, and the stranger, the subject with the power of access. Further, while Nura is spatializing

a public institution and an educational building as a place where she belongs, where she is free and should, of course, have access, the stranger enacts an alternative public rhetoric—one in which Nura, a hijab-wearing Muslim woman, is subject to, and thus, a subject of, surveillance. Her own capacity to be a participant in a public space is determined, in this instance, by a stranger who establishes a public place as a site of potential violence where he becomes—not only or primarily an instructor—but also a mechanism of security and a protector of the state, more oriented toward military defense from Nura than toward education of Nura.

Although the question posed by the stranger demanded a yes or no response, it seems it was intended to be a rhetorical question asked not for its answer but for its effect: that the stranger recognizes Nura as a Muslim and invokes an Islamophobic prejudice towards her. It is reasonable to speculate that the question was meant to trigger Nura to re-examine herself in that space in light of her visible Islamic identity. This is how discipline works where a subject is positioned such that she owns the idea of self-scrutiny and regulates her own behavior. My interpretation here is backed by Nura's answer when I asked her about her thoughts and response in that material moment when the stranger asked about her possession of weapons. She narrates:

Like I just stood there and was like “Wow, did you really just ask that [about the weapon]?” I just stood there and I was like “What? Why do you ask me that? What makes you think...? I'm not here to threaten you; I'm just here to see my TA. You have no right to tell me this. Yeah, you have your freedom of speech but you're basically attacking me in some way” (Nura, Personal interview, April 19, 2018).

Her rebuttal in real time resists the stranger's production of her subjectivity as a security threat and in that resistance, she shifts the discursive field from security threat to limits of “freedom of speech.” Nura refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the biopolitical rationality he invokes to

regulate her body. This emphasizes the dynamics of power relations as constituting “various points of instability that produce multiple sites and modes of resistance” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2017, p. 55; cf. Foucault, 1979). Here, the biopolitical rationale to regulate both Nura’s body and discourse meets a resistance from her. I will provide a focused analysis of how Nura employs modes of resistance as a “technology of the self” later in this chapter.

Beyond security concerns, the political rationality underpinning biopolitics also frames Nura as a cultural threat through a mechanism of advancing a narrative around cultural belongingness and citizenship. Foucault in a 1976 lecture titled “Society Must Be Defended” asserts that, “Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as a political problem...and as power’s problem” (p. 235). Dealing with the population as a political problem begins with the individual, in this case Nura, as a member of a particular population of veiled Muslim women within the American public. Thus, it is not uncommon for a public rhetoric of spatialization to be engendered to challenge the place of certain populations in a given space. Nura recalls one of such incidents where her presence is questioned by a stranger:

Another time I had someone just walk up to me and tell me that I don’t belong here and I should go back to my home country. It’s funny because the girl next to me she was also a Muslim but she didn’t wear the hijab so he didn’t know that she was Muslim. (Nura, personal interview, April 19, 2018).

Like the sovereign state’s exercise of biopolitical power on life to “make live” or “let die,” what is highlighted in the above incident is an extension of that sovereign state’s biopolitical power where a stranger exercises power in his individual capacity as belonging to the American geographical space and determines who belongs and who does not. This in itself makes the biopolitical also geopolitical. Given that visibility, recognizability, difference and stranger-

relationality characterize rhetorical models of public life (Clifton; Hesford; Higgins, Long, and Flower; Warner), the stranger appropriates the hijab, the marker of Nura's difference, as a site to frame her as a cultural threat and commands her, almost as if evicting and relocating her from that place, to "go back" to her "home country".

Although Nura occupies multiple intersectional identities, a hijab-wearing Muslim, Palestinian-American, immigrant, student, that the stranger cleaves those identities and chooses to focus on her Muslimness is not only political, but also accentuates his use of Islamophobic discourses as mechanisms of control. Nathan Lean (2012) argues that such cruel and virulent expression of the fear of "foreigners" and "dogged nationalism is predicated on the assumption that Muslims are immigrants and that the religion of Islam is not a fluid or borderless belief system, but rather originates from afar and has, with the relocation of populations...invaded the United States" (p. 5).

The display of an intersection of anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment in that rhetorical atmosphere expressed in "go back" to your "home country" corroborates the notion of a deep-seated public mistrust and suspicion of Muslims as cultural threats in the American society. Indeed, Cainkar (2011) whose ethnographic study included over a hundred interviews with Muslims in America concludes that hijab-wearing Muslims were easy targets of attacks in any spatial contexts because their hijabs were perceived as a refusal to assimilate into the American culture. Palpable in that encounter is the stranger's conceptualization of a certain image of American cultural costume with which Nura's apparel is incompatible. On this notion of American culture and Muslims' supposed unwillingness to assimilate, Lean (2012) notes that, "Many people have been critical of Islam and Muslims" because many Americans believe:

immigrants are unable or unwilling to adapt to the cultures of the countries to which they move. This is premised on the inaccurate idea that the United States has belonged historically to one main group of people with a core value system. Yet the United States has no state religion, class system, or overarching set of moral tenets; thus it is impossible to conceive that Muslims or any other group could refuse such a thing (p. 6).

It is important to recognize that in the hallway interaction Nura recounts, the stranger's claim to power and the exercise of it originates from a self-constructed "Americanness." It is this manifestation of his sense of belonging and determination of an apparel that is American that undergirds his decision to confront Nura, the hijabi, and not her friend who did not wear the hijab despite the fact that both of them were Muslims. Her friend's Islamic identity was invisible and that invisibility obviated any negative construction of her identity as a cultural threat. This incident coupled with the first encounter when Nura went to see her TA is part of larger public stigmatization and isolation of veiled-Muslim women; and this indicates the rhetoricity of the hijab as a site where certain competing discourses predicated on power relations are generated to construct a veiled-Muslim woman as a kind of subject deserving to be mistreated and verbally attacked, surveilled, isolated, and even removed.

As I engage in these analyses, my reflection on and experience of Nura's cheerful and compassionate personality deepen my understanding of her struggles in negotiating public spaces while donning the hijab and dealing with persistent bigotry.

The Art of Disciplining a Veiled-Muslim Woman

Foucault develops *disciplining* as another pole of power which focuses on the body as its object of subjectification (Adams, 2017). One of the mechanisms of ensuring "discipline" in

subjects is through the concept of panopticism: a surveillance apparatus that inculcates in a subject a self-consciousness that they are constantly under observation by an external power. This internalization of the presence of an external authority causes the subject to succumb to the expectation of that power or discipline themselves in accordance with a preferred action by that external power. The essence of the panopticon is to produce docile subjects and as Foucault (1995) states, its main goal is to impel in subjects “a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” by entangling subjects in “a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers” of power (p. 197).

In discussing biopolitics, I highlighted that virulent threats and confrontations have been the methods used by strangers to construct and attack Nura’s identity, marked by her hijab. Here, my analysis will focus on how the biopolitical practices of control and regulation advanced by strangers in their interactions with Nura is also a manifestation of disciplinary power geared towards confining and conditioning Nura to internalize their political rationalities and to regulate herself.

The repressive effects of biopolitics operate to confine Nura to her own private space, essentially causing in her a reluctance to participate in public life. In addition to the two previous interactions – those about weapon and Nura’s belongingness - I narrate a third critical incident related to Nura’s experiences to situate the effects and disciplining capacities of those difficult moments on Nura. While Nura was in high school, her teacher asked the class to create an ideal world for themselves and although the class agreed that they would permit religious freedom, a member of the class objected to the permission of Muslims in that world. Nura recounts that the student “went violent on Islam,” suggesting that Muslims were violent and did not deserve to be in that ideal world. Nura notes that each of these incidents was accompanied by difficult emotional

experiences that lingers on her mind. The disciplining capacity and rationality of these incidents to confine Nura’s visible Islamic presence is aptly captured in her words, “Sometimes, I wake up and I don’t want to get out of bed. I don’t want to deal with the world because I get mean stuff about the hijab.” The diagram below further illustrates the emotional effects of multiple power relations working to discipline Nura and its consequence of forcing her to restrict herself to her bed, her private space.

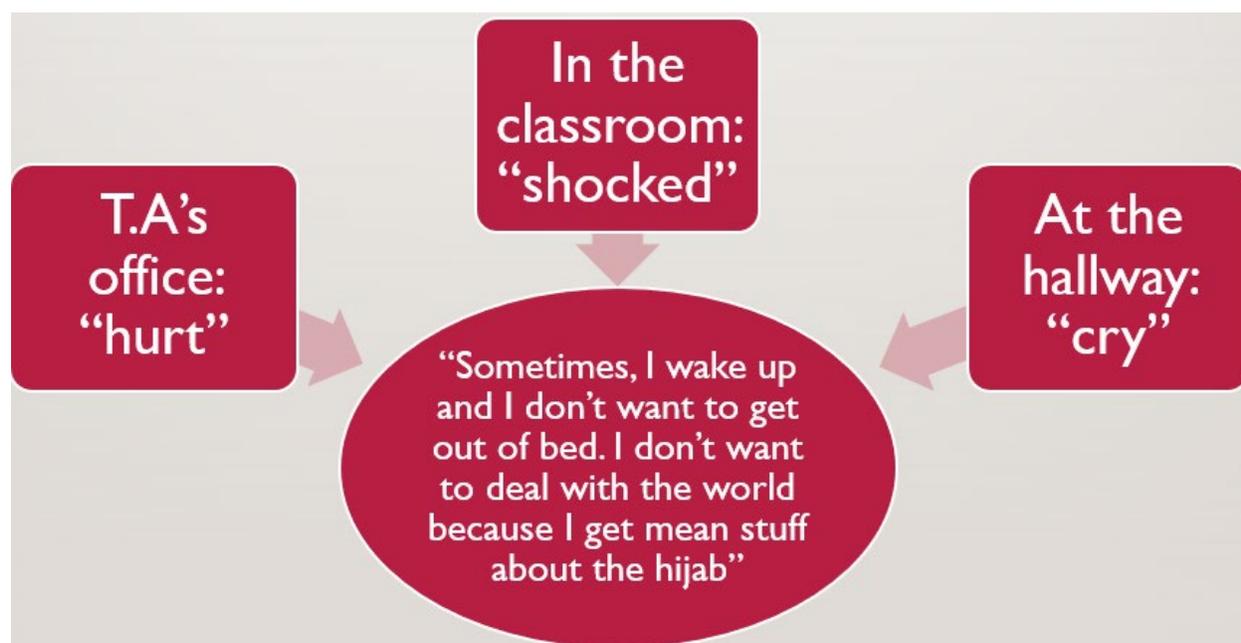


Figure 3.1: Nura’s disciplining experiences

Against the background of a stranger challenging Nura’s belonging in American society, it is reasonable to deduce that restricting Nura from public life, public institutions, and public places in El Paso constitute the preferred results of the power mechanism deployed by the strangers she encountered in the harmful interactions she relays. Thus, for Nura to restrict her body to her bed as a way of avoiding dealing “with the world because I get mean stuff about the hijab” is tantamount to disciplining herself and producing a docile version of her subjectivity. Although Nura does not seem to have internalized herself as threat, she does seem to have internalized her subject position as someone who, in the eyes of others, does not belong and as someone who will

be surveilled and regulated by others. In her most private space, her bed, the external power penetrates that space to regulate her body to remain stuck in bed. Disciplinary power thus functions automatically and makes Nura the “bearer” of that external power that interns her bodily movement. Kasper Kristensen (2013) argues that “the objective of disciplinary power is to make individuals internalize certain roles and practices within a given framework” (p. 21-22). Nura’s internalization of her role as an unwelcomed character in light of her hijab experiences within the framework of the American public places gives credence to how a biopolitical subject is also a subject of disciplinary power. Further, this disciplining also spatializes public places; as Nura internalizes the regulating forces, she removes herself from public places, creating—even if only temporarily—public places as sites marked by her absence, or at least reluctant presence. If regulating certain populations begins with the individual, a confined Nura is an absence of an Islamic identity in public sphere.

Another fundamental component of discipline that Foucault (1995) espouses is that power is not only repressive; it is productive as well. He asserts, “In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (p. 194). That is, power functions to produce certain realities and truths for individuals in their social relations with others. With respect to Nura's experience of the hijab, her own practices and discourses demonstrate the extent to which disciplinary power, through the mechanism of the panopticon, penetrates her conscience and produces a reality that makes her believe that, given her visible identity, she is constantly noticed and observed by others in her everyday life. Consequently, she assumes the responsibility of exercising the disciplinary power over herself by monitoring her own practices—deeds and words—in her relationality with other public actors. In framing the differences in experiencing the

hijab in Saudi Arabia where veiling is a norm and in El Paso where non-veiling is a dominant norm, Nura notes:

It's a lot more pressure here (El Paso) in terms that you stand out a lot more, you know. You are a representation of Islam. Over there (Saudi Arabia) it's more like you're just fitting in with a bunch of other women that wear it so, you feel more in the crowd rather than just standing outside the crowd. And it's a lot more calm, I guess in a way. It's a lot more peaceful there. If that makes sense because like I said you are just like everyone else. Right here, you are a representation (of Islam) every single day and you have to keep that in mind so that way whenever you are treating people, you know, how you act towards them and what not. You have to keep in mind that whatever you do would most likely be associated with you being a Muslim and what not. (Nura, personal interview, April 19, 2018).

Unlike in Saudi Arabia where she feels “more in the crowd,” the exercise of power in El Paso that constructs Nura as different in light of her Islamic identity and sartorial practices frames a reality in which she is situated as strange, “standing outside the crowd.” Her own recognition of her otherness thus compels her to sub-consciously bear and exert on herself the external power of control through self-scrutiny in dealing with others. It is crucial to note that in that short span of time, she emphasizes repeatedly the need for her to “keep in mind” that her Islamic identity is in focus and her modes of discourse and deeds will be construed as a representation of Islam. In this sense, the deployment of disciplinary power in the various instances of stranger-relationality is not only a manipulation of Nura's outward behavior—actions, sayings, doings—but, also her psychological self. This self-awareness, a by-product of her previous experiences where others construct her as a security and cultural threat, informs her self-discipline/scrutiny and thus

epitomizes how biopolitics intersects with disciplinary power. What is evident in this complex experience is the fact that Nura is situated in a subject position and power relation where even in the absence of the external power, she imbibes “a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1995, p. 197).

At this point, I find it expedient to also highlight the potential implications of the political rationality and power relation that undergird Nura’s exercise of power over herself as a form of self-discipline. Her concerns with respect to people’s associations of her actions with Islam is restraining in terms of what she can do or say and “what not.” Unlike earlier where the manifestation of power induces her to remain stuck in bed, here, the subtle manifestation of control where she participates in public life ensures that the underlining aims of biopolitics, regulation of bodies and self-discipline, are still present. These restrictions pressurize Nura and determine her trajectories in negotiating discourses and interactions with others in public life as she narrates:

I guess I put the pressure on myself because I want people to understand that Islam is actually a positive religion. It’s peaceful and it’s not what the media puts it out to be so I have to keep that in mind whenever I’m talking to someone that could automatically associate anything that I do that is bad. Let’s just say I’m just having a bad day and I’m not gonna have it with you, you know; so, I have a little argument with you and most of the time they associate that with what they see on the media, you know. Oh, they (Muslims) are violent; oh they are negative; they are oppressive and what not; so, I try to put out my best act, not so much of act, but my best manners out there. (Nura, Personal interview, April 19, 2018).

Her attempt to exhibit her best manners is, inherently, restrictive of her freedom of *being* and *doing* because the desire to be of good behavior emanates from her fear of others’ associations

of her actions with Islam. For Foucault, this represents “the perfection of power” in the functioning of the panopticon because through “its mechanisms of observation, it gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men’s behaviour” (1995, p. 199) so that they cultivate certain attitudes induced by the external power.

Performing the Hijab as a Technology of the Self

According to Foucault (1988b) technologies of the self are different practices and ways “which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and...conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness” among other ideals (p. 18). Technologies of the self thus pays attention to how an individual “knows themselves” and relies on that knowledge to construct a way of being and doing as mechanisms to “take care of themselves.” To know oneself is to understand who one really is in one’s relations and interactions with others and to take care of oneself is to acquire certain social and discursive practices that enable one to transform one’s life positively. Unlike the first two sections in this chapter that discuss Nura’s experience of the hijab, in this section, I will focus on her performance of the hijab through certain practices that she adopts, constituting taking care of herself as an active and knowing subject as she navigates different mechanisms of power in public life.

As evident in the two previous sections, Nura is subjected to different subject positions as she participates in public life as a hijabi; sometimes, she is constructed as a security threat and at other times, she is constructed as a cultural threat. Encountering these subject positions, she performs her hijab to achieve several rhetorical ends: to resist injurious interpellation of her Islamic identity (Butler); to embrace and construct her “dialogical self” as compatible identities (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010); and to express the ideals of freedom of religion in America.

A Foucauldian conceptualization of power, as aptly captured in his own words, “where there is power, there is resistance” (p. 95), suggests that the exercise of power equally has the potential of engendering resistance from those who are subjected to it. Knowing herself as a harmless individual, Nura performs her hijabi identity as a resistance by employing real time rebuttal as a discursive practice to counter strangers’ framing of her as a security threat. In her rebuttal, she asserts:

Like I just stood there and was like “Wow, did you really just ask that (about the weapon)?” I just stood there and I was like “What? Why do you ask me that? What makes you think...? I’m not here to threaten you; I’m just here to see my TA. You have no right to tell me this. Yeah, you have your freedom of speech but you’re basically attacking me in some way (Nura, Personal interview, April 19, 2018).

Nura’s prompt rebuttal in that incident constitutes a discursive practice geared towards reproducing a different subject position that confronts and challenges the stranger’s negative construction of her identity. Nura’s strategy of posing repeated questions to the stranger and further noting that her presence was not a threat to the stranger shifts the dynamics of the power of discourse in that spatialization. Relative to Nura’s constructed knowledge about herself as a harmless public actor, Foucault notes that such constructed knowledge not only results in self-(re)definition and personal transformation, but also changes a subject’s participation in the world (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Such transformation may result in rewards and in the case of Nura, her resistance led to her having access to the office and undertaking the purpose for which she went to the office (that is, to see the teaching assistant for the psychology class).

I wish to emphasize the rhetoricity of the hijab in this situation of resistance and self-(re)definition as a technology of the self by following Jeffrey Grabill who posits, “What rhetorical

research does not do very well is to detect rhetorical activity as coordinated and distributed, as human and non-human, as performative” (2013, p. 205). The rhetorical activity in this performance is a collaboration between Nura, as the human subject, and the hijab, as the non-human entity, that enacts a counter rhetoric to re-create the image of the hijab as a symbol that should not warrant any discourse about security threats in public places. As regards the coordination and distribution, Nura draws on the University and even the stranger’s own subject position as an individual within an office in the University to re-assert her own self-definition. She also invokes the Constitution and the value of freedom of speech in American public life. When she says, “I’m not here to threaten you; I’m just here to see my TA”, she is re-defining her right to be there not around the hijab explicitly but around her right and needs as a student. By rendering it matter of fact and ordinary (using ‘just’ is a kind of de-escalation of the stakes and of her motives), she also performatively asserts that the hijab, too, is ordinary—not something remarkable, extraordinary, not something to be remarked upon and certainly not surveilled—which is to say her subject position as an Islamic woman is not something to be remarked upon and surveilled.

Cognizant that her visible and recognizable Islamic identity in public accounts for the various ways in which strangers deal with her, Nura embraces her identity as another technology of the self for two related purposes: one, to construct multiple, compatible identities and two, to challenge dominant social expectations of clothing within the American public space.

As regards the first, Nura understands that her wearing of the hijab is part of her Muslimness and on the basis of this knowledge, she exhibits a material, Islamic practice of veiling in her everyday life. She avers, “I am wearing the hijab because Allah wants me to” and “I can’t think of a day where I do not wear it.” Within the American public space where non-veiling is the dominant norm and veiling is misconstrued as a rejection of American culture (Cainkar, 2011),

Nura's insistence on this material, cultural practice constitutes a construction of a multiplicity of her "dialogical self"—immigrant, Palestinian-American and hijab-wearing Muslim—as compatible subjectivities (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Fecho & Clifton, 2016). That these varied social and cultural identities of her which she both intrinsically and externally recognizes are, without any contradictions, embodied in her as an individual. It is against this background that when she is confronted by a stranger and framed as not "belong(ing) here," she accepts her immigrant status and yet invokes her citizenship as compatible with her Islamic identity and responds to the stranger: "This is not my first country but I live here. I am just as much of a citizen as you are, so you have no right to tell me that." This incident coupled with her resistance to the injurious construction of her identity in the TA's office demonstrates how Nura regularly integrates her positions as a hijab-wearing Muslim woman, as a student, as an American, as a person with a right to mark attacks on her, as a person with a right to mark constitutional violations/limitations in different situations.

With respect to expression of freedom of religion, Nura acknowledges that the hijab is uncommon in El Paso, Texas. However, given that America in general and El Paso in particular is constantly framed as a multicultural society where religious freedom is guaranteed, Nura dons the hijab as a performance to lay claim to that ideal and to test it, knowing that the hijab is an enactment of a non-dominant religious affiliation. When I asked her about the claim by some people that if hijabis want to avoid any discrimination, they should not wear the hijab in public, she asserts, "I completely 100% disagree. Let's just say in the United States, you know, I have the freedom just like you do to choose whatever I wanna wear, whatever you wanna follow, whatever you want. I have the freedom to choose." This reaffirms Yvonne Haddad's (2007) position that many American Muslim youth consider "the hijab as a public affirmation of trust in the American system

that guarantees freedom of religion” (p. 254). It is precisely this belief in the American system that Nura invokes to assert her freedom not only to wear the hijab but to also normalize it as an everyday apparel just like “pants and shorts” and to challenge other public actors who hold the view that the hijab does not “belong here.” To Nura, the hijab, as in Saudi Arabia where she feels “more in the crowd rather than standing outside the crowd” for wearing it, must be recognized as belonging in the American public sphere as well. Drawing an analogy between other people’s wearing of pants and shorts as an expression of their freedom of choice in their sartorial practices, Nura asks, rhetorically, “That’s like you choosing pants over shorts, you know. Why is that [the hijab] such a big deal?”

The technologies of the self as practices that Nura adopts and their rhetorical ends not only highlight her assertion of agency despite her experiences of overt regulation and internalized disciplining, but also facilitate her active participation in public life through her engagement in all the activities and initiatives that I previously highlighted at the beginning of this chapter. To conclude, the Foucauldian understanding of biopolitics, disciplinary power and technologies of the self within relations of power as I have discussed in this chapter characterize how Nura, as a subject, is constantly in the “double-process of being produced as well as transforming” herself in her everyday life as a hijab-wearing Muslim negotiating public life (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 62).

CHAPTER 4: MULTIPLE POSITIONING, DIALOGICAL SELVES AND STANDPOINTS ON THE HIJAB

In chapter three, I analyzed the in-depth experiences of one participant-researcher to highlight how the deployment of biopolitical rationalities and discipline functioned in shaping Nura's experiences of the hijab in public as well as technologies of the self that she performed to exercise her freedom and agency. Using Foucault's biopolitics, Clarke's situational analysis and standpoint theory as analytical tools, in this chapter, I will move from exploring one participant-researcher's experiences in-depth to looking across multiple participant-researchers' experiences to discern patterns as well as particularities to better understand biopolitical rationalities and their disciplining capacities as systemic rather than idiosyncratic or individualized. The analyses will examine how the veiled Muslim women are similarly and differently positioned, constructed and controlled by strangers (and sometimes acquaintances) and how they (the hijabis) position and frame their subjectivities to resist such regulatory attempts.

I will employ biopolitics and discipline to attend to mechanisms ordering the bodies of veiled Muslim women (Foucault, 1975) and situational analysis to map and analyze "discourse and agency, action and structure" (Clarke, 2005). Subsequently, I will use standpoint theory to highlight the participant-researchers' positions on constructing epistemological and ontological realities that contradict/challenge dominant discourses about the hijab in public sphere (Droogsmas, 2007).

Multiple Positioning of Veiled Muslim Bodies

The veiled Muslim women in this study encounter different strangers in public who position them in multiple overlapping, conflicting ways – as security and cultural threats, representatives of an exotic religion, and knowledge builders. I will first analyze the patterns of

discursive strategies used by strangers and the ways in which such discourses with biopolitical undertones overlap and reinforce each other to construct and discipline the veiled Muslim women. I will, then, depict visual representations of these intersecting and conflicting discourses on two maps to highlight the complex positions within which the veiled Muslim women are caught in public spaces.

Islamophobic Stranger Danger: The Prevalence of Security Threat

I define Islamophobic stranger danger as strangers' construction of Muslim identities and presence as dangerous. In the foreword of *The Islamophobic Industry*, John Esposito notes that the tragic events of 9/11 have masked the positive contributions that Muslims have made to the American society and have heightened "the growth of Islamophobia almost exponentially. Islam and Muslims have become guilty until proven innocent, a reversal of the classic American legal maxim" (2012, p. x). The fear of Muslims thus shapes the kinds of discourses that strangers enact in their encounters with the hijab-wearing Muslims.

All the participant-researchers in this study recount similar and different discursive mechanisms through which strangers enact rhetorics of fear in their interactions with them. Within certain situated encounters, strangers invoke binary constructions where they differentiate between bodies by framing certain individuals as dangerous/harmless or normal/abnormal (Foucault, 1975). Operating through these binary modes with a biopolitical rationality to control, discipline and exclude visible Islamic identities from the American public sphere, the strangers participants encountered branded these veiled Muslim women as dangerous to public safety through discursive mechanisms. Below are not just stories but experiences that deserve rhetorical analysis to uncover the underlying rationalities of violent and hateful rhetoric against veiled Muslim women. Jeffrey Grabill (2013) argues that to engage in rhetorical work is to "study particular kinds of associations

that are actively created and re-created” (p. 195). Putting Grabill in conversation with Foucault, we see that the associations of the veiled Muslim women’s identities with terrorism and the construction of their presence as a danger to public safety serve the strangers’ biopolitical goal of excluding Muslim women’s identities from the American public.

“**Saddam Hussein’s wife!**” Miss D, an African-America revert who wears the niqab (the full-face veil) and was born and raised in Alabama, recounts an instance where strangers associated her with Saddam Hussein: “I was driving home from the mosque, and there was some guys; they were walking. And as soon as I turned from the light to turn to go to my home, someone yelled out, ‘Saddam Hussein’s wife!’” (Miss D, personal interview, September 11, 2018). With hindsight, she relates that strangers’ association of her Islamic identity to Saddam Hussein stems from a misconception that all Muslims are dangerous. Such misconceptions are based on the concept of collective guilt that is imposed on all Muslims when a few fringe Muslims commit atrocious acts. She asserts, “When they look at us covered or with our face covered, they look at us as being terrorists. They don’t look at us as being peaceful, law-abiding citizens. They see terrorism. They see fear.” (Miss D, personal interview, September 11, 2018). Nura also narrates that she gets asked if she “is related to Osama bin Laden.”

The association of Miss D and Nura to these two specific individuals explicitly names these veiled women as particular “enemies of the (American) state” who are intimate with, and presumably share the ideologies of “Hussein” and “bin Laden” and may be as dangerous or almost as dangerous as these two individuals. Such associations, consequently, invoke a kind of stranger-relationship where strangers deem it as normal to hate and cast out these veiled Muslim women in the same way that the American military annihilated Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. It is based on such rationalities of eradicating the Islamic identities of these women from the American

public that strangers accost them and construct them as “enemies,” deserving to be publicly expelled and exterminated.

“Terrorist! You are a terrorist.” Other strangers directly declare that veiled Muslim women are terrorists themselves and make predictions that “something” disastrous could happen when veiled Muslim women are present in public places. For example, Rahma, born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, indicates that she has been called a “terrorist” in different cities in the United States. She recounts such an experience around the El Paso Community College (EPCC) campus near downtown, “I was with my friend near the parking lot near the library off campus. I was walking down the street, this car pulls, rolls down the windows and shouts, ‘Terrorist! You are a terrorist.’ and I don’t know what else she said. That’s all I heard.” (Rahma, personal interview, April 20, 2018).

Unlike the specific associations of Miss D and Nura as relations of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden respectively, this definite and yet broad branding of Rahma as a “terrorist” actually disregards the fact that Muslims are the most victimized group of global terrorism (Hayden, 2017) and rather superimposes a stereotypical construction of Muslims as collectively guilty of and responsible for the actions of terrorists and even directly/indirectly connected to one terrorist organization or another. This resonates with Wendy Hesford’s (2011) argument that through a repetitive portrayal of the collapse of the World Trade Center together with the “iconic figure of the hooded detainee standing on a box with wires attached to his body,” the second Bush administration used “terror spectacles” to frame and perpetuate an othering of Muslims. The anonymity of the masked detainee portrayed as a terrorist is misconstrued to be applicable to any Muslim and is co-opted by the stranger who assigns and imposes such a dangerous label on Nura because she is identifiably Muslim. Motives underlying such direct injurious constructions of

Muslim identities include legitimization and justification of hostile treatment of Muslims as a disciplining mechanism.

“Let's leave before something happens.” In a similar vein of such injurious interpellations, Miriam narrates that while she and her sister who does not wear the hijab were walking on a street, they got to a stop sign and “this one guy had stopped, and like, him and his friends...they looked at me, and they said let's leave before something happens. Like, indicating because I was Muslim, something bad was gonna happen.” (Miriam, personal interview, December 17, 2018).

Together with the previously described incidents, this encounter accentuates the systemic, patterned and pervasive framing of Muslims as dangerous to public safety. Together, they demonstrate a pervasive biopolitical rationality of control and exclusion of Muslims from the American public: if the very existence and presence of Muslims in public threatens the safety of others, then that constitutes, according to strangers, a reason to eliminate Muslim identities from the public sphere because the strangers have a claim to belonging and Muslims, according to this political rationality, do not.

“If I have any weapons on me.” In chapter 3, I described Nura’s experiences of being questioned by a stranger in her TA’s office about her possession of weapons: “So, we knocked on the door and we waited and this guy opens it a bit and peeps through. So, it’s open this much (she makes a gesture with thumb and index finger) right, and he peeps through and he just looks at me and asks if I have any weapons on me before letting me in...”

Like Nura, whose encounter with the stranger at the TA’s office became a site for the stranger to invoke a spatialization of a public institutional place as one of regulation on behalf of the (American) state, I have encountered such regulatory attempts at a time when I appeared

presumably visibly Muslim by wearing a long garment worn by Middle Eastern men and was asked about my possession of weapons upon entering a store. These experiences and regulatory interactions with strangers are painful to me both as a researcher and Muslim and hit close to home and their pervasiveness and unpredictability is precisely how discipline functions because the object of the discipline is unable to anticipate/predict such an occurrence.

Such unprovoked acts of hostility created and re-created branding veiled Muslim women as “terrorist” is precisely the quintessence of anti-Muslim bigotry and as Nura puts it, “That’s hate; that’s not misunderstanding.” These hegemonic discourses that seek to define the realities of the veiled Muslim women not only perpetuate the Islamophobia that continues to rise in light of past and contemporary political events and their media coverage, but also demonstrate how the strangers spatialize public places and discipline public subjectivities of hijab-wearing Muslims.

The American mainstream media coverage on the War on Terror has contributed to the association of veiled Muslim women with terrorism (Cloud, 2004). Also, past and present administrations of the United States government are complicit in creating and re-creating these stereotypical misrepresentations of Muslim identities as dangerous. More recently, the Trump administration placed a ban on individuals from seven Muslim majority countries from entering the United States and the stated rationale behind this Islamophobic executive order was to “protect the Nation from terrorist activities” (Giorgis, 2019).

Following a Foucauldian conceptualization of biopolitics and discipline, these associations and constructions of Muslim identities as inherently dangerous emanates from a governance and control rationale to legitimize state and individual violence on Muslims (Manzoor-Khan, 2018). As if living Foucault’s title “Society must be defended,” President Trump’s stated rationality shares a similar racialized rationale—keeping Muslims out in order to protect America—with the

strangers who attempt to confine the veiled Muslim women's belongingness in the American society. The biopolitical rationality aimed at controlling and eliminating the presence of Muslims constitutes the very foundation upon which these discourses are based/sustained. These attempts to target, isolate and contain Muslims perpetuate the misconceptions that Muslims cannot be Americans and should not be in America or that to be Muslim is to be anti-American. Thus, given their visibility in public spaces, veiled Muslim women are vulnerable to experiencing such violent and sometimes gendered Islamophobic attacks that seek to regulate their bodies and presence in public.

More profoundly, the Islamophobic public rhetorics of spatialization are not just limited to discourse. Some strangers resort to physical acts of intimidation that in essence threaten the very security of the veiled Muslim women. Miss D narrates that in an encounter with a man in Walmart, the strange man made a gesture as if he was drawing a gun from his side, "I saw the movements... I didn't know if it was a gun; I didn't know what he was gonna do" (Miss D, personal interview, September 11, 2018). While the details vary, four of the six participants recounted other significant encounters where strangers exerted some symbolic and yet violent physical and bodily pressure on them. Evidently, the prolonged attack on the visibility of Muslim identities such as the hijab creates and sustains an atmosphere where rhetorics of fear and intimidation flourish and where extreme measures of disciplining through symbolic violence explicitly suggestive of bodily harm are permissible in public. However, simply *being* – wearing the hijab and shopping at Walmart – is somehow offensive and unwelcome.

Islamophobic Stranger Danger: The Prevalence of Cultural Threats

In post 9/11 America, the American public has taken upon itself the mission to "Americanize" Muslim women by culturally managing and integrating them into the American

society and the primary focus is on the women's way of dressing (Ali, 2017; Cainkar, 2011). The veiled Muslim women who participated in this study appreciate their visible identities as Muslims, yet, given the conceptualization of their symbolic positions within a "clash of civilizations," they face social and cultural discriminations because of the negative stereotypes associated with their visible Islamic identities in the American public (Droogsma, 2007; Haddad, Smith & Moore, 2011). Although the veiled Muslim women in this study belong to different cultural and racial groups, they share a commonality in terms of religion (Islam) and veiling. As the veiled Muslim women navigate public spaces with strangers, they encounter divergent experiences that are also deeply resonant regarding the mechanisms of regulation that strangers employ to culturally manage and contain their subjectivities. Framing such subjectivities as cultural threats manifests in racialized rhetorics of spatialization on citizenship and belonging, language and dressing and violent religious discourses.

Citizenship and Belonging. With regard to citizenship and belonging, the strangers participants described assumed and exercised a certain power to determine the "normal" (American) and the "abnormal" (unAmerican), categorizing the veiled Muslim women under the latter classification and accosting them in public for expressing an identity that the strangers believed is a deviation from the norm. While shopping at Walmart, Miss D who wears the niqab encountered a stranger and she narrates what ensued between them:

when I saw him, he came toward me and he spoke, and I spoke nicely because I was fasting, you know? I was fasting during Ramadan. And, he spoke to me, and as he got closer, I said, "Well he'll probably ask me a question." And then he told me, "You should be ashamed of yourself. You should go back to your country." And I said, "Excuse me?" I said, "I'm from America." I said, "I'm American

citizen." And he said some expletives, you know, to refute that I'm an American citizen (Miss D, personal interview, September 11, 2018).

Undoubtedly, the stranger deliberately elects to approach Miss D and relies on her recognizable Islamic identity as a basis to challenge her citizenship and chastise her for veiling. The hateful and racialized expression, "go back to your country" is consistently invoked by strangers enacting public rhetorics of spatialization to construct Muslims as foreigners, unwelcome in American society. It is worthy of mention that Miss D is from Alabama and she recounts that when some strangers accost her and challenge her citizenship, her response to them in her Southern drawl ironically shocks such strangers who remark, "Oh you're from the South."

In addition to Nura and Miss D who experienced the "go back to your home country" narrative, Miriam also narrates cultural controls manifested through challenges to veiled Muslim women's claims to America. She says, "It's always this thing of, you can't be from here. I'm a dual citizen; I'm an American and I'm Saudi, but like, just the fact that I wear a hijab, automatically it's like, 'Where are you from?' And I say, 'El Paso,' and they're like, 'But where are you really from?' And I'm like, 'I said, 'El Paso.''" (Miriam, personal interview, December 17, 2018). The suspicion and doubts expressed by strangers to refute the validity of the veiled Muslim women's claim to being Americans "underlies the projects of exclusion" (Foucault, 1975, p. 196) and cultural containment of Islamic identities in public.

Language and Dressing. Cultural threat also manifests in responses to the linguistic and sartorial practices by the veiled Muslim women. Although the United States is characterized as a multilingual country, the veiled Muslim women are intimidated by strangers when/because the women speak Arabic and not English. Brown veiled bodies speaking Arabic and attracting

strangers' constant stares points to the "fear of the foreign" that exists among many Americans (Lean, 2012). Two of the three participant researchers in this study who speak Arabic recount different instances in which they were targeted for speaking Arabic. First, in a Philosophy class at EPCC, a professor isolates Rahma and attacks her language and mode of dressing. Rahma narrates, "One time he was saying something about Muslims and how Muslims speak weird language, wear weird clothes; people of Rahma's inclination think that they live in a different year, calendar." (Rahma, personal interview, April 20, 2018). Second, on her part, Miriam recounts:

there are certain restaurants that...if you go in, and there's a ton of white people, they'll just spend their entire day staring at you... then like, you know, I'll speak Arabic to my brothers. And then I think that's what really triggers them. They're like, 'Oh my God, they're speaking that language,' right? So, it's just kinda makes you really uncomfortable... like they really try and make you feel like, unwanted (Miriam, personal interview, December 17, 2018).

The visibility of the hijab itself attracts strangers' attention and the Arabic language spoken by Rahma and Miriam, a language known to be associated with Islam, heightens the surveillance on their bodies. Foucault posits that in disciplining and punishing bodies, "Inspection functions ceaselessly" (1975, p. 195). Constant staring, thus, becomes a discipline mechanism to intimidate the veiled women and coerce them to speak English, the dominant, not official, language in America. This linguistic containment in public sphere is fundamentally cultural containment and reinforces Wayne Wright's argument about racialized undertones about speaking non-English languages in America: "The sad thing about debates about language is that they're rarely about language itself, but the people who happen to speak those languages" (Kaur, 2018, para. 11).

Competing Religious Discourse. In a 2014 religious landscape study, Pew Research highlights that Christianity is the dominant religion in the United States and many Americans believe that Judeo-Christian traditions are ingrained in American culture. For such individuals, any overt display of non-Christian religious culture marks a threat to American culture. The hijab, thus, becomes a site where strangers accost veiled Muslim women and leverage violent religious discourse to spatialize public places in ways that render Muslim visibility immoral and as something to be cast out. These religious discourses are nationalized and racialized in ways that target and seek to discipline hijab-wearing Muslim women and their practice of Islam. Miss D narrates:

I was shopping for grocery and the pastor and his wife came into the grocery store. And so we all end up outside the grocery store at the same time. I was getting ready to go to my car. And his wife said, "You going to hell." And my immediate response was, "Save me a glass of water when you get there." That means if I'm going then you're going. (Miss D, personal interview, September 11, 2018)

Although different Christian religious groups such as Catholic nuns, Amish and Mennonite Christians practice different versions of veiling, strangers construct veiling by Muslim women as a kind of cultural threat that deserves to be treated with hostility. Craig Calhoun in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* notes, "Religion is threatening, inspiring, consoling, provocative...It is a way to make peace or make war" (2011, p. 118). The pastor's wife's condemnation of Miss D to "hell" is geared towards invoking fear as pathos to threaten Miss D's sense of belonging and even her safety. The woman's comment to Miss D, who is otherwise a stranger to her, is presumably premised on Miss D's veiling, the Islamic way—a practice that reflects a particularly strong and public affiliation with Islam. For religious groups that believe in life in the hereafter,

“hell” constitutes the ultimate eternal punishment and to name someone as being condemned to it for expressing one’s religious identity is unquestionably violent and hateful.

On her part, Aisha, born in Malaysia and immigrated to the United States with her parents, recounts a similar ordeal of hostile treatment by a stranger at the drive-thru at Burger King across the UTEP campus:

she said something like, "You're a sinner and you should go back to God." She said “Catholicism is the right path, and read the Bible. You’re a sinner.” Like, this woman that didn't even know me, like, she was a stranger, I never met her in my life, think that I was doing something wrong just for what I'm wearing? (Aisha, personal interview, October 24, 2018)

This encounter is at the core of highlighting the prejudice underneath the violent religious discourses that strangers initiate in their interactions with the veiled Muslim women. Veiling is not uncommon in Catholicism and yet, when the same practice is performed by a Muslim woman to express her association with Islam, it is construed negatively and treated as immoral and sinful.

The underlying rationality of all these public rhetorics of spatialization on security and cultural threats are aimed at eliminating visible Islamic identities/presence by framing what belongs in the American public sphere (public institutions, grocery stores, restaurants, etc.) and what does not as well as who is harmless and who is dangerous. As of June 2016, there were at least six cases of the removal of Arabic speaking Muslims from flights in the United States (Santiago, 2016). From the foregoing analyses, it suffices to assert that the construction of veiled Muslim women as security and cultural threats represent and perpetuate a racialized Islamophobic stranger danger.



Map 4.1: Mapping discursive positioning

This map presents a visual representation of how strangers resort to discourse and action as mechanisms to multiply position veiled Muslim women. As demonstrated in the discussion, the veiled Muslim women get caught up in diverse positions across different intertwined spectrums.

For example, the “go back to your home country” narrative, on the one hand, represents a challenge to the women’s citizenship and their presence as a threat to American culture, whatever that means; and on the other hand, it represents the perception the women’s hijab indexes Islam which is perceived as an exotic religion and incompatible with the dominant Judeo-Christian religious establishment in America. Muslim women who wear the hijab find themselves regularly encountering these overlapping and conflicting discourses that then inform and shape their experiences of public and private places even when the discourse or the strangers are not

immediately present. Remember Nura's experience of not wanting to leave her bed as discussed in chapter 3.

“Poster girl for all the faith”

Nathan Lean (2012) indicates that within the American public sphere, American Muslims “are seen as only Muslims, foreigners whose religious identity is their primary identity” (p. 6). This (mis)understanding and formation of singular notions of citizenship and identity forms the basis on which strangers frame a veiled Muslim woman, as Miriam calls it, as a “poster girl for all the [Islamic] faith.” All the veiled Muslim women recounted several instances where they had to answer questions to justify their wearing of the hijab and the responses they offered were construed by strangers as representative of all other Muslim women. Such tactics by strangers stifle the multiplicity of voices within Islam and form the basis on which a negative action by one Muslim is extended to all other Muslims.

Miriam narrates, “in the university, there's a lot more questions about it [the hijab]. They ask me like, millions of questions, but you're just kind of the poster girl for all of the [Islamic] faith and you have to answer all these questions.” (Miriam, personal interview, December 17, 2018). In any political discourse where power relations exist, “Questions play a prominent role in social interactions, performing rhetorical functions that go beyond that of simple informational exchange. The surface form of a question can signal the intention... of the person asking it” (Zhang, Spirling, & Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, 2017, p. 1). Although the veiled Muslim women in this study mentioned that some questions by strangers were knowledge seeking, other utterances such as “Do you shower in it?” as Nura mentioned, did not come across as knowledge seeking. Excessive questioning of an individual's practice has a great potential to frustrate, intimidate and even may lead women to desist from engaging in such visible religious and cultural practices; it is

reasonable to speculate that the daily bombardment of such regulatory discourses over time have a disciplining effect as they did with Nura, causing some veiled Muslim women to question or abandon their veiling practice. Indeed, this consequence might underlie such questions asked by strangers. Given the fact that Islamic veiling practices are not positively portrayed in the American media and the mission of the American public to “Americanize” veiled Muslim women (Cainkar, 2011), the “million questions” that Muslim women have to answer about the hijab is suggestive of the perception that Islamic veiling needs to be accounted for since it misconstrued as an un-American practice – which is one of the perceived conceptualizations that Muslims are inferior and oppressed (Cloud, 2004; Steet, 2000).

As poster girls of the faith, therefore, their responses to strangers’ questions are understood as representative of the positions of all other Muslim women and for that matter Islam in totality. While comparing the donning of the hijab in Saudi Arabi and the United States, Nura mentions that as a veiled Muslim woman in America, “It’s a lot more pressure here [America] in terms that you stand out a lot more, you know. You are a representation of Islam.” (Nura, personal interview, April 19, 2018). When some of the veiled Muslim women reference the Qur’anic text as their reason for donning the hijab, strangers use that as a tool to question other Muslims who do not wear it. Miss D responds to questions about her reason for wearing the hijab as:

If Allah says, ‘Cover’, then you should be more obedient to Him and cover. It [the hijab] is designed for modesty. Not that people can’t be modest without hijab, but for a Muslim to be modest with hijab, nobody gets to say ‘Ooh you’ve got beautiful hair or ooh you’ve got beautiful skin.’ That in itself is really worth wearing the hijab. (Miss D, personal interview, September 11, 2018)

Like Miss D, Nura indicates that her decision to wear the hijab is based on the Qur'an; however, some strangers used that as a tool against her Muslim friend who did not wear the hijab. She recounts:

I have been asked why I wear it while other Muslims don't because in high school, my best friend was a Muslim that did not wear the hijab. We were always together and people would always ask us, 'Why do you wear and why doesn't she?' you know. I felt bad for her because to some it seemed that because I wear it, I am more religious so they were basically judging her character because of the hijab. But it's a personal choice (Nura, personal interview, April 19, 2018).

That strangers' assumption that Nura's decision to wear the hijab means every Muslim woman wears the hijab basically does three things: frames Islamic practices as monolithic; homogenizes Muslim women's way of being in regards to the hijab; and disregards the ontological reality that just as it is the independent decisions of some Muslim women to wear it, it is also the independent decisions of other Muslim women not to wear it, especially within the American context where there is no law that enforces the wearing of the hijab.

Dialogical Selves and Standpoints on the Hijab

The strangers participants encountered constructed the women's selves in terms of singular, isolated notions of Muslim women and used the veiled women's Islamic faith and race as a subtext to initiate public rhetorics of spatialization premised on binary constructions of citizenship, security, morality and belonging. The women, in turn, regularly seized those moments to re-create not only dialogical selves as technologies of the self but also epistemological and ontological realities that challenge dominant American discourses about the hijab.

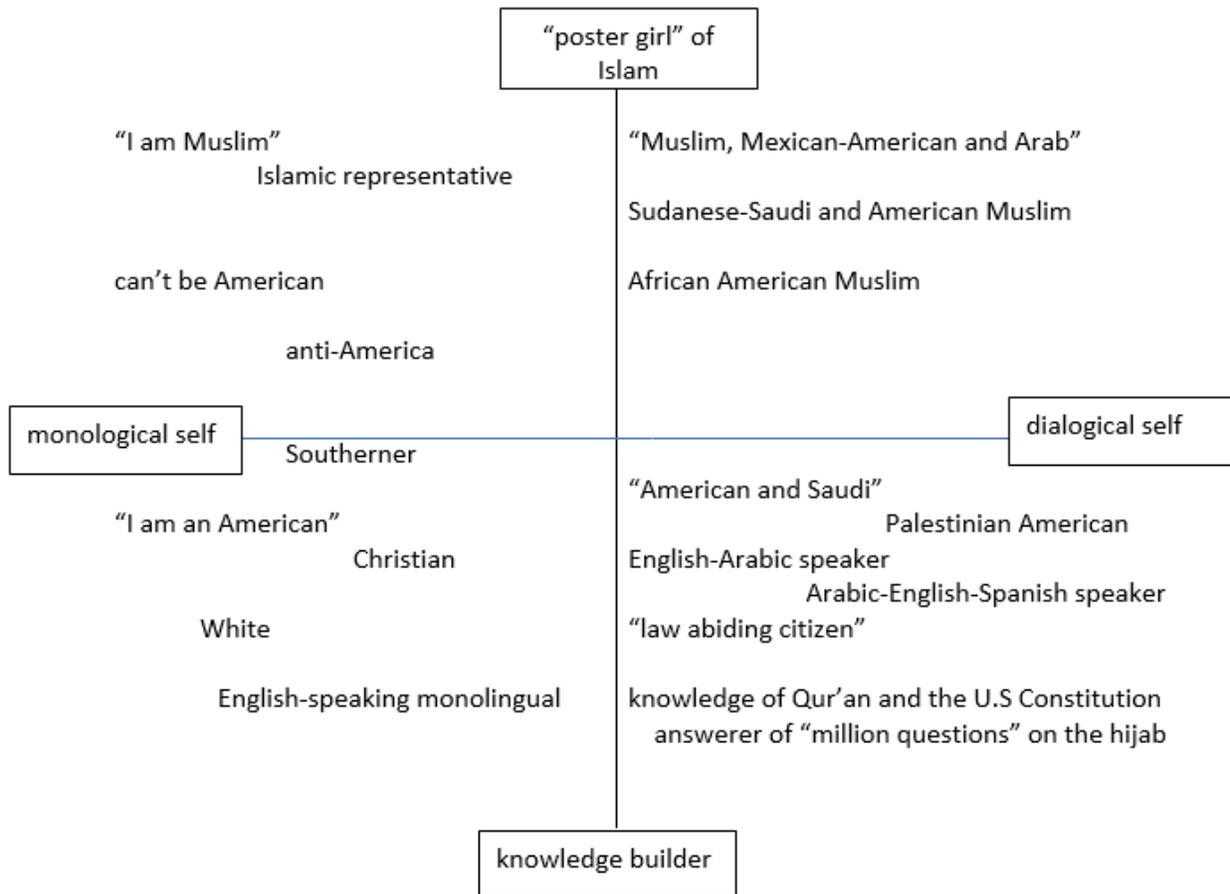
Dialogical Self as a Technology of the Self

Hubert Hermans and Giancarlo Dimaggio (2007) assert, “The increasing interconnectedness of nations and cultures does not only lead to an increasing contact between different cultural groups but also to an increasing contact between cultures within the individual person” (p.35). The contact of different cultures and identities within an individual self results in a “conception of the self as multivoiced and dialogical” (p. 36) in contrast to an Enlightenment era notion of singular core self. A dialogical self allows the construction of diverse I-positions or “voices in the landscape of the mind, intertwined as this mind is with the minds of other people” (p. 36). These I-positions are both “internal” (e.g. I as a woman, Arab, Muslim, student, wearer of the veil) and “external” (e.g. my country, my race, my professor, my religion) belonging to the extended domain of the self (see also Aron et al., 2005; Clifton & Fecho, 2018). The dialogical self, thus, functions as a “society of the mind” with tensions, conflicts, and contradictions as intrinsic and normative features of a self (Hermans, 2002). As Hermans and Dimaggio put it: “The personal voices of other individuals or the collective voices of groups enter the self-space and form positions that agree or disagree with or unite or oppose each other. Along these lines, real, remembered, or imagined voices of friends, allies, strangers, or enemies can become transient or more stabilized positions in the self-space (Hermans, 2001)” (p. 36). This conception of a dialogical self resonates with Foucault’s notions of how biopolitics and disciplining works and rings true with Nura’s experience described in chapter 3 and with the cacophony of voices mapped in this chapter.

The assertion of dialogical selves was also an important technology of the self in terms of how the Muslim women who participated in this study knew themselves and how they insisted

that others should know them in public places. In their interactions with the strangers, the veiled Muslim women performed the hijab by constructing dynamic I-positions and dialogical selves that made possible a congruent existence of different identities within their individual selves—identities strangers regularly expressed as irreconcilable. Miriam asserts that strangers expressed shock when she says, “I’m Muslim, Mexican-American and Arab” or that “my mom’s Mexican-American [Muslim] revert.” All the other participant researchers also embody numerous identities and nationalities that inform the ongoing construction of their selves-in-dialogue. For example, whereas Rahma is a Sudanese-Saudi and American Muslim, Miss D is an African American Muslim raised in the Deep South. Dressed in niqab, Miss D explains that strangers often mistakenly think that she is a citizen of another country—until they hear her Southern drawl. At that point, they typically express surprise at hearing an accent so recognizably American, tied to a particular geographic region of the United States, from someone donned in clothing and representing a religious culture they do not associate with the United States—a religious culture that some strangers falsely see as un-American. In the very factness and publicity of their wearing the hijab in public places while knowing multiple languages, having dual citizenship, speaking Arabic or having a Southern drawl, these Muslim women are asserting their dialogical selves as a technology of the self. In wearing the hijab, they are publicly enacting and navigating multiple I-positions to break false ideas of a universal model (Foucault, 1998, p. 15)—whether that is framed around citizenship or religious morality or something else. For participants, the rhetorical dexterity of their identity constructions both disrupts the singular notions of citizenship and identity that strangers conceptualize about the veiled Muslim women and further invites strangers to “imagine possibilities not yet accepted” (Clifton & Fecho, 2018, p. 13).

If a self-in-dialogue suggests ongoing fluidity, it also suggests a self regularly positioned by discourse. Agency is, then, “a paradox. We have it and we do not have it. Some of us have it more than others, but no one has it absolutely or lacks it absolutely” (Joseph, 2006, p. 238).



Map 4.2 Mapping dialogical selves as a technology of the self

These women’s mastery in constructing multiple identities of themselves performs the rhetorical role of demonstrating that the hijab can be worn by a woman who is Muslim, American, and multiplicity of other identities; and her Americanness and other identities are compatible and belong to the American public sphere. In light of her active participation in student affairs and

community activism, Miriam concludes that constructing such a complex identity, for example, “kinda give me the space to have a voice. You know what I mean?”

Standpoints on the Hijab

Employing a feminist standpoint in a phenomenological study enables women “to speak from and about their everyday experiences in order to discover aspects of the social order that have not been brought to the light” (Allen, 2000, p. 179). Such discoveries construct possibilities for women to create knowledge that challenge and disrupt the dominant discourses and inaccuracies that seek to define their lived experiences and ontological realities (Hallstein, 1999; Droogsma, 2007).

Seyla Benhabib (2011) posits that dominant discourses generally conceptualize the hijab as a tool of oppression imposed on veiled Muslim women. However, all the veiled Muslim women in this study assert, strongly, that their decisions to wear the hijab in public was an independent decision: Aisha recounts, “I never had the experience of being pushed to wear it” (Aisha, personal interview, October 24, 2018); Nura says, “it’s a personal choice” (Nura, personal interview, April 19, 2018); Rahma, growing up in Atlanta, narrates, “Hijab wasn’t really forced or anything. I was in that environment like I said and just continued to wear it, personally, as a choice” (Rahma, personal interview, April 20, 2018); and Miriam summarizes, “in high school, I kinda start to think about wearing it more, then I didn’t. But once college came around, I kinda just realized it was an opportunity to re-identify myself and get in touch with my faith. So, that’s why I decided to wear it.” (Miriam, personal interview, December 17, 2018). All the women in this study, except Miss D, have lived in Muslim majority countries (Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Palestine, and Indonesia) and their lived experiences construct the hijab as a site where they exercise agency within a social reality that enables them to be “both Muslim and independent” (Droogsma, 2007,

p. 296). Although not all women who have ever lived in such countries and America will describe their decision to wear the hijab as a “personal choice,” the dominant discourses about the hijab must recognize the existence of such ontological realities and epistemological standpoints.

Cognizant of strangers’ use of forcible tactics of intimidation based on their perception that veiled Muslim women are weak and oppressed, Miss D, for example, performs the hijab to resist such perceptions. She narrates:

men can tell strength and they can tell weakness in people. And often time, men misjudge me when they do that. They see me covered, they see me with my head down a lot, you know? They see me not staring them in the eye, so they take that as, as I'm a weak person. But when they encounter me with the badness, they fully realize that I'm not a weak person. And the majority of the time, they feel that they can dominate me because they've heard in the news so much that women are oppressed. By no means, we're not oppressed (Miss D, personal interview, September 11, 2018).

Many of the participant researchers indicate that men are more hostile towards them than women. Thus, the male strangers that accost the veiled Muslim women consider the hijab as a site to exercise “masculine domination” (Bourdieu, 2001) and control. Miss D explains that male strangers who approach her often expect her to occupy a position of docile subject and perform a gendered expectation of an oppressed woman. However, she challenges those expectations and resists the “badness,” making the men “fully realize that I’m not a weak person...By no means, we’re not oppressed.” In essence, the performance of the veil in such encounters expresses a

standpoint on the veil as a subversion of patriarchal attempts to dominate veiled Muslim bodies (Mule & Barthel, 1992).

Finally, the veiled Muslim women express standpoints on the hijab as a material entity that is not strange or foreign to the American society. Within different discursive situations, they call on different entities to make the strangeness of the veil familiar to their interlocutors and expose the hypocrisy and racism that surround discourses about the hijab. Nura and Miss D call on other religious practices and texts to achieve this rhetorical end, making the strange familiar. For example, Nura compares her hijab to the veils worn by Catholic “nuns” to both disabuse any mystery about the hijab and question why the hijab is treated differently in America in general, and El Paso in particular, where there is a significantly high Catholic population.

In the encounter between Miss D and the pastor’s wife where the latter told Miss D “You going to hell,” Miss D calls on biblical text as a rhetorical strategy to appeal to the pastor’s wife and familiarize her with the veil. Miss D recounts:

And I said, ‘Furthermore, do you know that in your Bible, it tells you that you're supposed to cover too?’ ‘I- I've never read that.’ [she said]. I said, ‘How long you been a pastor's wife?’ ‘Over 40 years.’ ‘In 40 years you've never read what God said you had to cover your head?’ And I never had a comment from her anymore (Miss D, September 11, 2018).

Although many Christians groups do not practice veiling as a religious practice, that Miss D and Nura reference nuns and biblical texts accentuates their position that the veil is not materially different from other scarves in the American public sphere, but, as Miss D concludes, “It only became a problem when you associated Muslim with it.” Thus, discourses about religious veiling practices become racialized and hijab-wearing Muslims are the target of such racialized rhetorics.

Throughout the analysis in this thesis, I have demonstrated that as veiled Muslim women navigate public places, they encounter several discursive situations where strangers perform rhetorics of public spatialization that construct the veiled Muslim women as security and cultural threats. The multiple, intersecting and conflicting discourses that position the veiled Muslim women are pervasive and unpredictable, accentuating the systemic and tangled biopolitical rationalities of control and discipline that different strangers seek to impose on these women given the women's visible Islamic identities. More unnerving is the fact that some strangers transition from anti-Muslim talk to initiating physical gestures that fundamentally threaten the safety of the veiled Muslim women. Yet, the women persevere. They rhetorically construct dialogical selves as technologies of the self to assert their agency, counter the regulatory maneuvers of strangers and express standpoints on the hijab that challenge the negative conceptualizations of the hijab in the American public sphere.

Quite obviously, the difficult challenges associated with the experiences of hijab-wearing Muslims negotiating public spaces are premised on the ways their religious and sartorial differences are visible, recognizable and publicly marked. In our current state of volatile socio-political, religious and racial tension, these experiences have several implications for the discipline of rhetoric and composition. There is an exigency to undertake research that represents religious pluralism in rhetorical studies in general and more specifically to adopt pedagogical practices that expand religious discourse to include the experiences of veiled Muslim women in any rhetorical project. As Lynch and Miller (2017) predict, "For the foreseeable future, religious literacy will appear to be a basic requirement for civic life. Cultivating that literacy cannot fall to composition alone, but nor can composition remain religiously illiterate" (p. 9). Understanding how people navigate each other's differences is fundamental to creating a democratic and civic public life

among people of diverse religious persuasions, cultures, races and sexualities. Such a task can be negotiated by inviting difference and competing discourses to the table of public life and enacting rhetorical invention that frames differences as sites of deliberation, calling for dialogue across such differences (Clifton, 2017) and building intercultural knowledge that “support wise action” (Flower, 2003, p. 239).

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