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MUSLIM COLLEGE STUDENTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Aus Abdulwahhab

University of Kentucky, ausabdulwahhab2002@yahoo.com

Author ORCID Identifier:

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4749-4939>

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Aus Abdulwahhab, Student

Dr. Beth L. Goldstein, Major Professor

Dr. Jane M. Jensen, Director of Graduate Studies

MUSLIM COLLEGE STUDENTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Education
at the University of Kentucky

By
Aus Abdulwahhab
Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Beth L. Goldstein,
Professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation
Lexington, Kentucky
2020

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

MUSLIM COLLEGE STUDENTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

This study explores the nature of civic engagement of Muslim college students in the United States. The Community of Practice Theory is used as a conceptual structure to explore the relation between meaning, practice, identity and organization for Muslim students active in civic engagement through campus-based Muslim Student organizations. Pluralism, as shared values that combine different people and advocates for wider civic participation, was adopted as part of the conceptual framework to see how the Muslim students think, serve, learn, and develop throughout the process of civic engagement on campus and in the local community. Particular attention is paid to the impacts of Islamophobia on the one hand and campus initiatives for diversity and inclusion on the other.

The study uses a mixed method design to uncover multiple dimensions of civic engagement of the Muslim students. In the first part of the study, a close-ended survey completed by fifty Muslim students on three Midwestern college campuses with active Muslim Student Associations (MSA) explored the domains, types, and intensity of their civic engagement. In the subsequent qualitative field research, in-depth interviews of 12 members of the three MSAs explored the purposes, goals, effects, values, and aims of civic engagement from personal and organizational perspectives. The qualitative design also included field observations of MSA meetings and activities.

The study found that Muslim students' engagement in civic practices is driven by religious, national, and conditional factors. Islam is the moral compass that motivates and guides their social and service activities on campus and in the local community. Through different aspects of practice, Muslim students affirm their presence as American citizens and encounter the negative discourses and images circulated about their faith identity. Engagement in the organization opens up ways for the Muslim students to establish constructive relations with non-Muslims, create connection and collaboration between the campus and the local community of Muslims, grow civically, and develop various leadership skills.

KEYWORDS: Civic Engagement, Muslim Students, Pluralism, Community of Practice Theory, MSA, Mixed Method.

Aus Abdulwahhab

07/14/2020

MUSLIM COLLEGE STUDENTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

By
Aus Abdulwahhab

Beth L. Goldstein, Ph.D.,
Director of Dissertation

Jane M. Jensen, Ph.D.,
Director of Graduate Studies

07/15/2020
Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all the members of the Muslim community in the USA and around the world who are positively engaged in civic activities to help their nation develop and prosper.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Same as building a house that starts with drawing lines on the paper to make a sketch of the structure with its spaces, rooms, and ceilings, this dissertation is the outcome of organized and systematic journey. Throughout this journey, Dr. Beth Goldstein has been the experienced companion who took my hand and helped me bring my vision into reality. Dr. Goldstein has the brain of an engineer, the experience of a professional educator, and the attitude of a caring teacher. I am grateful for every moment I spent with her starting with the point where the questions of this work were developing, the main concepts emerging, the theoretical direction being drawn, the methods being determined, and every detail being included or excluded. She spared no time, advice, or effort to respond to my questions, listen to my viewpoints, remove obscurities, and pave the way in front of me. Indeed, she left a long-lasting impact that will be part of who I am in my upcoming academic journey.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

It is well-known that those who go through a major transition in their life, including moving from one place to another, experience a variety of social and psychological challenges. This applies very well to my case as an international Muslim student coming from a country that has experienced dramatic events and long-term instability for the past forty years. Living the major part of my life in Iraq has molded essential aspects of my personality. I was one of the few lucky students who got a scholarship for doctoral studies in the United States. Throughout my presence here as a graduate student, I could not escape making endless comparisons between where I come from and the new environment. These comparisons span the culture, the way of life, the system of beliefs, the modes of behavior, and the institutions, to say the least.

The field I started to study here was completely new to me, so it took me a while to digest not only the fundamentals but also the totally different educational setting. Throughout this journey, I explored the myriad pathways and possibilities for a doctoral student in the Educational Policy Studies & Evaluation Department. I found myself gradually leaning towards social justice, ethnic, and racial issues. The heightened negative discourse in the global media against an important part of my identity—Islam—led me to develop an interest in the issues of Muslims in this country. For a long time, Islam—both as religion and identity—has been represented as an outcast. It has been essentialized as a foreign ideology that is incompatible with the civil values of the West. Islamophobia, a manifestation of this exclusion, is a thriving industry that has been creating division, spreading false generalization and misinformation about Muslims through various

powerful platforms. It is a manifestation of the prevailing discourse about Islam; an extension of Orientalism that used to identify the constructed attitude towards Muslims (Said, 2003; Meer, 2014). The inescapable sense of alienation coupled with the negative portrayal of Islam as dangerous and fearful left an impact on that part of myself and motivated an intense curiosity about the concerns of Muslim students.

My presence here over the past years gave me other opportunities to examine first-hand and intellectually the differences between the reality where I came from and the social, political, and economic reality in this country. An important area that occupied my mind is the meaning of citizenship, the way that people practice their rights and duties as citizens, and how they become civically engaged.

The recent history of Iraq is one of different wars and violent events that have had deleterious impact on the people who had hardly experienced a proper civil life. Rather, they were dragged into constant conflicts, subjugated to totalitarian government, and lived through a chain of terrible suffering. When I came here, I understood the value of something that we were deprived of, an element that is highly appreciated and mostly associated with a stable democratic system - I became familiar with the concept of Civic Engagement (CE). I started to realize the significance of this concept to each citizen, the multiple ways it can be practiced, the many positive merits, and its communal effect. While we did have some social patterns and versions of communal involvement and participation in Iraq, they were not as organized, institutionalized, constructive, or diversified as they are in the U.S. context.

Regardless of the many forms, variations, and dynamic nature of civic engagement, it represents to me a concept that leads the individual and the group to interact actively for

the common good. It provides means for enhanced connection among people, makes them better aware of their interests and concerns, and creates venues for social, communal, and political participation. In other words, civic engagement is deemed to be an effective instrument to influence change on various levels.

As a student here at the university, I noticed that one of the active organizations on campus is the Muslim Students Association. The organization is seen as a collective body that attracts diverse students who share an aspect of identity. I came to know some of the members who are actively engaged in various activities in different domains. The organization's overall action could be subsumed under the term civic engagement. The students come together to affirm their own religious identity and to make a positive impact on their environment through engagement in civically oriented activities. The research has been conducted in the Midwestern region of the US. Three campuses with Muslim student organizations are included in the study: two public research universities and one liberal arts college.

The way the organization is configured, the activities its members practice, the meanings and the identity they develop over time as a result of their engagement relate conceptually to Wenger's influential social learning theory, community of practice. Wenger (1998) provides the basic constructs that explain the relationship among four primary elements: community, practice, identity, and meaning. Exploring the relationship and interaction among these constructs are used in the research that follows to help explain how learning occurs and, in consequence, the meaning of civic engagement for Muslim college students in the U.S.

The following study primarily tries to answer the question: what is the nature and meaning of civic engagement for Muslim college students on U.S. campuses. In a more elaborate way, I examine the forms of Muslims college students' civic engagement and how the students make sense of it. Using this question as a point of departure, I investigate the purpose, the guiding vision, the motive, and the consequence of being engaged in civically oriented activities as members of a Muslim student organization. I also examine how these students affect the environment as a result of interaction with people and the way engagement affects them individually and collectively *in a reciprocal manner*.

Placing the concept of civic engagement next to a religious social group that has been misrepresented, misunderstood, or regarded as the 'incompatible other' or even a 'suitable enemy' might be considered a challenging task given the complexity of the issues considered. However, it is an important topic to explore in these uncertain times in which we are witnessing a heightened sense of identity awareness and insecurity. Moreover, giving more attention to inclusive civic engagement that accommodates individuals across their distinct identities is thought to be an effective instrument to diminish divisions and even avoid bitter conflicts.

1.2 Theorizing student civic engagement

This study seeks to understand the nature of civic engagement from the perspective of Muslim American college students in the U.S. Conceptualizations, perceptions, and approaches to civic engagement have an idiosyncratic nature. Each community, group, or social configuration might have their own understandings, drives, and distinctive practices.

Moreover, conditional factors such as time, context, and political events influence the way civic engagement is conceived and materialized.

Although the study examines a group of students who have a religious identification, those students are still part of a diverse social environment and dynamic world with fluid borders across culture, space, and types of communication. They themselves live lives informed by their own intersection of identities inclusive of religion, gender, class and other social locations. Therefore, to better understand Muslim college students' understanding and practice of civic engagement, this study relies on ideas of plural thinkers who advocate for wider democratic participation. The philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958; d'Entrèves, 2000) argued that wide democratic participation should accommodate different people and create free space where they could express their needs and demands. Similarly, Robert Putnam (2015, 2000) contends that sustenance and vibrancy of a democratic system depends on inclusive and equal participation of citizens through organizational involvement. Another pluralistic thinker who believes that shared values among different people enhance social stability and cohesion is Robert Bellah (1985). He emphasizes the role of faith in public life. Tariq Ramadan (2013), an Islamic philosopher who supports plural ideas of equity, tolerance, and justice for all people, thinks that Muslims should be active civic agents and make positive contributions in their communities.

Wide democratic involvement and civic engagement have a conditional relationship; they are inseparable and complement each other. The democratic system's legitimacy and sustainability depend on ensuring, encouraging, and bolstering the wider participation of different social groups. Weak or non-inclusive participation from people

with different identities means a deformed or crippled democracy. Moreover, viewing civic engagement through pluralistic lenses creates a space for communication, interaction, and collaboration among different groups. Hence, understanding the way each community or group approaches civic participation in different settings is of paramount significance.

Even though voting and communal participation are two broad pathways of civic engagement in the U.S. democracy, there is no unified definition or clear-cut manifestation of the concept. Defining civic engagement depends to a large extent on the perspective and approach of the definer. Both within the scope of higher education and beyond, variation in activities and purposes of civic engagement yield diversified views and definitions. This study, however, adopts a definition which is consistent with both the community of practice theory (Wenger, 1998) and the setting of higher education. Jacoby (2009) defines civic engagement as “acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one’s communities. This includes a wide range of activities, including: developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civil society, and benefiting the common good” (p. 9). Simplicity and clarity characterize Jacoby’s definition. It integrates elements related to the motivations of students to be engaged with their communities, underlines the multifirmity of practice, and emphasizes the learning associated with civic participation.

The community of practice theory (CoP) will be used as a guiding model to explore the relationship between civic engagement and Muslim college students. CoP was developed by Wenger (1998) as an informal learning theory. This theory synthesizes four key conceptual components: meaning, practice, community, and identity. Those components together explain how learning takes place in diverse social settings. Learning is the outcome of being active participants in activities occurring within the framework of

an organized social entity that unifies several individuals. Those individuals supposedly have or share a common objective, purpose, or passion that binds them together. Through engagement and initiating interaction both among themselves and beyond the scope of their organized entity, those individuals negotiate meaning, make certain sense of their participation, and formulate an understanding of reality. The components of CoP apply to Muslim college students being investigated in this research.

1.3 Why should we care about Muslim students' civic engagement?

Besides the personal motivations mentioned above, there are other reasons that give value and significance to this study. Civic engagement is considered a dynamic and serious topic due to factors related to the wider national context such as stability, social cohesion, and inclusive democratic participation. Because of its dynamic and changing nature, studying civic engagement within the scope of university is worthwhile. In addition, understanding how civic engagement is approached by college students who have salient ethnic or religious identifications can help educational institutions foster their mandated civic agendas.

The study also argues that Muslim student organizations have an important role to play on college campuses in attracting and encouraging other Muslim students to be civically involved. In other words, students involved in Muslim organizations act as active civic agents who promote inclusive social, philanthropic, and political participation. Because engagement in civic practices involves aspects of growth and development for students, understanding those manifestations matters a lot to educational institutions.

Growth and development are undoubtedly essential parts of an educational institution's mission and vision. Moreover, service and philanthropic activities create a collaboration between students on campus and their local community; therefore knowing more about forms and potential domains of this connection helps to strengthen collaboration between the campus and its community in a more productive way.

Islamophobia is a global phenomenon that manifests itself in different forms and contexts. This study tries to understand how Muslim students counter this phenomenon using civic means. Confronting Islamophobia involves reciprocal educational encounters between Muslim students and other students of different identities. On another level, students' overall involvement in co-curricular activities that are considered of interest and value to them, means that those activities initiated within the scope of the campus help develop a sense of attachment and belonging which in return increases possibilities of academic success.

1.4 Structure of the dissertation

This work addresses the key concept of civic engagement. The aim is to explore the meanings and manifestations of Muslim college students' civic engagement. The study adopts pluralism as a general theoretical framework to help understand why and in what ways Muslim students participate in various domains of practice. The community of practice theory (Wenger, 1998) is used as a conceptual instrument to understand the relationship that combines meaning, practice, identity, and organization. The abstract components of CoP have comparable representations in the group under investigation. The main parts of the dissertation are presented in five chapters. Following this introductory

chapter comes the literature review, methods, survey analysis, interviews analysis, and discussion. Each chapter consists of a set of themes summarized in the following outline:

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter two is a comprehensive overview of the theoretical framework. I start by presenting ideas of theorists of pluralism who have a participatory view of civic engagement. The chapter discusses the fundamentals, dimensions, complexities, and definitions of civic engagement both in general and within the specific context of higher education. I move then to talk about Wenger's 1998 Community of Practice as a guiding model and discuss the justifications of using CoP to explore this topic. Then the main components of CoP are utilized to explore the relationship between identity processes and organizational involvement, and also between membership in a student organization and civic engagement (CE). Other themes include Muslim students' rationale, purpose, motive and practices of CE; the university, student organization and community outreach; and the relation between Muslim student organization and local Islamic centers, mainly the mosque. Then I provide a summary of the chapter by reviewing the impact of students' participation in civic activities and community service.

Chapter Three: The Methods

Chapter three presents the research design and rationale for the study. It addresses the justification for using a mixed method that includes survey, observations and interviews of Muslim Student Associations on three campuses. Then, I turn to the process of selecting the sites, which grew out of several phases accompanying the process of the topic's

development and emergence. Next, the chapter presents a comprehensive review of the survey design, distribution, and method of data analysis. The subsequent section addresses details related to themes embedded in the observations and interview protocol. The other sections address interview participants, the process of recruitment, the analyses of the qualitative data, and the role and positionality of the researcher. Chapter three closes with the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter Four: Survey Results

In this chapter, the results of the survey are presented. First, a descriptive analysis of the participants including their demographic characteristics is provided. Second, two main sections follow that address quantifying the type, frequency, and intensity of Muslim students' participation in civic oriented practices. Finally, I address the correlation between certain demographic characteristics and civic practices.

Chapter Five: Interview Analysis

In chapter four, the researcher analyzes the observations and interviews conducted with Muslim Student Association members. Results of the analysis are classified into major categories and themes that appear in this chapter as follows: a) structure, composition and the characteristics of the organization; b) designing, structuring activities, and making decisions; c) attraction, support, and the organization's supervision; d) the guiding vision; e) faith, service and participation; f) civic engagement from two perspectives; g) MSA and the Community; h) MSA and the local Muslim and non-Muslim community; i) CE, the

campus, and students' perspectives and experiences; j) interaction and socialization of the organization with different individuals and entities; k) the organization's impact from its leaders' perspectives; l) broader social impact of the organization; and m) students' perceptions of challenges.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion

The main findings of the quantitative and qualitative parts are reconsidered in this chapter. The major themes that emerged are reviewed as they relate to the theoretical and conceptual framework used in the study. Motivations of civic engagement of Muslim college students, the intersection of identity and plural values, and the role of the students' organization are all considered thoroughly. This chapter also discusses student growth and development that emerge as a part of civic involvement. The last section presents a set of conclusions, insights, and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Pluralistic Thinkers and Civic Engagement

This study seeks to understand the nature of civic engagement from the perspective of Muslim college students in the United States. Conceptualizations, understandings, and approaches to civic engagement is idiosyncratic by nature. Each community, group, or social configuration might have their own understandings, drives, and distinctive practices. Moreover, conditional factors such as time, context, and events interfere with the way civic engagement is conceived and materialized. The study uses the community of practice (1998) as a theoretical guide to explore the relation between Muslim students and civic engagement. I will discuss in this chapter the fundamentals, dimensions, and complexities of civic engagement in general and within the specific context of higher education for Muslim students.

To lay the ground for this review, the relation between democracy as wide participation in social and political life and civic engagement will be addressed. I start by briefly presenting the ideas of a few modern theorists who have a cosmopolitan view of civic engagement within the scope of the American context. A prominent figure often associated with the philosophical dimensions and meaning of citizenship and collective democratic participation is Hannah Arendt (1906-1975). Arendt had a pluralistic view of citizenship that rose above but still acknowledged racial, ethnic, and religious identities. In her book *The Human Condition* she argues that “Men in the plural, that is, men in so far as they live and move and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves” (1958, P. 4). She advocated

shared and interactive spaces where people can unreservedly express their needs and “establish relations of reciprocity and solidarity”. Having accessible and free spaces to speak differences and commonalities allows the people to reach a common understanding; “the active engagement of citizens in the determination of the affairs of their community provides them not only with the experience of public freedom and public happiness, but also with a sense of political agency and efficacy” (d’Entrèves, 2000, p. 82). Those free spaces are open domains for practicing democracy, initiating change, empowering citizens and strengthening a sense of citizenship. Within those spaces, communities are constructed to further their economic and political demands (Evans and Boyte, 1992; Loidolt, 2014).

Robert Putnam contends that the sustenance of democratic governance depends on some of its important aspects on the vibrancy of civic participation, which he broadly advances as social capital in his influential book *Making Democracy Work*. Putnam argues that stability, economic welfare and legitimacy of the governing system depend on wide and diverse social participation. Civic engagement is about shared responsibility and collective obligation. He emphasizes that the cornerstone of the democratic system is the involvement of the public in the social and political process: “The essence of democracy is equal influence on public decisions. A representative democracy requires at least widespread, if not universal, voting and grassroots civic engagement” (2015, p. 234). Accordingly, the purpose of public representation and common participation is to have a seat at the table and to have a say in the making of the decisions that touch the lives of the people.

Speaking about the associational life, Putnam thinks that involvement in a social organization should be evaluated based on the organization's civic value that furthers tolerance and equality. The other key criterion is the ability of the organization to interact and collaborate with diverse social entities, i.e., not to have an isolationist orientation. In addition, an organization is supposed to be able to solve tangible social problems or at least to make positive and useful contribution. He also views the value of an organization through the benefit brought to the public and not only the interest of few individuals (Boix and Posner, 1996).

Putnam has drawn attention to the negative consequences of the decline in civic engagement in the United States. He considers diversion from participation in voting as a sign of a decrease in collective action and disengagement from common causes partly attributed to frustration with the political class. He also believes that there is a close relationship between education and civic participation. Those who are well-educated are more likely to take part and be civically engaged. This means that civic participation is dependent or is correlated with education, which should be equally provided to all citizens:

“In absolute terms the declines in organizational activity and club meeting attendance were roughly parallel at all educational and social levels. However, because the less well educated were less involved in community organizations to begin with, the relative decline was even greater at the bottom of the hierarchy... in other words, the gross decline in community involvement has been masked to some degree by the fact that more and more Americans have the skill and social

resources that traditionally encouraged participation in community affairs.
(Putnam, 2000, p. 62)

A sociologist of religion who speaks about the negative consequences of individualism is Robert Bellah. He argues that the excessive concentration on personal interest weakens the bonds among the members of the wider society and leads to fragmentation. Although Bellah believes that the tension between private interest and common good would never be resolved, common virtues might help to mitigate polarization and inherent differences. He defends the idea of living with shared ideals for the benefit of the greater good and not a particular group. His ideas are an interpretation of pluralistic civic engagement that advocates more cohesive social relations grounded in the fundamentals of religious faith:

sharing practices of commitment rooted in religious life and civic organization help us identify with others different from ourselves, yet joined with us not only in interdependence and a common destiny, but in common ends as well. Because we share common tradition, certain habits of the heart, we can work to construct common future. (1985, p. 252)

In this sense, Bellah's approach to civic engagement implies modifying the whole direction of the country. He proposes a wide and comprehensive change of the whole economic, social, psychological, and educational aspects of the American life. He believes that democratic socialism as opposed to capitalism should be adopted to correct the course of the country. The shared grounds between Bellah's vision and that of Putnam is that they

both advocate collective involvement in social and political life be it through unions, religious or non-religious associations. They also show concern that self-interest ideology associated with individualism undermines the fabrics of the US society.

Following the path of Bellah, Gorski (2014) argues that religious freedom enshrined in the American constitution generates and empowers religious pluralism. Moreover, the sustenance of democracy depends on creating a balance across the social and political spectrums under a civic egalitarian frame. He introduces, in this vein, the concept of ‘vital center’ that involves basic commitment to collective values.

These concepts about civic engagement resonate with ideas promoted by the Islamic philosopher Tariq Ramadan, a reformer who defends plurality and coexistence. Given the monotonous discourse that proclaims incompatibility of Islam and liberal democracies, Ramadan (2013) argues that Muslims should be fully engaged in their non-Muslim societies: to respect the laws, develop a sense of loyalty and belonging to their countries, and to be fully integrated by making positive contribution across all areas of life. He thinks that civic engagement should be made with clear vision and mindfulness. Moreover, it is not about being compassionate toward your fellow citizens, but civic engagement is in fact an obligation toward the whole society. It requires being fully aware of the local, national, and global challenges and issues, and then making appropriate contributions. The relative similarity in those conceptualizations concisely presented earlier is compatible with the way I see civic engagement. Core elements of this view are collective participation, inclusiveness, and agency.

From a social perspective, there are common features that combine the concepts of agency and inclusivity. Both are seen by scholars as broad, elusive, complex, and multi-dimensional. The relationship between agency and inclusivity is also characterized by being mutually reciprocal. The sense of agency serves as drive for seeking equity through inclusion (Kockelman, 2007, Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, Nickel, 1997, Moore, 2016, Oxoby, 2009, Osler, 2012). Although the concept of agency is mostly associated with individuality such as the freedom of choice and self-determination, agency is viewed in this study as a theme that unites a group together. It is manifested through a group of individuals with shared identity, values, and interests who work voluntarily together to further their demands using their own civic approach. Inclusivity, on the other hand is viewed “as a means of providing equity across diversity, a remedy to social isolation, access to material resources, and participation in community decision making” (Hutchison and Lee, 2004, p. 119)

Against this backdrop, it could be argued that plural democratic involvement and civic engagement have a conditional relationship; they are inseparable and complement each other. The democratic system’s legitimacy and sustainability depends on ensuring, encouraging, and bolstering wider participation of different social groups. Weak or non-inclusive participation of people across the spectrum of their identities means a deformed or crippled democracy. Moreover, viewing democracy through pluralistic lenses creates the ground for communication, interaction, and collaboration among different groups. Hence, understanding the way each community or group approaches civic participation in different settings is of paramount significance.

2.2 Defining Civic Engagement (CE)

Even though voting and communal participation are two broad pathways of civic engagement in the US democracy, there is no unified definition or clear-cut translation of the concept. Defining civic engagement depends to a large extent on the perspective and the approach of the definer. Whether within the scope of higher education or beyond, variation in the activities and purposes of civic engagement yield diversified views and definitions (Boland, 2012). Levine (2012, para. 7) defines active civic engagement through core intertwined concepts that include action, deliberation, and virtues. He points out:

Active citizens seek to build, sustain, reform, and improve the communities to which they belong, which range from small voluntary associations to the world. Active citizens deliberate with peers to define public problems and then collaborate with peers to address those problems. In doing so, they honor certain virtues, such as equal respect for others and a degree of loyalty to their communities that does not preclude critical thinking and dissent.

The dynamics of civic engagement revolve around the practice which generates learning, interaction and collaboration. Practice as the soul of civic engagement produces tangible and shared benefits to the people in common. Although civic engagement is centered on collective work, Levine views it from an individualistic perspective. He considers the moral grounds of the individual as the driving force for contributing to the society. A group of individuals with common vision and a shared sense of agency cooperate to achieve a set of goals through civic means.

Adler and Goggin stress the multidimensionality, complexity, and elasticity of the concept of civic engagement. The participation of a citizen to bring change in people's

lives is pivotal in their definition; “Civic engagement describes how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future” (2005, p. 241). Another comprehensive definition is introduced by Diller who views civic engagement through the lens of personal and group enrichment; “all activity related to personal and societal enhancement which results in improved human connection and human condition” (Diller, 2001, p. 22).

Although diversity of definitions of civic engagement might be seen as problematic and distorting, it is viewed by Skocpol and Fiorina as something positive that refines the concept. They argue that, “When people of different partisan or theoretical positions converge - not only on questions, but also on a sense of where the answers might lie - a new "agenda" is born” (p. 13, 2004). Civic engagement resists having a clear cut or unified definition because the concept is comprehensive and stratified by its very nature. The term civic combines different people in their complex identities, interest and worldviews. It also involves various typologies as we shall see later. This study, however, adopts a definition which is consistent with the concept of community of practice and the environment of higher education. Jacoby (2009) defines civic engagement as “acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one’s communities. This includes a wide range of activities, including: developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civil society, and benefiting the common good” (p. 9). Simplicity and clarity characterize Jacoby’s definition. It integrates elements related to the reason that incentivizes students to be engaged with their communities, underlines the multiformity of practice, and points out the learning associated with civic participation.

2.2.1. Civic Engagement within the Context of Higher Education

Progress, justice, and stability in any democratic nation depend a great deal on providing equal opportunity mainly through decent education. This allows people to be better informed about their future and to make reasoned decisions about it. Dewey (1897, p. 79) stated, “through education society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move.” Building on the essential elements of community of practice (CoP) including the practice, organization, and identity, it could be said that higher education plays a major role in encouraging, mobilizing, and organizing efforts to promote civic participation. Some educational institutions possess the necessary means to promote democratic and inclusive involvement. Communal diversity in the institutions of higher education represents an optimal environment for collective action. In the campus educational environment, students learn about the value and moral benefits of coming to work together (Ehrlich, 2000).

Higher education is expected to have an influence on shaping the growth of undergraduate students. This is especially true when it comes to developing mental capacity and academic knowledge that enables the students to think critically, adopt positions concerning social, political, and life issues by weighing out things independently. Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, and Stephens (2003) believe that cultivating students’ civic and moral values are inseparable. Those values could be approached through both curricular and extra-curricular means. Colby et al, argue that colleges and universities are supposed to teach core common moral and civic principles and to have neutral, impartial,

and balanced set of values that respect the differences of the students not only within the national context but beyond.

Egerton (2002) remarks that both the social status and network of social relations predict the engagement of students in civic-oriented practices. He thinks that the relation between education and civic engagement is “mediated through the spatial mobility of the more highly educated and occupationally successful” (2002, p. 606). In a large-scale study of 5,000 households in the United Kingdom, in which he examined the youth civic behavior before and after joining the post-secondary education, he found that the familial background of the students influences civic engagement even before they come to college. However, the presence of student organizations on campus motivated students in this study to be civically involved regardless of the professional background or social status of their families. His findings suggest that educational institutions can create equitable venues for students to learn and practice civic engagement.

In a democratic environment, students’ knowledge about different identities and positive interaction with people of dissimilar backgrounds is quite important. Boyte reflects on the significance of free space in the context of higher education. Conceptualization of free space extends across various social and political categorizations to address collective demands, to form alliances across difference, to deal with common concerns, and to make educational reform, “Free spaces also entail public qualities of diversity of belief and background, cultivating capacities to work and form relationships across partisan and other differences” (2014, para. 17). Hannah Arendt theorized about the significance of the people having free space in democracy to speak and act without coercion. Bhabha (1990, 1994, 1998) furthered this notion by introducing the concept of a third space which allows

different perspectives to come together to interact, negotiate, and to challenge polarization and the existing structures. Third space is a medium for social and personal transformation. The two concepts of free and third space represent symbolic open domains where people who have diverse beliefs, modes of thinking, and ideologies can get together and interact freely. While free space as a concept is mostly concerned with influencing political change; third space deals with describes broader cultural or transcultural interaction that leads to the birth of new system of thoughts.

The engagement and interaction of the Muslim students through their symbols, voices, cultural expressions, and activities represent a process of creating a third space in which they reciprocally affect and become affected within the scope of an educational institution. The presence of Muslim students and students with other identities on any one campus provides a continuum for interaction and negotiation that does not necessarily yield a hybrid identity but narrows the gap of different perspectives which may consequently reduce constructed social divisions. It allows for a spectrum of identities to challenge and encounter their own presuppositions, myths or misconceptions. The dynamics of this interaction as explained by Bhabha is an occasion for cultural intersection, “the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new era of negotiation of meaning and representation” (1990, p, 211). Muslim students interact with students of other identities through activities they organize on campus and beyond. Hybridity in the broad social sense refers to a mixture of ideas and worldviews. An outcome of this mix in the educational environment of the university may yield a mending of students’ perception of each other. The hybridity also arises from interaction among the Muslim students themselves. US Muslim students do hold high diversity in

terms of their national origins, Islamic sections and identification (Shia/Sunni, conservative/liberal, practicing/non-practicing).

2.2.2 Civic Engagement's Typology and Intersectionality

The variation in activities (political, social, communal) contributes to the intricacy and fluidity of civic engagement. Moreover, racial, ethnic, religious, historic, and even generational factors add to this complexity. Some scholars even consider civic engagement an immature field that is still developing. Andoloina et al. (2002) for instance, affirm that understanding civic engagement requires paying attention to the evolution of the values and attitudes system, "studies of 'youth' civic engagement-and attempts to characterize their political world view-will need to capture both the traditional behavior and attitudes they have inherited, and the new interpretations, values, and meanings that they assign to this legacy" (p. 195).

A major dichotomy of civic engagement is between social and political engagement. Ekman and Amna (2012) underline the 'conceptual confusion' associated with civic engagement. They consider social participation as the manifestation of collective practices that influence in the end decisions made by representatives of political class. They make a distinction in this regard between the 'manifest' political participation and 'latent' forms of participation. The first involves direct and the second may be considered indirect participation. Berger (2009), who claims that the term civic engagement is coming slowly to an end, argues that this notion became so increasingly bifurcated that it can hardly hold coherently together. He prefers to draw a distinction among political, social, and moral engagements. While he sorts some activities under moral engagement such as those associated with faith, it appears that a separate moral category lacks reasonable justification

since political and social engagement encompass moral grounds as well. He thinks that civic engagement should be measured against the attention and energy dedicated in the activities to make democracy function effectively.

Deriving themes from other scholars, Arvanitidis (2017, p. 255) enumerates key characteristics of civic engagement:

First, voluntarism: it concerns activities that are not mandatory or rest coercively on deliberate choice. Second, it is unpaid: there is no direct profit or monetary gain. Third, it strongly involves acting for others out of altruism or concern for the collective well-being and common good. Fourth, it concerns behavior and action, rather than simply attitudes or cognition. Finally, it operates largely in the public sphere and thus is usually carried out with others. In that sense it is often collective and cooperative.

Using the lens of Arvanitidis dimensions of civic engagement divide into formal/informal, paid/unpaid, or individual/collective. It has spaces, temporalities, location, and methodologies (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Sherrod, 2007; Torres, Rizzini, and Del Rio 2013). The primary approaches to civic engagement are civic education, service learning, social organizing, and youth development. Civic education aims to raise the learner's awareness about the value and benefit of collective action and to leverage wider participation. Service learning promotes a sense of social responsibility and strengthens meaningful community collaboration. Social organization is a course of action that attempts to incur social change through mobilization of a community that shares common interests. Finally, youth development seeks positive personal cultivation that spans across the emotional, mental, and cognitive capacities (Rohdt, Hildreth, and Baizerman, 2009).

Another approach to civic engagement, which is regarded by scholars as an independent domain, is critical youth engagement. It calls upon the young people “*to unpack the historic and current role of structural forces such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism, which perpetuate inequality*” (Fox et al. p. 633). Because this type of civic engagement is social justice oriented, it shares ground with Critical Race Theory. Both deal with structural inequality and discrimination. Forms of advocacy and engagement include signing petitions, staging protests, and holding public actions. These forms may also translate into acts of negotiation, resistance, or defiance of all forms of injustice experienced by community or group.

Some researchers are interested in the growth element of civic engagement for youth. Sherrod (2007) points out that civic engagement develops the individual positively through the five Cs: competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring. A sixth dimension was added later which is contribution. Both personal and ecological factors like education, teachers, social activities, and family all contribute to the formation of the civic competencies.

Another relevant conceptual dimension examines the dynamic relation between social trust and civic engagement. Indeed, trust and engagement are interdependent and reinforce each other. Jennings and Stoker (2004, p. 345) state that “*Trust in others is expected to encourage involvement in social organizations as well as to be inspired by it, just as distrust is expected both to breed disengagement and to be reinforced by it.*” If ethnic, racial, or religious communities, as in the case of Muslims, have a fair amount of trust in the broader society and its members feel they are part of the societal structure, those communities are expected to have higher levels of positive civic involvement. This is a

significant dimension to consider because when we try to understand the civic engagement of a certain group, social trust here in my study adds a macro level to the entire process of analysis and explanation.

Another important component that should be carefully weighed when studying civic engagement is the profile of a community. Campbell-Patton & Patton (2010) argue that “*The characteristics of a particular community, its unique cultural, social, economic, and political issues, and the youth and adults therein are core considerations in any civic engagement work*” (p. 602). Each one of these complicated and interrelated elements needs to be considered in order to understand how a religious community of Muslim students thinks or behaves. In summary, civic engagement is not a straightforward or clearly defined concept; it rather has several historical, cultural, conditional, and circumstantial entanglements. Civic engagement may also change over time because of the process of acquiring new meanings which makes it always worth studying.

2.3 Wenger’s 1998 Community of Practice as a Guiding Model

Muslim students can be viewed as individuals with distinctive shared identity who are seeking constructive engagement in their environment. Through the interactive process of participation that occurs on campus and across intersected boundaries, those students internalize a myriad of meanings, construct certain understandings, and negotiate their identities. At the same time, students undertake outreach and community service that contribute to their civic presence. CoP will be used as a guiding model to explore the relationship between civic engagement and Muslim college students.

To begin, CoP was developed by Wenger (1998) as an informal learning theory to synthesize four key conceptual components of a process where meaning, practice, community, and identity come together to explain how learning takes place in diverse social settings. Learning is an outcome of being an active participant in activities that occur within the framework of an organized social entity that unites a number of individuals. Those individuals supposedly have or share a common objective, purpose, or passion that binds them together. Through engagement and establishing interaction both among themselves and beyond the scope of their organized entity, those individuals negotiate meaning, make certain sense of their participation, and formulate an understanding of their reality.

Meaning is derived from experiencing the world through engagement in practice. The meaning's close correlation with practice makes it generative, evolving, and rarely static. Through participation or because of participation, meaning is negotiated, established, enacted, or even rejected by members involved in an entity which makes them pursue jointly coordinated activities. Organization, practice, and meaning consistently come together to mold members' identities through an integrated learning process.

According to Wenger (1998) the practice of a community has three interrelated dimensions. First, is **mutual engagement** which represents the set of reciprocal relations that involve working together. Along this line, diverse perspectives, identities, and relationships are infused together which gives the community coherence and animation. Second, is **joint enterprise**, which refers to the collective entity that gives meaning to the existence of the community. Members relate and connect to each other by being part of this body. Rules are defined, negotiations conducted, roles distributed, and activities are

undertaken within the domain of this collective body. Third, is **shared repertoire**, which could be broadly defined as the complex stock of social, cultural, symbolic and communicative components. It is both the abstract and concrete objects that embody membership, identification, and participation in a community. Wenger (1998, p. 83) writes that repertoire is comprised of:

routine, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence and which have become part of its practice. The repertoire combines both reificative and participative aspects. It includes discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members.

A community is defined by engagement in mutual practices among the members; and through practice, a community becomes coherent. Aspects of interaction give meaning as well as viability to the community. Additionally, a community of practice is recognized through the foundational concept of boundary. The concept of boundary is highly important in social science and is very complex. Lamont and Molnar (2002) present a critical review of the concept of boundary in sociology. They offer a functional distinction between symbolic (conceptual/ cognitive) and social (social group) boundaries. A symbolic boundary is a socially constructed categorization that spans time and space and incorporates objects, individuals, and practices. Social boundaries are more concrete (objectified forms) that may be manifested through disparities and differences across class, race, and gender. The usage of this distinction does not in any way mean that the social boundary is more tangible than the symbolic, but rather they have distinctive conceptual

manifestations. The former refers to social categories whereas the latter refers to the meaning or the symbolic implications. Lamont & Molnar's elaboration on the social and symbolic distinction in relation to community resonates well with Wenger's perspective on the interrelation between meaning, identity, and boundaries; "Individuals within such categorical communities have at their disposal common categorization systems to differentiate between insiders and outsiders and common vocabularies and symbols through which they create a shared identity" (2002, p. 182).

Wenger's use of the concept of boundary involves layers. Boundary objects and encounters serve as vital elements of interconnections among communities of practice. Boundary objects (artifacts, concepts, terms, documents) are significant sources of common identification. They also tie individuals and different communities together. Boundary encounters refer to the events, occasions and moments of interactions both within the domain of the community and beyond. Wenger classifies boundary encounters into: one to one, immersion (revolving or rotating around central entity/object), and delegations (dispatch and external connection lines). Boundary practices, on the other hand, represent the range of practices across the landscape. Practice within the boundary of a community is idiosyncratic and is based on knowing the complexity of the members of their enterprise and includes their own repertoire. Wenger summarizes the interrelationship among the communities of practice by saying, "As communities of practice differentiate themselves and also interlock with each other, they constitute a complex social landscape of shared practices, boundaries, peripheries, overlaps, connections, and encounters" (1998, p. 118).

CoP theory can be flexibly used to understand the engagement, activities, relationships, and interactions of a social configuration, provided that certain conditions are satisfied. Wenger lists the following indications that make a social configuration a valid entity:

- 1) sharing historical roots
- 2) having related enterprises
- 3) serving a cause or belonging to an institution
- 4) facing similar conditions
- 5) having members in common
- 6) sharing artifacts
- 7) having geographical relations of proximity or interaction
- 8) having overlapping styles or discourses
- 9) competing for the same resources (p. 127).

Identity holds a major role in Wenger's (1998) conceptualization of CoP. Through participation in the activities of the organization, interaction, and communal relations within and across boundaries, members come to negotiate who they are. Members of a community compose their identities by means of participating in the world. Through this process, they learn to be, and learning is being. Members of a community mingle the bits and pieces of knowledge they obtain via community engagement into the ingredients of their identities.

Meanings and reifications are originated and internalized based on the interaction and the occurring engagement. The practice is the primary medium of experiencing identity processes and the formation of the self. Wenger also stresses the importance of trajectories

that constitute the different pathways of participation in a community, and the tensions associated with multi-membership in different communities. As an outcome of being engaged in a community, members form a sense of purpose, motivation, goals, history they aspire to continue or contribute to, objectives they want to achieve, and a trajectory they want to follow.

An additional dimension essential to the whole theory of CoP and the processes of identity is the dichotomy of participation and non-participation. Based on this distinction, members' positionality in the social domain of practice is determined. This distinction shows the things the members are concerned about; what they are willing to know or choose to ignore; with whom they establish links and whom they neglect; the way they invest their time and efforts; and the pathways they try to pursue. Moreover, modes of belonging are closely related to the formation of identity and the overall learning process. Those are composed of three distinct yet complementary parts: engagement, imagination, and alignment. Wenger illustrates that "engagement, imagination, and alignment each create relations of belonging that expand identity through space and time in different ways" (1998, p. 181). The mode of engagement is concerned with the interactive processes of meaning negotiation. Through the mode of imagination, creative possibilities and reflections of the world are created based on the practices and experiences. Alignment is pertinent to orienting the efforts into certain organizational or social directions.

Finally, it should be reaffirmed that Wenger thinks of an organization in a flexible way; as being the locus of learning, doing, and knowing. Organization, according to Wenger's conceptualization, is not limited to a specific type with a strict form. Instead, each organization has its own structure, vision, operations and strategies. Therefore, the primary

constructs of this theory as well as its subsidiaries are believed to provide a suitable instrument to inspect the nature of civic engagement for Muslim college students.

2.3.1 Civic Engagement & Elements of CoP: Identity Processes & Organizational Involvement

CoP provides the key components which help to understand the nature of civic engagement for Muslim college students in the U.S. Each constituent of CoP can be utilized as the nexus that connects or explains interrelationship with other constituents. Since this study examines the meaning of civic engagement largely through a Muslim student organization, it is useful to review the interplay between organization and identity.

The student organization presence on campus and the involvement of students in different activities can be viewed within the framework of socialization theory. One of the common theories that addresses social interaction was presented by Weidman (1989). Weidman conceptualized college impact in relation to personal development such as the formation of values, goals, and aspirations. Patterns and norms are transmitted and acquired as a result of being a student on campus and a member of certain organization. The structure of socialization is determined by aspects of interaction between the individual and the group in a medium of interaction that yields developmental outcome. This model is useful because it addresses minority students' socialization processes. The model is flexible and allows a space for modification in accordance with the race or ethnicity of the group being examined. It can be effectively used to understand identity development as a result of the socialization process that involves inter- and intra-personal interaction with the whole environment on campus (Weidman 1989, Weidman et al, 2014).

Engagement in different activities within the scope of an organization may also be understood by attending to Social Identity Theory. Ashforth and Mael (1989) provided a seminal theoretical perspective on the relation between the organization and identity processes which explains how social identification leads to activities that are consistent with the group's ideals and characteristics. Four primary principles distinguish the social/group identification:

1- It is perceptual (behaviors are understood as being outcome of relating to the group). 2- Members experience the success or failure of the group. 3- Social identification is distinguishable from internalization which involves incorporation of values, attitudes within the self as guiding principles. 4- Identification with the group is similar to identification with a person (1989, p. 21-22).

Organizational behavior is situationally dependent: elements that need to be considered include roles, status, policies and logistics (detailed organization and implementation of a complex operation), behavioral norms, power, and status structures. Haslam (2011) argues that organizational membership influences the way we behave. Both individual and collective behaviors give a distinct identity to the organization. Haslam draws attention to identity processes that result from membership in an organization. This membership has mutual effect on the person and the group who are both shaped by the values and norm of the organization. He stresses that the membership of an organization produces a distinct organizational identity which is often characterized by having shared perception of the world. This shared identity also incentivizes the members to adopt a common course of action. Indeed, the setting of the organization opens up the way for molding of the self. Different forms of interaction that take place within the context of the

organization may reshape, modify or even create new identity in a way that aligns with the overall direction of the organization. Salience of identification and assimilation to behaviors stem from the individual's perception about the organization. This perception leads to adopting the vision of the organization and enforces psychological attachment.

Each organization is perceived to be distinctive and has a cultural uniqueness: "Organizations have a broad repertoire of cultural forms such as rituals, symbols, ceremonies, and stories that encode and reproduce shared organizational patterns of behavior and interpretation" (Dutton et al. 1994, p. 243). The sum of cultural repertoire shapes the overall identity of the organization and its members.

Some argue that collective identity that emanates from having shared ideology or faith orientation undermines the domain of difference and individuality. From a perceptual perspective, Hogg and Terry (2000) argue that identification with the group diminishes the possible space for individual distinctiveness and independence because the primary hypothesis of social identity theory is founded on the collective identity and prototypicality of the group. They explain that:

Social categorization of self-categorization- cognitively assimilates self to the ingroup prototype and, thus, depersonalizes self-conception. This transformation of self is the process underlying group phenomena, because it brings self-perception and behavior in line with the contextually relevant in-group prototype. It produces, for instance, normative behavior, stereotyping, ethnocentrism, positive in-group attitudes and cohesion, cooperation and altruism, emotional contagion and empathy, collective behavior, shared norms, and mutual influence. (p. 124)

The above shared conceptual themes allow a structural understanding of how the group sets its objectives and puts its plan into action. The collective identity of the group and its common vision and values as conceptualized by CoP represent an integrated body of will and power of civic involvement.

2.3.2 Student Organization and CE

As we think of the interrelation between identity processes within an organizational context, we need to specifically consider the student organization as a constitutive component of campus composition. This consideration is mainly concerned with the relationship that combines identity-based student organization and the practice of civic engagement. Yet, there are opposing views about the value of identity-based student organizations. Some see them as merely ethnic enclaves that create segregation, while others think of them as the main substance of diversity, inclusiveness, and advancement of civic participation. In general, a student organization creates spaces for students of different backgrounds to express the complex spectrum of identification. Students find in those material and symbolic spaces a haven to come together, make friendships, participate in various activities, learn and interact with each other, and connect with different identities.

In a qualitative study that used extensive interviews with Black student organization members, Harper and Quaye (2007) point out that engagement in racial organizations and the socialization with students in this realm gives rise to various issues, challenges and grievances encountering the group. Students join the organization to advance the African American community's rights, change misconceptions and stereotypes towards their identity, and affirm their presence on campus and beyond. The researchers found that students join the African American organization "to get minority initiatives funded; to

advocate bringing African American speakers, musicians, and entertainers to campus; and to promote collaboration between those organizations and the Black and minority student groups with which they were also affiliated” (2007, p. 136). Moreover, membership in the organization allows students to gain access to administration, take part in decision making, have an opportunity of sitting around the table, and get financial support for the organization. The study also found that involvement in this organization may hinder cross cultural communication and negatively enhance “*intentional self-segregation*”.

The influence of Greek, national, and ethnic organizations might not be symmetric. Sidanius et al. (2004) looked at the organizational effect using a critical lens. They assumed that membership in these organizations augments feelings of victimization, identity biases, ethnocentric attitudes, and even potential intergroup tensions. Using twelve measures to test the assumptions, they found that Greek organizations intensify perceived group conflict, ethnic victimization and prejudice. Although the study showed that those indices are more often associated with Greek organizations compared with the ethnic organizations, they found that membership in ethnic minority organizations results in “high levels of ethnic identification and ethnic activism, as well as with the sense of being a part of the larger university community” (2004, p. 107).

In a longitudinal study that examined the association between involvement in racial/ethnic student organization and civic outcome that extend even beyond college, Bowman et al. (2015) found that this involvement makes positive contribution in these areas: community leadership, discussing racial issues, socialization across race, donation, news consumption, voluntary work, agency for effecting social change, keeping up to date on politics, perceive unequal opportunity for success, cooperativeness, and leadership skills.

Cross organization relations also enhance the potentiality of civic activities and positive learning outcome for the students.

Using Weidman's model of interaction, Lott (2013) argues that processes of social interaction among different students help to enhance and develop civic attitudes and values. He examined eight variables that manifest civic growth: (a) influencing the political structure, (b) influencing social values, (c) becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment, (d) developing a meaningful philosophy of life, (e) participating in community action programs, (f) helping to promote racial understanding, (g) keeping up to date with politics, (h) becoming a community leader (2013, p. 4).

Enburg (2007) suggests that opportunities for mutual interaction among different students within the context of the university help to develop a sense of acceptance and promote pluralistic orientation, such as "the ability to see multiple perspectives; the ability to work cooperatively with diverse people; the ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues; openness to having one's views challenged; and tolerance of others with different beliefs" (p. 285). Coming to terms with and embracing a pluralistic attitude by students who have different background arises from the opportunities that bring them closer together where they examine each other's behavior and thinking and question their own. Civic activities such as volunteering, political participation, and organizational membership that aim to promote social justice – termed 'prosocial involvement' – were examined by White-Johnson (2015) focusing on black students attending three predominantly White Institutions and two historically Black Colleges and Universities. Contrary to the norm, their study found that prosocial involvement increases when Black

students receive ‘racial barrier messages’ which is typically hypothesized to demotivate participation. The study reaffirms previous assertions that:

people of color are motivated to engage in prosocial activities when they perceive inequality and disparate treatment in society participants who received messages about the presence of race-related obstacles may have felt more of an obligation to participate in activities that helped reduce the presence of race-related obstacles in society compared to individuals who received other types of socialization messages. (2015, p. 149)

Combining the social background of the students and their practice of civic engagement merits deeper understanding because this relation has different entanglements and meanings. In the upcoming section, I will examine why Muslim students engage with their campus, community and overall environment.

2.3.3 Muslim Students’ Rationale, Purpose, Motives and the Practice of CE

Although the connection between religion and civic engagement is multifarious and complicated, studies show a positive association. Attendance at religious houses such as churches, synagogues, and mosques is often used as one of the important indicators of civic involvement (Smith, 2007, Gibson, 2008, Smidt, 1999, Driskell et al, 2008, Jamal, 2005).

Studying the relation between religion and CE in the US over a period of 30 years, Smith (2007) points out that religious affiliation cultivates civic values and incentivizes social involvement. Regular attendance at houses of worship increases awareness of community issues and encourages attendees to help remedy some of the problems. Moreover, political participation such as voting is seen to be higher among religious people

(Smith, 2007). Several positive social impacts result from religious observance. Analyzing 6000 surveys in US and Canada to examine the relation between religion and CE in these two countries, Smidt (1999) found that religious traditions and church attendance are positively associated with civic involvement. He states that religious affiliation fosters social connectedness, develops associational ties, increases political involvement, and instills civic behavior. Driskell et al (2008) propose that uncovering the effect of religion on civic engagement should go beyond attendance to include the level and type of activities practiced. In their comprehensive study that involved analyzing 1721 surveys conducted by Gallup Foundation, they demonstrated a variation in this relation according to religious traditions: “Mainline Protestants and Jews more likely to be engaged, and Evangelical Protestants and Black Protestants less likely to be engaged in civic activities” (p. 593). Another comprehensive study that was conducted across the US and Canada focusing mainly on volunteerism found that religious people in their different denominations tend to give their time for faith-related causes. The study also showed that religious fundamentalists are inclined to give their effort for people who share the same identity. The study argues that “We need to get a better idea with whom people associate when they give of themselves so that we can better understand their motivations for giving to others” (p. 253).

With regard to Islam, one cannot understand the vision, motive, and purpose that guide the Muslim students’ civic engagement without going back to the foundations of their faith. Muslims in general derive a great deal from their generationally transmitted heritage as they engage in different pathways in the society. The Quran (the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be a revelation from God) and Sunnah

(the body of literature which discusses and prescribes the teachings and practices of the Prophet Mohammed) are considered the two primary sources that guide Muslims. Caring about social concerns, helping those in need, giving to charity, standing with the weak and vulnerable, enjoining good, and preventing harm are some of the common teachings of Islam. As part of these moral principles, Tariq Ramadan (2016) opines that Muslims are driven by both citizenship and faith related motives. Civic engagement is seen as part of the Muslims' duties and rights towards their communities as citizens within the rule of law. It is a mutual responsibility between the citizen and the state. He views, for instance, voting as a form of *jihad* (struggle), and that Muslims are supposed to take an active role through voting. Islam presents a spiritual and ethical side to the practice of CE, being a form of commitment to the beliefs, principles, and values of Islam. Within this framework of understanding, citizenship and faith do not contradict each other; they represent commitment to justice, freedom, dignity, and protection of human life. In Islam there is a deep sense of humanism which comes through understanding the divine.

Contrary to the prevailing discourse that proclaims the incompatibility of Islam with western liberal values and the incapacity of Muslims to coexist with citizens of other groups of different identifications, Tarraf (2010) found that Muslims are considerably less skeptical of people with different identities. They are willing to cooperate, collaborate, and build communication channels with people of different backgrounds. When they find the appropriate platform and space, they show willingness to be civically engaged in different shapes and forms. He also found that religiosity does not hinder civic involvement. In fact, communal religiosity drives like-minded people to be politically involved through different acts such as protesting. He states that: "levels of communal religiosity perform differentially

on civic behavior, with higher levels increasing the likelihood of engagement, and lower levels reducing the prospects of such acts. This finding was robust irrespective of the type of civic acts considered” (2010, p. 117). From a social capital perspective, the outward communal religiosity plays both ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ roles with regard to civic engagement.

Harrisa and Rooseb, proposed that the role of Muslim youths as engaged citizens has been neglected. Instead, these youth are often portrayed as a potential threat to the society and should be put under surveillance. They argue that “Rather than treating Islamic belief as an impediment or incidental to civic participation, it is necessary to fully explore how constructing and engaging with Islam might shape civic life and conceptions of citizenship for young people living in non-Muslim majority Countries” (2014, p. 809). They think that Muslim youth, the same as other youth in today’s world, approach civic engagement in fluid, transient, spontaneous, and issue-driven ways. They have a modernistic understanding of their faith that transcends the traditional and narrow conceptualizations.

In a study that examined the civic engagement of Arab Muslims in the US, Read (2015) argues that religious identity is interlinked with higher level of involvement. She observed that men are more engaged compared to women in the group she examined. Moreover, she also observed that organizational involvement has significant effect on civic participation and that their religion plays a vital role as an incentive. Those findings are also supported by other studies conducted by Matteo et al. (2016) and Danna and Barreto (2011).

Focusing on the personal dispositions of Muslim students, Peucker (2016) explains that Muslims are generally driven by altruism. They care about improving the society in which they live, help the disadvantaged, improve the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, and advance the wellbeing of the Muslim community. They barely express contradiction between the basics of their faith and duties as citizens. The study states that it is difficult to separate their personal and faith-based motivations:

A clear line between faith-based and general personality-based motivation is often difficult, and sometimes impossible, to draw. In many instances, both dimensions are seen as synonymous, inextricable intertwined or at least closely connected. Some interviewed Muslims do articulate a clear prevalence of Islamic value in their elaboration on their driving forces-often in combination with a sense of religious obligation that tends to go hand in hand with their personal eagerness to participate and the intrinsic pleasure they gain through it (2016, p. 234).

Johns et al. (2015, p. 174) “explore the possibilities that exist to view Islamic rituals and faith-based community participation not merely as ‘habitual acts of reverence and obedience’. Rather, they are also affective and grounded performances that provide the possibility for belonging and political engagement.” Through engagement in different activities, Muslims focus on core human values such as peace, equality, social justice, and taking care of neighbors. The study showed that respect for diversity and equitable treatment are part and parcel of Islamic teachings which are compatible with liberal values of multiculturalism and respect for human rights. An essential basis of Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudence) underscores the dignity and rights of all citizens.

2.3.4 The University, Student Organization and Community Outreach

The concept of boundary as conceptualized by CoP serves as the main frame for understanding the relation between the university and the community. Wenger (1998) uses this concept in flexible and multifaceted ways; however, the concept could be condensed to mean the communication, interaction, and overall reciprocal relation between different entities and parties on campus and community. One of the pronounced missions of higher education is to consolidate the connection of educational institutions with society through activities that enhance civic growth of students and alleviate social problems.

Campus Compact, a coalition of college and university presidents of nearly 1100 institutions in the US, spearheads the institutionalized efforts to promote civic engagement in higher education. Through their mission, the coalition attempts to “to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility”. They also envision the “colleges and universities as vital agents and architects of a diverse democracy, committed to educating students for responsible citizenship in ways that both deepen their education and improve the quality of community life” (Campus Compact Website, 2019). The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching introduced since 2006 the Community Engagement Classification to measure the nature and extent of an institution’s engagement with the community. This classification reflects the institutional mission and designation in terms of its civic approach. According to the foundation’s website the purpose of community engagement is:

the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens;

strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good (Carnegie Website, 2019).

Crucible Moment, a national report, examines the way colleges and universities can support democratic engagement. Using a global democratic perspective, the report calls upon the entire community of higher education to adopt a plural approach for civic engagement. The report argues that the different institutions of higher education should strike a balance between the curricular materials and the practical methods and programs of civic engagement, taking both national and international principles and objectives into consideration. The report envisions participation as not only embracing the economic or political aspect, but also bringing diverse people together. This entails developing a set of important capacities and aptitudes that are highly valuable to navigate different settings which are becoming increasingly heterogeneous and complex. Another important report that calls upon institutions of higher education to foster their connection with the communities was introduced by the Kellogg Commission (2000). Beyond outreach and service, the commission urged the faculty and students to have stronger relationships with their communities (Fitzgerald and Primavera, 2013). Because these foundations and commissions tend to have pluralistic understandings of partnership; the authors emphasize the value of closer collaboration between campus and community and stress the importance of giving an equal weight to the theory and practice of civic engagement.

The relationship that combines university and community is multifarious, context dependent, and fluid. Fitzgerald and Primavera state that engagement with the community “is unique due to the social-ecological context of the institutions involved and the personalities of the key players” (2013, p. 310). The partnership is co-constructed through

the “development of structures that include activities and policies that foster positive relationships among individuals, groups, organizations, and neighborhoods” (Mulroy, 2004, p. 37). Institutional factors that influence the creation, encouragement, and sustenance of partnership regarding students’ involvement with the community, include the campus agenda for civic engagement, curriculum, dynamic relations among different group students, and faculty (Astin, 1991).

Different scholars see various benefits to close partnership between campus and community. Mutual relations between the university and the community through shared projects and community service may contribute to solving some problems in the society. This relation represents a positive force that empowers the civic society to tackle issues and problems through cooperation. Fitzgerald and Primavera (2013, p.4) reason that these relations “contribute to institution’s civic mission by connecting students and faculty with public partners to create knowledge that is of value to both scholars and society, and to demonstrate workable solutions to community-defined problems”. Fisher, Fabricant, and Simmons (2005) believe that campus/ community partnership helps addressing and finding solutions to local problems. However, they think that privatization and dominant individualism diminish care about public concerns.

Using evidence from the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012) and the US Department of Education, Mitchel (2016) describes community campus partnership as limited and sporadic. He posits that the institutions need to expand this partnership; make it more proactive and objective: “It is not enough that students are connected to opportunities to serve the community. How they are connected,

what constitutes engagement, and the meaning students make from the experience must also matter if research universities are to succeed in their civic mission” (2016, p. 259). Mitchel also calls for adopting transformative engagement by making the campus have an active presence in the community. Similarly, Hoy and Johnson (2013) adopt three main themes in their edited book, proposing that engagement should be deep, pervasive, and integrated.

Besides the primary role of a university (teaching, learning and advancing knowledge), it is necessary to embrace a culture of engagement within its environment. Ellis and Hart argue that students must have a voice in the form of partnership between the university and the community because the students practice a functional role. They think that having a constructive role in the engagement requires broadening and strengthening the map of relations at the local, national, and global levels (2013, p.202). Astin (1991) also highlights the importance of understanding the students’ side or perspective on engagement. Examining volunteering as one of the gateways of community/campus partnership he states, “Any attempt to promote volunteerism among students will be most likely to succeed if it is based on an understanding of students' goals, values, and aspirations” (p. 13). Based on the type of the institution, Astin found that research universities tend to focus more on their academic reputation than real civic engagement. Astin states that “once the size and type of institution is taken into account, those institutions that are more selective are perceived by their faculty as having a lower level of commitment to promoting student involvement in community service” (p.12).

Some scholars believe that reengaging faith is quite important to have a more productive relation between academia and the community. Meisel (2013) argues that

secularization is pervasive, and the Kellogg Commission criticizes university campuses for lack of care and encouragement of faith-oriented service. By overlooking an important source of motivation for students, the campus may be disregarding considerable potentials and possibilities for civic involvement. Therefore, Meisel suggests reconnecting the faith and campus more effectively. Through this desirable reconnection, higher education becomes, “more responsive to the students that we were there to serve, nurture, and develop. In the end, we recognized a deep yearning on the part of the students to explore, to discern, and experiment, to learn, to engage, and to move down the path of spiritual exploration” (2013, p. 63). Indeed, faith is an important factor that drives engagement. Astin (1991) found a significant association between the students’ willingness to volunteer and their faith identification; they reinforce each other.

Involvement in a student organization is an essential factor that affects students’ civic involvement. Using Weerts and Sandmann’s (2010) expression, a student organization is a ‘boundary spanner’ that helps to create, enhance, and empower connection between the university and the community. Fagan (1990) points out that “many service organizations have a long history on college campuses. National fraternities and sororities have historically encouraged their members to participate in service projects” (p. 20). Adopting such an understanding, this study thinks of Muslim student organization as an organic entity that not only practices various forms of civic engagement, but also helps to build pathways of partnership between the campus it belongs to and the broader community.

2.3.5 Mosque and Muslim Student Association (MSA)

Learning and practicing civic engagement are not born out of a specific entity; it comes through various sources and social institutions including faith-based organizations. The mosque has a central role in Islam not only as a place of worship but as a viable space where the moral principles, social connections, acts of charity and service are generated. In fact, the mosque as a faith and social entity serves different roles which vary in scope, type, and vibrancy from one to another. Mosques in different parts of the world mainly focus on practices associated with rituals and traditional practices that have positive social impact, but due to the context in the US they tend to have civic associated activities such as encouraging voting, building cross faith relations, and volunteering. Due to political reasons, mosques have been viewed controversially. These views were popularized in the media as potential threat that need to be scrutinized, especially following the tragic events of 9/11/2001. Despite the negative and controversial discourse related to the presence of mosques in Europe and US, many of the activities promoted by those faith institutions could be conveniently categorized under the framework of civic engagement.

Only a few studies have examined the relation between mosque as a faith institution and civic engagement. Despite the relative variation in terms of the background of the community of Muslims and their mosques, most of their leaders agree that they should make active political and social participation (Bagby, Perl, and Froehle, 2001). In a comprehensive study that covered different aspects of mosques and Muslim community, Bagby (2012) found that most of the community leaders consider the involvement of Muslims in the US society and their interaction with American institutions as something they value. Devout Muslims tend to be more incentivized to be civically engaged. This

originates from the traditional heritage that urges Muslims to be active and to care about community issues. Collins (2011) who sees the mosque as a “dynamic institution capable of adapting to the circumstances of the society in which it has operated” thinks that one of the main tasks of the mosque is actually to understand and respond to the Muslim community needs. In a comprehensive study that included 1410 Muslim participants, Dana, Barreto, and Oskooii (2011) point out that mosques facilitate Muslim integration into US society and open up gateways for civic participation. They also emphasize that Islamic teachings do not hinder integration in the US society or coexistence with other identities. Al-krenawi (2016) noted that Muslim activists who have ties with the mosques are successful in incentivizing Muslims to vote and make positive contribution to their community. Besides the integrative effect of the mosque in the broad US society, it also helps Muslims practice their role as equal citizens who have rights and duties. The Mosque also is seen as providing an important emotional support to both the newcomers and those who have settled in the US for generations. Some of the activities adopted and promoted include:

voter registration drives, writing or calling political leaders, hosting politicians, and interfaith dialogues ... cash assistance for families and individuals, marital and family counseling, prison and jail programs, food pantry, soup kitchen, tutoring and literacy programs, thrift store, and clothes collection for the poor, among other services and programs. (Nguyen, et al., 2013, p. 4)

Civically oriented activities promoted by mosque and other faith organizations pave the way for Muslims to make more active social contributions and create pathways for cross community interrelationships. Muslim student organizations have dynamic

connections and collaborations with the mosques, especially in those areas related to community service.

2.3.6 Formative Impact of Students' Engagement in Civic and Service Activities

The way this study looks at development of civic attitudes and skills, which is associated with membership in a campus organization, hinges primarily on CoP as a social learning theory. Within the scope of the organization, individuals have various interactions through the activities they practice. These practices and interactions generate meanings that seep into the minds of those individuals. The development of skills and the growth element of the students occur within the context of the organization and campus. This context involves different processes of interaction among individuals and includes engagement with various civic and social activities.

The developmental impact of civic engagement on the students comes as an outcome of several essential factors including but not limited to civic education, curriculum, the institution's relevant policy and agenda, campus climate, and programs. This study examines development as it occurs in context; and as related by the students who shared their views and experiences. As a main categorical frame, it could be said that learning and development takes two main shapes: the formation of civic identity embedded within the faith identity, and the acquisition of civic and moral values and skills. Due to the nature and type of activities Muslim students practice, they enhance their bond with their faith and formulate civic aptitude interwoven with their overall identity. They also acquire various communication, emotional, and leadership skills.

Both personal and ecological factors like education, teachers, social activities, and family all contribute to the formation of civic competencies. Youniss, McLellan, and Yates (1999) argue that because of involvement in community related activities, students become better aware of the living conditions of the people they serve. This awareness facilitates their civic growth and expands their knowledge about others, which comes through interaction with different people on campus and in the community. Interacting and working with various people through service helps students to experience diversity which makes them question their own presuppositions, convictions and worldviews. Engagement in civic oriented activities also involves the development of civic skills which contribute to the construction of identity. Jacoby and associates (2009) state that those skills include “active listening, deliberation, engaging diverse perspectives, collaboration, creative problem solving, civility, ethical decision making, and information literacy” (p. X, preface).

Proponents of service-learning view it as the appropriate approach for gaining experience; service-learning helps students to establish consistent connection between theory and practice, to critically think about life conditions, and to scrutinize their own worldviews. Hunter and Brisbon Jr, (2000) noted that students who engage in service-learning become more accommodative of people who have different racial and ethnic backgrounds than their own. Students also become more thoughtful and sympathetic towards the circumstances of underprivileged people. Because they examine directly the living conditions of the underprivileged people, they opt not to blame them for the hardships they encounter. Moreover, students who practice service-learning tend to seek other service opportunities later on to help improve the living conditions of people. As a

result of the whole experience of service-learning, these students become also more knowledgeable about their communities. This sense of diversity, commitment to community service, and acquired knowledge were also noted by Kahne and Sporte (2007) who think that service-learning represents an important manifestation of civic engagement. Using a wide sample of 1,474 of the National Study of Living Learning Programs Survey, Rowan-Kenyon, Soldner, and Inkelas (2007) confirm the positive cognitive, attitudinal, and emotional impact of participating in civic oriented activities. Their study however, found that active engagement is more attributed to the students' perception of the value of engagement prior to entering college. Students' thoughts about civic engagement which they held previously predicted their civic behavior more than the living/learning programs. This shows that civic attitude develops in a progressive way as the students go through the different stages of their educational journey and experience societal influences.

Some scholars go further to think of civic identity development as a separate domain that merits special consideration. Following Kniefelcamp's conceptualization of the formation of identity, Johnson (2017) wrote that civic identity development should be thought of as independent construct that has its own merits. In more precise terms, it is regarded as an autonomous domain of development from the other constellation of identities. His research attempted to examine the knowledge, attitude, value, and action that form the basis of civic identity formation. Similar to Perry's model of staged development (1978), the process of civic identity formation is characterized by being dynamic and evolutionary, where the students "progressed from simplistic, fixed, certain positions of civic identity to more complex, mature, and integrated ways of being, knowing, and relating to others and their environments" (2017, p. 52).

Jones and Abes (2004) argue that the reciprocal interactions that occurs within the context of service-learning programs nurture the students' capacities to think critically about themselves and others. Service-learning also enhances the sense of social responsibility, caring for others, and making service as part of long-term commitment. Students become more receptive to ideas that come from those who have different opinions. They think about themselves by examining and interacting with others especially those who are less privileged. Therefore, students develop the ability to have the power over the construction of their identities or what is called self-authorship, a concept which was introduced by Robert Kegan (1994, p. 185) to mean, "an ideology, an internal personal identity, a self-authorship that can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states". Self-authorship in this sense involves a system of meanings that we instill into our minds as we experience the reality. Hodge, Magolda, and Haynes (2009, p. 1) state that transformative learning which should be adopted institutionally enables self-authorship; it "entails a shift from uncritical acceptance of external authority to critical analysis of authority in order to establish one's own internal authority".

As mentioned earlier, student organizations constitute the hub that builds a constructive connection between the campus and the community. Membership in these organizations encourages students to act responsibly, to nurture their leadership capacities, and enhance their patriotic sense. In those organizations, students develop civic, social, and leadership skills (Flangan and Faisan, 2001). There is also a positive emotional dimension to the practice of civic engagement. Theokas and Lerner (2006) suggest that in addition to the primary role of the educational institution in creating opportunities for the students, the

family and neighborhood have their own part in this equation. In their research, Theokas and Lerner found that across the lines of civic service, students become more satisfied about themselves, and their service provides a sense of achievement. Because of the experience, students also gain confidence about their abilities and potential (Kimbrough, and Hutcheson, 1998).

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the nature of civic engagement of Muslim college students. The primary goal is to understand the meaning of civic engagement as experienced by a group of students who share a common religious identity and are members of a campus-based organization. Muslim students are thought to have their own way of practicing and understanding CE. Although the organization is bounded by the context of the campus, the students' activities are thought to have an extended impact beyond that scope. CoP is used as the theoretical structure that gives guidance to this research.

The study uses a mixed method to explore the multiple dimensions of civic engagement of the Muslim students. Using a mixed method provides a mechanism to learn about the interrelationship that combines meaning and practice as conceptualized by CoP. In the first component of the study, the forms of civic engagement of Muslim students were addressed by conducting a close-ended survey to identify the domains, types, and intensity of engagement. In the qualitative part interviews were conducted with the MSA members to explore the purpose, goal, effect, value, and aim of civic engagement.

In this chapter, I will address the research design, the rationale for using mixed methods and the design's relation to the question proposed by the study. I will also discuss my role as an investigator and motive for studying this topic. The research context and the participants of the study, their recruitment, data collection, the instrument, and analysis will also be addressed. I will finally address the IRB approval and the relevant ethical considerations.

The abbreviation MSA is used in several ways in this dissertation. Each of the three student organizations included in this study is an MSA, affiliated with its own higher education institution and with the national umbrella organization. The use of the singular form (MSA) in this manuscript most often provides or asserts information about the national organizations in general. The same form is used when a participant talked about his/ her MSA. The context would help the reader discern the intended meaning, i.e., whether the paragraph is addressing a specific MSA or MSA as national organization.

MSAs (in the plural form) is mostly used to refer to the general category of these organizations in the US. This form was also used other times to refer to the three organizations in the three campuses. The use of the definite article ‘the MSA’ (singular) referred to the organization of a certain campus to which the participant belongs such as the MPU or ELAU MSA, whereas the ones without the article refer to MSA in general. In some cases, a participant talked about the MSA intending to generalize about other MSAs in the United States based on the participant’s knowledge, experience, and relationship with members of MSA organizations on other campuses.

3.2 Research Design and Rationale

Since civic engagement primarily involves practice and participation, my main objective using mixed methods was to identify the forms and types of activities Muslim students do and explore the meaning that stands behind their engagement. I think that mixed methods are appropriate for this topic because the two methods complement each other. A survey was utilized to measure the degree, type and domain of involvement in

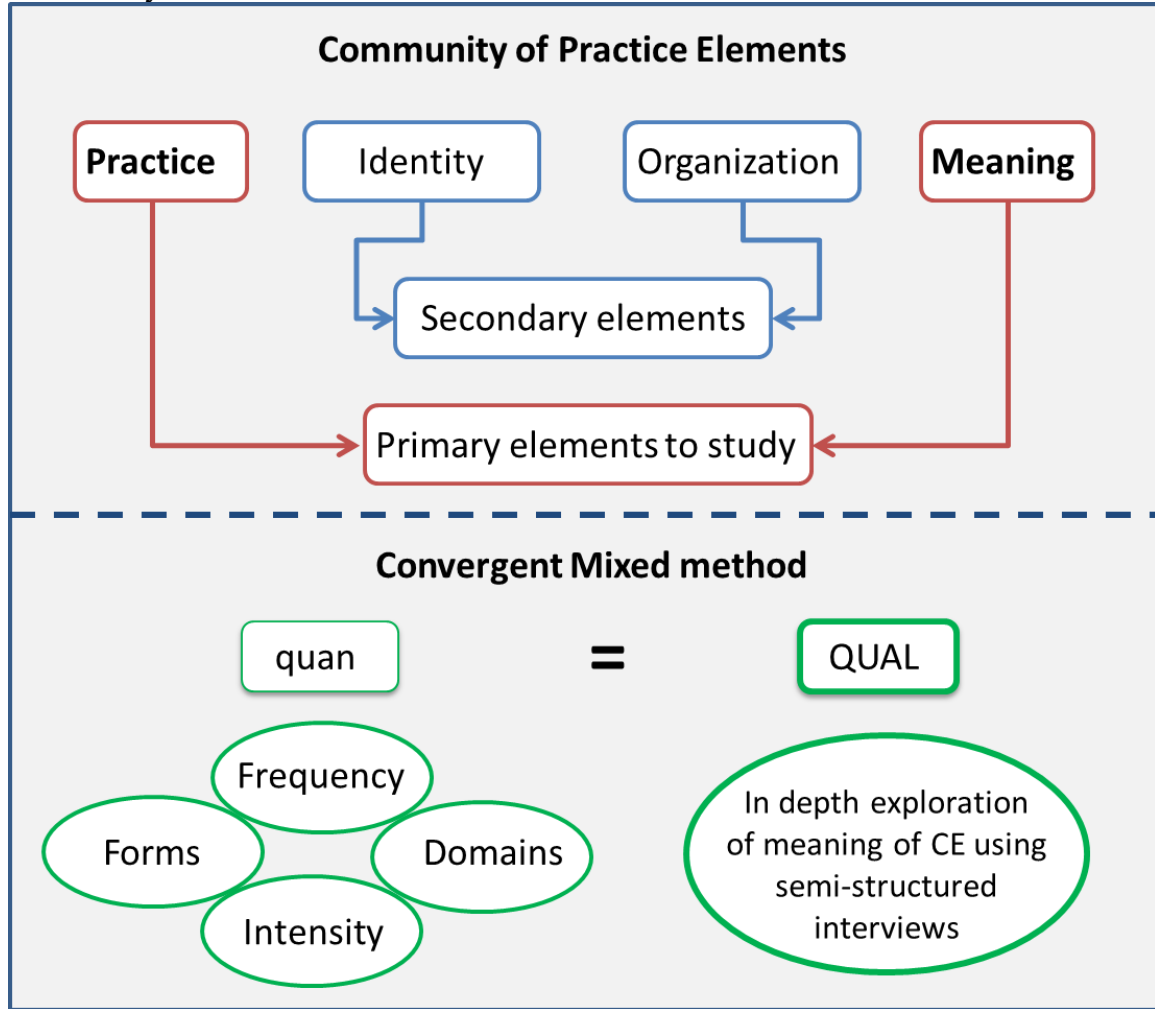
different activities. Qualitative methods were used to examine how the students make sense of the practice, the motivation, the messages they convey, and the purpose(s) that lie therein.

The key question this study seeks to answer is: what is the nature of civic engagement for Muslim college students? There are two components embedded in this question; the ‘what’ part of civic engagement is covered initially quantitatively while the ‘how and why’ is covered qualitatively. There is a set of reasons that justify using mixed methodology to investigate this topic. The issues of Muslims in general and the civic engagement of Muslim American college students in particular has been scarcely studied. Most of the researchers, however, focus on Muslim college students’ experiences on college campuses using either ethnographic, phenomenological or narrative analysis. Studying this particular topic using mixed methods is believed to give a deeper understanding and reveal different aspects of the issue. (Creswell, 1999, Tashakkori et al., 2015, Morgan, 2014)

Moreover, the study largely uses an exploratory approach to the topic. It does not have specific hypotheses to test; nonetheless, it assumes that the Muslim students, as one minority group in the US, have their own way and purpose for civic engagement. The information obtained from the survey helps to provide a descriptive account of the Muslim students, the structure of the activities, and potential relations between the variables. The qualitative part uncovers the nuances of meaning associated with the practice and its boundaries. The two parts are intended to be integrative and to complement each other. (More and Niehaus, 2009, McCoy 2015, Bryman 2006)

Adopting Morse and Niehause's (2009) description of mixed method studies, I am using a quan-QUAL convergent method. This symbolic representation (quan-QUAL) signifies the sequence adopted which starts with a quantitative part followed by the qualitative. In addition, the capitalization of the term QUAL indicates that the research questions of the study are primarily addressed qualitatively, whereas the small letters quan indicate that this part deals with a specific domain which is the descriptive practice of Civic Engagement. The following diagram outlines the mixed method model to be used in the study:

Figure 1 The convergent mixed method for study of Civic Engagement within a Community of Practice



Understanding the meaning of civic engagement with its multiple implications for a particular population of college students within a student organization is the main aim of this investigation. However, in order to research the meanings of civic engagement, its practice by individuals (identity) within an organization were also necessary dimensions. Describing the practice of civic engagement for these Muslim American college students (the ‘what’) was initially approached quantitatively in order to derive a baseline description for further investigation of what, how and why of civic engagement. The community of practice components (meaning, practice, organization, identity) situate the research of the

students within their organization. The meaning of civic engagement within a community of practice was investigated qualitatively.

Although the study is largely qualitative (core component), the quantitative part is used to enhance, supplement, and answer the same key question proposed by the study. The rationale for utilizing these two methods is that each one of them helps to reveal certain aspects of the phenomenon under investigation. In other words, the qualitative and the quantitative methods are integral parts of the research and are based on the same methodological assumption. Although each method can stand by itself and produce independent findings, they complement each other.

3.3 Methodology

This study explores the nature of civic engagement of Muslim college students. The study addresses the question: what is the nature and meaning of civic engagement for Muslim college students on U.S. campuses? The primary goal is to understand the meaning of civic engagement as experienced by a group of students who share a common religious identity and who are members of a campus-based organization. The study examines the forms and domains of engagement as those students navigate their journey across various interactive environments. The research uses a mixed method. (Creswell, 1999, 2015, Bryman, 2006, Morgan, 2014, Morse and Niehaus, 2009)

Bryman (2006) points out that the integration of the two methods has to be clear and used for specific reasons. The questions proposed by the study were thought to be best answered if both quantitative and qualitative methods are deployed. Finding out the type, domain, and intensity of civic engagement for the Muslim students on campus provides

useful categorical information which then serves as a guideline for the interview. Both of these methods are integrative and help to approach and understand the topic in holistic way. (Creswell, 1999)

It needs to be stressed that the primary part of the study is qualitative which means that it encompasses the key questions the study tries to answer. However, the quantitative part provides supportive information to categorically understand the concept of practice as proposed by CoP. Morse and Niehaus (2009, p. 15) states that “the supplementary component is a methodological strategy different from the method, use to extend investigation. The supplementary component is incomplete or lack some aspect of scientific rigor, cannot stand alone and is regarded as complementary to the core component.” In this study, the quantitative part is supplementary in that it offers beneficial entry point to the qualitative part. However, the results of the survey could be considered complete in the sense that it could stand by itself and answer the quantitative question sufficiently.

Morse and Niehaus argue that “the researcher must design the pacing of the supplemental component with the core component. This includes developing a sampling plan, data collection and analysis, the point of interface of the two data sets, or consideration about how the findings will be incorporated.” (2009, p. 50) I decided to start with the survey to help identify the students who have higher level of participation in the various forms of CE. Doing so I was able to target those students as potential interview participants. In the survey, students willing to give their time for the interview were asked to voluntarily provide their emails to be contacted by the researcher.

In this study the format quan-QUAL was used to provide the descriptions and measurement needed to adequately explore the topic. The rationale for this format is that the themes that emerge out of analyzing the survey would help to refine the interview questions. Deriving information about the intersected domains of participation and practice of civic engagement facilitated the drafting of more precise questions in the interview. Morse and Niehaus state that the “QUAL-quan designs may use the quan components to enhance QUAL studies with measurement, providing descriptions or illustration, revealing how much or how many, enabling comparison or confirmation” (2009, p. 99).

3.4 Site Selection

The selection of the site for the study is of paramount significance in social research. However, there are few systematic studies that give clear guidance on the selection criteria or factors that should be adopted or negotiated at the preliminary stages of the study. Most scholars address the issue of site selection within the frame of the field notes the researcher records as the study emerges and develops. (Wolfinger, 2002, Lavery et al. 2008, Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2018, Harper and Zuckerman, 2006) The selection of the site is indeed a meticulous process which intervenes with the essential components of the research including the overall theoretical framework, validity, transferability, and ethical considerations.

Decision about the selection of the site has to be based on the aims of the study and should benefit the community or the social group being studied. Lavery et al. (2008, p. 318) states that the “Investigators must bring to the process of site selection a well-cultivated desire to act ethically and constructively, and they must give the best interests

of the host communities at least as much consideration as they do to the quality of their science.” Good description and selection of the setting also help the receptors to see the resemblance of a study to other similar contexts. Walford points out that “If the authors give full and detailed descriptions of the particular context studied, it is argued that readers can make informed decisions about the applicability of the findings to their own or other situations.” (2001, p. 154-155)

The process of selecting the site of the study in relation to the topic grew out of various developmental phases. I was initially interested in examining the concept of diversity and the Muslim students. As part of a coursework assignment, I designed a survey to better understand and measure Muslim students’ attitude about diversity on campus. Through attending different activities organized by Muslim students at the Middle Public University (MPU), I started to lean towards the contributions the Muslims make to their campus and community. Therefore, I decided to focus on civic engagement.

Selecting the site to study the nature of civic engagement as practiced by Muslim students came after careful deliberation with my doctoral advising committee members and Islamic studies professor. Being a novice educational policy researcher, they guided the various aspects to consider when choosing the sites and the prospective participants such as the demographic factors, accessibility, size and vitality of the Muslim students, racial and ethnic composition, and other institutional considerations.

The MSA as the object of study is regarded as the organizational unit that represents the Muslim students on campus. It is the entity that gives voice and creates a space for the Muslim students. Programs and activities are usually initiated by members or individuals associated with this organization. Despite regional and contextual variation across US

campuses, the MSA's main profile has common features. Therefore, studying the MSA in the Mid-western region is important because, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no attempt has been made to study this organization within this boundary. Information about civic engagement from this study might apply to MSAs in other area campuses.

Familiarity and accessibility were factors in deciding to conduct the study at the MPU as the main campus and then adding two other nearby campuses. Other pragmatic reasons are associated with the theoretical grounds of the study. CoP was the framework theory that gave guidance to this research. In this theory, the community and practice are two basic components along with meaning and identity. Based on personal observation, attendance at various events and conferences, and participation in social and philanthropic activities, I found that the MSA as a Muslim organization plays a vital role in initiating and promoting civic engagement in the MPU. Moreover, the student members have emphatic relationships with the community of Muslims and other Muslim community centers in the city. They also create and maintain active ties, collaboration, and communication with different non-Muslim organizations on campus which represents the boundary relations according to CoP. The catalyst role of those students was also viewed through the theoretical lenses of civic engagement scholars and thinkers who talked about the creation of free space (Putnam, 2015, Bellah, 1985, Ramadan, 2013, Arendt, Bhabha, 1990). Examining other regional campuses with active MSAs and establishing communication with their supervisors, SPU (public research university) and ELAU (small Liberal Arts College) were added as the other locations to conduct the study. These other campuses have Muslim Student Associations with various ranges of students' involvement and activity. However, the MSA National website shows only the MPU in their map of

geographic distribution of the MSAs across the United States. Choosing these three campuses expanded the scope of investigation both in terms of the number of the organizations and the students involved in them. It also created a relative space to see the different perspectives of students across these three organizations, allowed making comparisons among the organizations in terms of different themes addressed in the study such the structure, the boundary of network and relation, and the domain and breadth of the practice of civic engagement.

In terms of the profiles of the campuses included in this study, the MPU is classified as a research intensive, public university. According to the university's website, the total student enrollment for the Fall of 2018 was approximately 30,000 students, including the undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. Of those enrolled, over 1500 were international students. Underrepresented minorities makes up 14.4% of the student population on this campus. MPU was a recipient of the Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement which aims to institutionalize civic engagement by adopting measurements and assessments that improve civic practice. The campus developed a system to collect information about the efforts related to outreach and community engagement and enhancement of the partnership between the campus and the community. The campus has over 450 student organizations and active offices that facilitate inclusive and productive engagement of diverse students such as an Office of Institutional Diversity, a Center for Graduate and Professional Diversity, and an MLK Center. MPU also has a and Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Council comprised of community partners and campus students, faculty, and staff. The role of this council is to facilitate communication, coordination, and collaboration between the university and the

community (MPU website, 2020). MPU is located in a city with an estimated population of 300,000. There is no formal record of the number Muslims in the city, however, it is known to have a diverse Muslim population. The city is home to several mosques, an Islamic school, and a community center.

SPU is also public university with high research activity. SPU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associate, bachelor, master, specialist, doctoral, and professional degrees. The Community Engagement Classification by the Carnegie Foundation has been awarded to SPU. According to the university website, the total number of the students in the Fall of 2019 was nearly 23,000. The university reported having a total over 600 international students on campus. The campus hosts over 400 student organizations covering a wide variety of students' interests. The institutional diversity offices include an MLK Center, and an Office for Diversity Education and Inclusiveness (SPU website, 2020). SPU is one of the largest cities in the state. The city's total population according to the 2018 census estimate was over 770,000. In 2001, an estimated 4,000 to 10,000 practicing Muslim resided in the city and supported six local mosques, a Muslim Community Center and an Islamic school.

The ELAU is a four-year undergraduate, private college with an Arts and Sciences focus. Many of its approximately 1400 students and faculty travel abroad for various programs. According to the Carnegie Foundation website, this institution did not apply for or receive the civic engagement designation. Two campus offices promote diversity and inclusion: the Diversity Office and the Religious Life Office. The College reports having a total of 100+ international students on campus. The student organizations on campus include the Baptist Campus Ministries, Catholic Newman Club, Jewish Student

Organization, and Muslim Student Association (ELAU website, 2020). The campus is located in a predominantly rural county with a population of approximately 16, 000. according to the 2010 census. The community of Muslim students is very small and has one mosque. Finally, it is important to note that the actual links to the websites used to collect information about the campuses were not cited in the references in order to protect the confidentiality of participants.

3.5 The Survey

Through the survey, I identified myriad ways of engagement. The survey (See appendix 2) was developed based on examining the ways civic engagement had been studied academically. I also included particular items related to the students' religious identification, such as the practices associated with faith rituals. Three dimensions of engagement were used (on campus, off campus, and online) to categorize the way the students participate in the environment. The students started with a set of demographic questions about the age of the participant, gender, status of study (undergraduate/graduate), major, number of years at the university, citizenship status, nationality if not U.S. citizen or permanent resident, ethnicity or race, place where the participant grew up, the mostly attended mosque, and membership status (MSA vs. non-MSA).

Through the practice of civic activities, students experience reality and interact firsthand with various environments. Experiencing reality is essentially intended to mean here the way students engage and make meaning practicing civic engagement. Deriving concepts from the CoP helped to discover various features of practice as exercised by those students. As a result, identification of the domains, types, and frequencies of civic

engagement of Muslim college students was developed using an eclectic model. The model used consists of three segments. The first segment of the survey elicited the activities within the domain of the campus, developed by examining and collecting information about the MSA's programs, activities and events.

The number of items included in the on-campus segment were thirteen (see appendix 2. The survey, items 13-26). In the survey segment that addressed engagement off-campus, items were derived from the Youth Inventory of Involvement (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Alisat, 2007). Most of those items focus on the aspect of practice within the scope of the local domain such as community service, politics, works of art, neighborhood, and participation in social events. Twenty-three items were included in this segment of the survey (see appendix 2. The survey, items 28-50). The last segment of the survey consists of eight items that address students' forms of action on-line (see appendix 2. The survey, items 53-60).

Technically speaking, the questions that derived information about the practice used a five-point Likert scale to examine the pattern and intensity of students' involvement. At the end of each of these segments, participants were asked in an open-ended question to briefly report any activity that was not listed. Qualtrics software provided by the University of Kentucky was used to design and distribute the survey. This web-based instrument was accessed through a URL. It was disseminated through the students' organization webpage on Facebook. Participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and their participation would be rewarded by lottery gift cards to compensate for the time spent.

The individuals invited to take part in this study were Muslim students enrolled in three campuses in the Mid-western region of the United States. There is no formal record that provides information about the total number of Muslim students across these three campuses; MSA students in leadership positions and supervisors on the three campuses helped as sources of estimates. The total number of students who identified as Muslim for these campuses was estimated at around 400-450 students, with approximately 150 affiliated with one of the three campus MSAs. Those who responded and completed the survey were 50 students. So, the response rate to the estimated total number of enrolled students was 12%.

Table 1 Estimated Numbers of Muslim Students on the Three Campuses 2018-19

Name of Campus	Estimated Number of Muslim Students	Estimated Number of Students Affiliated with MSA
Middle Public University	300-400	80-100
Southern Public University	100 +/-	40-50
Small Liberal Arts University	20-30	13

Analyzing the survey results revealed the set of activities the students preferred, the ones that brought them together, as well as those that combined them with other individuals across different practices. Through analysis of this survey, I also tried to explore the correlation or association between different demographic characteristics and the various activities, such as membership in the organization and intensity of engagement in activities, graduate vs non-graduate students degree of involvement in various activities, gender as related to participation in activities, and so on. These elements were generally presented under the concept of boundary in CoP. Another important dichotomy forwarded by the theory is that of participation and non-participation. The survey detected areas of concern for the Muslim students, what they chose to be involved in or ignore, with whom they established links through practice or neglected, the way they invested time and efforts, and the pathways they followed.

The analysis intended to compare the results across these campuses. But because the total number of participants was not high enough and because of the modest participation in two of the campuses compared to the third, comprehensive comparison was not conducted. Instead, I looked at the results of the survey in a holistic way and I left space for comparison in the focal qualitative part of the study, i.e., the interviews.

The statistical tool used to process the data is SPSS. Descriptive analysis was the method utilized to report and analyze the results of the survey. A univariate analysis provided an evaluation of variables and the frequency of all categories. Chi Square analysis was used to examine the relation between specific demographic characteristics and the survey questions to find any possible correlations. It was also used to account for the

subgroup differences including the gender, the national origin, and the educational status of the participants.

3.6 The Interviews

3.6.1 Interview Protocol

The qualitative part of the study followed the survey administration. Students were asked to voluntarily participate in 60-90-minute interviews. The interview (See Appendix 3) complemented the survey by exploring how the students conceive, understand, and make sense of the multilayered meaning of civic engagement. Through a semi-structured individual interview, students were asked to reflect on civic engagement.

The interview questions explored the way the MSA members ascribe meaning to civic engagement. Those questions try to understand the structure, purpose, process, value, implications, consequence of being a member in this organization, and the way those members steer the course of action for the MSA. Although the questions introduced to the participants generated individual responses, the focus of the study was more on the organization itself. The reason for this emphasis was that the access point to the information about the organization is through its members; the organization derives its existence from those members. Awareness of this point in historical time with all the contextual complexities emerged as the researcher interviewed the students. These main questions were points of departure and led to expansion and discovery. As detailed below, the interview questions were grouped into segments. Each segment addressed a main concept related to the meaning of CE as perceived by the MSA students.

The interview protocol consisted of five segments. The first one asked the students to describe the overall structure and types of activities they do as part of the organization. This includes the organization and regulation of activities according to the timespans either on weekly, monthly or annually. It also asked about who decides to do what and ways of promoting engagement as well as the dimensions and the environments of practice.

The second segment of questions derived information about the vision that guides the organization's course of action. In this part, the students reflected on the tenets or principles that give guidance to the organization. This includes the way they understand action and engagement, the personal motivation to be part of this entity, and whether the members have exchanges, conversations, or discussions about the guiding principles.

In the third segment, the students were asked to provide answers about their own understanding of civic engagement. This set of questions relates to the previous segment in that it probes the connection between the individual or collective conceptualization of practice and the ideological convictions.

The fourth segment focused on the procedural aspect of involvement in this organization. This incorporates key processes such as the role practiced within the organization and the forms of interaction with the people and environment. The other points addressed in this part touched on the challenges encountered and the way the university supports their efforts to promote civic engagement.

The final segment of questions dealt with the outcome of the work of this student organization. The questions here gave the students the opportunity to ponder about the value of their work, the effect of interconnection with different community/ies across the

domains of engagement. In addition, these questions addressed the way the engagement through those various activities influences the students and how they influence the broader society.

The questions presented in the qualitative section went through some expansion and modification during the early stage of the interviews. Student were asked before the end of the interview to reflect on the list of questions they were asked and state whether they would like to see any addition or if they had issues which should be addressed. A couple of students suggested to consider the change the organization has experienced over the years in its overall orientation. I also decided to add another pathway to the interview protocol to probe the involvement of international students and consider gender factors as the students interact with each other. Indeed, I was asked about the gender relations and the female position within the organization in a presentation of the topic during my participation in the American Anthropological Association conference in San Diego in 2018. I chose not to explore extensively the issue of gender relations because it needs an extensive and independent exploration; instead I have discussed secondarily female leadership of the organization and its potential implications.

3.6.2 Interview Participants and their Recruitment

There are important questions to think about when recruiting participants for an interview such as what is the theoretical perspective that guides the work, who could best answer the primary questions of the study and more specifically the interview questions, what are the defined standards of inclusion or exclusion, what is the number of participants in order to sufficiently investigate all aspects of the study, and what are the participants’

interest in being involved in the study. (Patton, 2002; Edie, 2008; Sargeant, 2012; Newington and Metcalfe, 2014)

Although the group I am studying has religious identification, I looked at civic engagement from a cosmopolitan perspective that includes identity across national or racial lines. Since I was examining an organization that embraces or attracts students based on their religious orientation, I included both US and non-US nationals across their ethnic and racial lines in the study. This was mainly implemented in the quantitative part of the study where I tried to invite Muslim students to fill out the survey. In the qualitative part however, I set more specific criteria for the participants to be interviewed.

Using CoP as the main theory that provided the structural framework for the study, I decided to primarily include the US Muslim students who have membership in the organization. I was also keen on considering other factors such as the intensity of involvement in the MSA as well as the role of the member within the organization. I also wanted to include members from the three campuses and secure the best possible diversity among participants with regard to the status of study (graduate/ undergraduate) and gender (male/ female). Racial variation was already present because Muslims in the US, and hence the MSAs are quite diverse groups.

I developed friendly relations with some of the MSA members at MPU through attending most of the major events held on campus as early as 2014. This included the halaqa meeting they regularly hold to educate attendants about various issues of faith, besides inviting scholars and renowned Islamic figures to MPU campus to speak to the public. I also attended two major conferences held by the MSA west, one of them at Ohio State University last year and a more recent one at the MPU. I also arranged for a meeting

with the MSA members at the MPU to speak to them about my project and had a positive response from the students.

Being a regular mosque attendee, I often meet some of the MSA members, especially in Friday prayer where we exchange greetings and talk. As mentioned previously, as part of my course work in the methods of evaluation class, I conducted small-scale research that addressed the relationship between Muslim college students and diversity. A total of 24 Muslim students from the MPU participated in this course report. The research mainly addressed Muslim students' perceptions of diversity on their campus and classroom.

The total number of the participants in the interviews was twelve individuals. Eight of those are from the MPU, two from the SPU, and two others from the ELAU. All but one of the participants are US students, only one MSA member was an international student from Bangladesh. I decided to add the non-US member because the engagement of international students was brought up by more than one interviewed member when they spoke about composition, recruitment, and involvement in the organization. Therefore, I wanted to see his perspective being involved in the organization and to examine the motive and nature of participation from an international perspective. His inclusion added minor comparative elements to the research.

There were five female and seven male participants. My preference was to interview the MSA members who were in leadership positions. I relied on a snowball method (Creswell, 2002) to recruit the students for the interview. Since the object of study is an organization, the students interviewed in the beginning helped as a lead to other participants. Also, the number of students to be interviewed was not precisely

predetermined. Instead, I planned to see how the information obtained throughout the interviews developed and became fully integrated. (Morse, 1995, Lowe et al., 2018) All the interviews were conducted in locations chosen by the interviewees (private room in campus library, masjid, lobby of a college), except for two interviews which were completed online using Skype. The time spent in the interviews ranged from 60-90 minutes so this should be 44 – 102). The maximum time spent during in an interview was 102 minutes, while the minimum time was 44 minutes. As an average, it took 60 minutes to complete an interview with each one of the interviewees. No interruption was experienced during the interviews except for one interview conducted in the Mosque. It was the time for *Salat al-'asr*: the late part of the afternoon prayer. We paused to perform the prayer and then came afterward to resume the interview.

I started with Othman who had been a president of the MSA and a graduate student in the Medical School. This participant still has a leadership position in a community center in the city. He maintains an active relationship with MSA members and provides advice and assistance. He helped to connect me to another former female president of the MSA who was at the time of the interview a graduate student at the Dental School. This is how I managed to recruit the rest of the students. The personal connection and the acquaintances with some of the organization members facilitated the whole process of recruitment. Seven out of the twelve participants have occupied leadership positions in the organization as presidents, two members have a very active role in the organization and the community, while two participants have moderate participation, and one was an international student. Those participants have different majors, including medicine, dentistry, chemistry, neurology, geography, mathematics, and biology. I assume that all of these students had

completed the online survey and a few of them expressed interest earlier to give their time for the interview by contacting the researcher using the information provided in the survey. Their participation in the study was attributed to altruistic motives, their willingness to help the researcher; and because the topic of the study addresses an organization that represents an inherent part of who they are as students on their respective campuses.

3.6.3 Interview Analysis

Through the questions proposed in the interview, I tried to explore the purposes, guiding visions, motives, and consequences of being engaged in civically oriented activities as members of a Muslim student organization. I also intended to examine how they affect the environment as a result of interaction with people and the way engagement affects them individually and collectively *in a reciprocal manner*.

The process of analyzing the qualitative data was guided by the general principles of thematic analysis. The epistemological grounds of this method are largely realist, constructionist, and essentialist. Using both deductive and inductive approaches, the researcher explored the topic as it exists in the context of inquiry. Braun and Clark assert that thematic analysis provides a flexible instrument to gain a deep understanding of the composing elements of the data in an integrated way. This method facilitates flexibility, helps the researcher to immerse in the data, and allows the ideas and themes to emerge throughout the process. (Braun and Clark, 2006, Vaismoradi et al, 2013)

Thematic analysis is used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes in the data. Within the frame of this method, a set of procedures are followed to conduct the analysis, which are: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. (Braun

and Clark, 2006, p. 35) As an extension of this method, I also relied on technical instruments and techniques of cycles of coding, and creating themes and causal relations among categories, as provided by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana in *Qualitative Data Analysis* (2014).

The gathered data was organized chronologically in accordance with the centrality of the information embedded in each interview. I stored all the audio recorded interviews in my personal computer to be transcribed in the order they were conducted. I transcribed all the interviews by myself rather than using a transcription service because doing that part by myself allowed me to dig deeper and immerse myself with both the spoken and written material. This gave me the opportunity to listen carefully to the speaker's account and capture the intentions conveyed through the sound, including the tone, pitch, voice, and pauses which also carry layers of meaning. Listening carefully to the vocal expressions helped to better decipher the message. I also transcribed everything being said by the interviewee even the occasions where he/ she had to reformulate the sentence, correct a mistake, or use filler words.

Then I made more than one thorough reading of each interview to comprehend the macro meaning and to get acquainted with the main and secondary ideas. I used ATLAS.ti (QDA) throughout the process of analysis. This included the different cycles of coding, developing and revising themes, writing memos, and making comments and notes about the emergent themes. ATLAS.ti was very beneficial as a classification tool because it allowed quick and easy access to both the emerging codes and the codes I was intending to formulate.

The first cycle of codes was largely descriptive; I mainly tried to describe the idea embedded in each unit of meaning. Then, in the second cycle, I tried to capture the essence of each described unit and to condense these into short codes. Sometimes the interviewee mentioned some important idea or concept that merited marking as *in vivo* code. The clusters of emergent codes were carefully examined to see if there was a thread that connected them together to consequently develop into a theme. The process involved a lot of moving forward and backward to refine, revise, or scrutinize the emerging codes and themes. The side commentary and notes were also very important in expanding or connecting the ideas within each interview or among them. Then, based on the clusters of themes and the main questions introduced during the interview, I started to write the first draft of each section. The writing process of each section involved identification of the argument to be introduced and the main ideas. The final outcome of each section underwent multiple cycles of revision and editing.

3.7 Role and positionality of the Researcher

The concept of positionality is intertwined with the standpoint theory which has its roots in feminism. Standpoint theory was born out of discussion about democratizing the production of knowledge and the right of different social classes to have their voices heard. At its core, the standpoint theory advocates and advances social equity and justice in knowledge production:

“It sets out a rigorous "logic of discovery" intended to maximize the objectivity of the results of research, and thereby to produce knowledge that can be for

marginalized people (and those who would know what they can know) rather than for the use only dominant groups in their projects of administering and managing the lives of marginalized.” (Harding, 1992, p. 444-445)

Positionality is mainly concerned with identity and world views; it has relation to the construction of knowledge from individual’s social locations and personal experience. Positionality critically debates the enigma of objectivity versus subjectivity when one is engaged in research. Researcher’s awareness of positionality and a topic’s multiple procedural aspects is quite important because researcher’s background influences the process and the outcome of the research. (D’Silva et al. 2016, Ganga and Scott, 2006) Placing the concept of positionality as a significant component in the research next to the concept of reflexivity in its various dimensions aims to maximize objectivity. Guillemin and Gillam present an encompassing identification of reflexivity as “an active process that requires scrutiny, reflection, and interrogation of the data, the researcher, the participants, and the context that they inhabit.” (2004, p. 274) Reflexivity is regarded by many scholars as a substantial component of the method and process of conducting research including the purpose of choosing the topic, selection of the participants, values that give motives to the researcher, ethical and personal consideration.

In this section, I am going to reflect on my position as researcher dealing with the dynamics of CE from the perspective of Muslim students with whom I share a portion of identity. I will also consider any possible biases involved in the implementation of the research. This is a necessary step because as Bourke points out: “Our own biases shape the research process, serving as checkpoints along the way. Through recognition of our biases, we presume to gain insights into how we might approach a research setting, members of

particular groups, and how we might seek to engage with participants.” (2014, p. 1) Although major decisions about the research are made by the researcher in its different stages, being fully cognizant of the explicit or tacit biases enhances the transparency and credibility of the work.

First of all, I practiced the role of an academic researcher in this study. I undertook the proposed research tasks and responsibilities as I engaged in a learning process of how to improve and acquire research skills. Several reasons attracted me to study civic engagement of Muslim students. Most importantly, the topic itself sounded appealing with its various communal values. As an international student from Iraq, a country that has experienced apocalyptic events for decades, I found that civic engagement is an essential pathway for stability, social cohesion, productive contribution, and democratic participation. The way that civic engagement is practiced in the US and in different platforms of higher education can be systemic, organized, and dynamic. Therefore, I wanted to approach this topic to identify the key characteristics of CE on the college campuses and to try to understand its practice in context and how the students conceptualize their roles as actors.

The concept of positionality is commonly represented through the metaphor of lenses the researcher wears to view the topic and the participants being studied. In terms of my positionality, I would say that I have had a mixed bag of positions. I was both insider and outsider with regard to the studied group. I was attached to the topic yet intended to take a neutral stance throughout the research process.

Being a Muslim student who shares faith identity with the students facilitated accessing the Muslim community and building rapport with the students. Attending the

activities organized by the Muslim students on campus provided the appropriate opportunity to interact or talk to some of the students. However, nothing was easy or straightforward due to generational differences between me and the undergraduate Muslim students. I tried to take part in the social activities they publicly announced on campus and invite participants, but because the students were younger than I am, I felt sometimes in awkward situations. For instance, I went once with a group of about 20 Muslim students to the bowling center in the city. I wanted to use that occasion to introduce myself to some of the Muslim students, but it felt somehow uncomfortable, although I tried not to show how I felt about it and acted normally. The students themselves were friendly, and I had nice and casual talks with some of them. In addition to that, the masjid served as the gateway to meet some of the students, to establish friendly relations with MSA students who attended, and to casually convey my intentions about the study I wanted to conduct.

Being an international student coming from Iraq made me feel like an outsider despite the faith identity I share with the students. These students have their own cultural characteristics, their unique national values, and other peculiarities associated with their social background. This was another impediment to consider with all its implications when it comes to mental and behavioral assumptions. However, what mitigated these concerns is the awareness that students on campus have diverse ethnic and racial origins and so difference within this environment was not unfamiliar.

The other challenge I was concerned about was the form of language to use during the interviews. English is my second language and the students I interviewed were born in the US; their native language is American English. I was worried that they might not fully understand the way I pronounce some words, or that I might sound too formal in the way

I formulate sentences when I tried to present questions to interviewees or follow up on their responses. However, I did not encounter any real problem or misunderstanding, in most cases the interviewed students were able to catch what I meant during those interviews.

Although I have a personal interest and some attachment to the community being studied due to the shared identity, I actively tried to have a neutral stance during the different stages of the study including the interviews, analysis, and interpretation.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

When it comes to studying a community such as that of Muslims, there is a generally inherent sensitivity for several complicated reasons. Islamophobia, the negative portrayal of Muslims in the media, and other defamatory stereotypes represent crucial factors that come into effect. (Said 2003, Sheehi, 2011, Alsutany, 2013) Studies show that ostracization, otherness, and victimization over the past decades have propagated a sense of suspicion and distrust among the Muslims and other groups. (Peek, 2011, Marvasti, 2006, GhaneaBassiri, 2013, Kazi, 2015, Sirin & Fine, 2007) For this reason, approaching Muslim individuals was more complicated than other communities of people. Recruiting participants in research about Islam or Muslims was anticipated to be imbued with caution and concern. However, my shared identity with the subjects both as a student and as a Muslim facilitated getting access and establishing rapport with some of the community members, especially within the context of the Blue City and the MPU campus. For the other two campuses, the organizations' supervisors were welcoming and helpful in reaching to the MSA students.

Although the study addresses a topic that might not be regarded as problematic because it deals with an issue of public interest, I was concerned that some of the students might not be fully responsive, ready to take the survey, or make the interview. Another caveat is that the study focuses largely on a Muslim student organization. Because of involvement in the MSA, it was assumed that students might be hesitant to participate, speak freely or provide answers to the questions included in the two parts of the study. Therefore, I was keen on informing the participants about the nature of the study, the issues to be covered; and expressed my readiness to answer any questions they might have. This could have mitigated any feelings of cautiousness or concern. The students were also told that their identity would remain anonymous and the researcher would make sure to maintain confidentiality of the obtained information.

Throughout my encounters with the participants in the interviews, I did not experience any issue or concern. All the interviews went smoothly, and the interviewees did not show reservation or objection towards any of the questions presented. They were reminded, before the beginning of the interview that they were free not to answer any question they deemed inappropriate or prefer to skip.

My personal presupposition derived from my shared identity with the participants might unconsciously make me lean towards a narrow interpretation of the data or understand the meaning in a way that lacks objectivity. Therefore, I was watching and reflecting on my own prejudice during the process of coding, interpreting, explaining, and representing the experiences of the participants in the interview.

Additionally, I thought that my background as an international student whose mother tongue is Arabic would probably serve a good purpose in the study. I expected that

dual language speakers of Arabic and English, those coming from the Middle East in particular, might prefer to use Arabic language during the interview. I also anticipated that there might be occasions in the interviews that the Arabic/English speakers among the participants will choose either to switch totally into Arabic or move back and forth between the two languages. All the interviewees however, used the English language with very few instances where they used some Arabic expressions that was quite familiar.

This research was conducted after getting approval from the IRB Office in the university. Their approval extended to all three campuses involved in the study. All the research requirements including the consent/ assent form, cover letter, and research announcement were formally authorized. The research was implemented in compliance with the IRB conditions and requirements. No changes were made to the protocol presented in the approved application. All the consent documents were signed and dated by the researcher and the interviewees. The interviewees were reminded to contact the IRB Office if they would like to have more information about the research or to express any concerns. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no harm or risk was inflicted on the participants throughout the process of participation in the study.

All research records that identify participants were kept confidential. Pseudonyms were assigned to the interview participants, the campuses, and the study locations. The data was saved in a personal computer accessed only by the researcher and protected by a password. All research materials including the signed consent, assent documents, generated data and interview recordings will be kept confidential for at least six years after the end of the IRB approval. Qualtrics software provided by the university was used to design and distribute the survey. This web-based instrument was accessed through a URL.

The researcher's access to the data generated from administering the survey was accessed using the university student account which was also protected by a password. All audio recordings were encrypted and protected against unauthorized access using a strong password.

CHAPTER 4: SURVEY RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This study attempts to understand how the Muslim college students practice civic engagement. In this quantitative part of the research, the questions presented in the survey cover various aspects of civic engagement as experienced by the Muslim students. This part of the study explores the practice, a central component of community of practice theory (Wenger, 1998).

In this chapter, the results of the survey will be presented. First, descriptive statistics of the participants will be introduced, including the information collected about their demographic background. In the second part, a description of the lessons derived from frequency, type, intensity, and domains of practice will be presented. Finally, Chi Square analysis will be used to examine the relation between specific demographic characteristics and the survey questions to find any possible correlations. The total number of participants in this survey was 50 Muslim undergraduates from across the three focal campus MSAs. Questions presented in the survey were closed ended. The participants were provided open-ended questions to add any additional forms of practice not covered by the researcher. In addition, respondents were asked to indicate at the end of the survey if they would be willing to participate in an in-depth interview. This chapter aims to describe aspects of civic engagement practiced by the respondents as an introduction to the qualitative research exploration of the meanings of civic engagement to MSA Muslim American students.

4.2 Survey Data: Descriptive Statistics

The individuals invited to take part in this study were Muslim students enrolled in three campuses in the Mid-western region. There is no formal record that provides information about the total number of Muslim students across these three campuses; instead I was able to get an estimate of the number of students in each one of these campuses, which totaled around 400-450 students (*Appendix 1. Table 2, Demographic Characteristics of Participants in the Survey*). Fifty students completed the survey. So, the respondents' rate to the total number of enrolled students is an estimated 11%.

Very few questions were left unanswered by the respondents; surveys with missing items were still considered valid because all participants completed the survey to the end. The proportion of the participants of those three campuses are not equal, one of them have more respondents than the two others. Although this might cause skews in the results, the data from those three campuses were processed in the aggregate due to the limited total number respondents. Also, the study is mainly concerned with understanding the meaning of civic engagement as practiced by a college student population that share a common faith. Findings from the survey data analysis were subsequently used to inform the questions asked during the in-depth interviews. During the interviews, some notable distinctions between the campuses emerged that will be discussed during the analysis of the interview data.

Figure 2 below presents details of the participants' gender, age, status of study, years at university, citizenship, racial/ethnic background, MSA membership, non-US country of origin. Table 2 (see Appendix 1) presents the demographic characteristics of the students who participated in the survey.

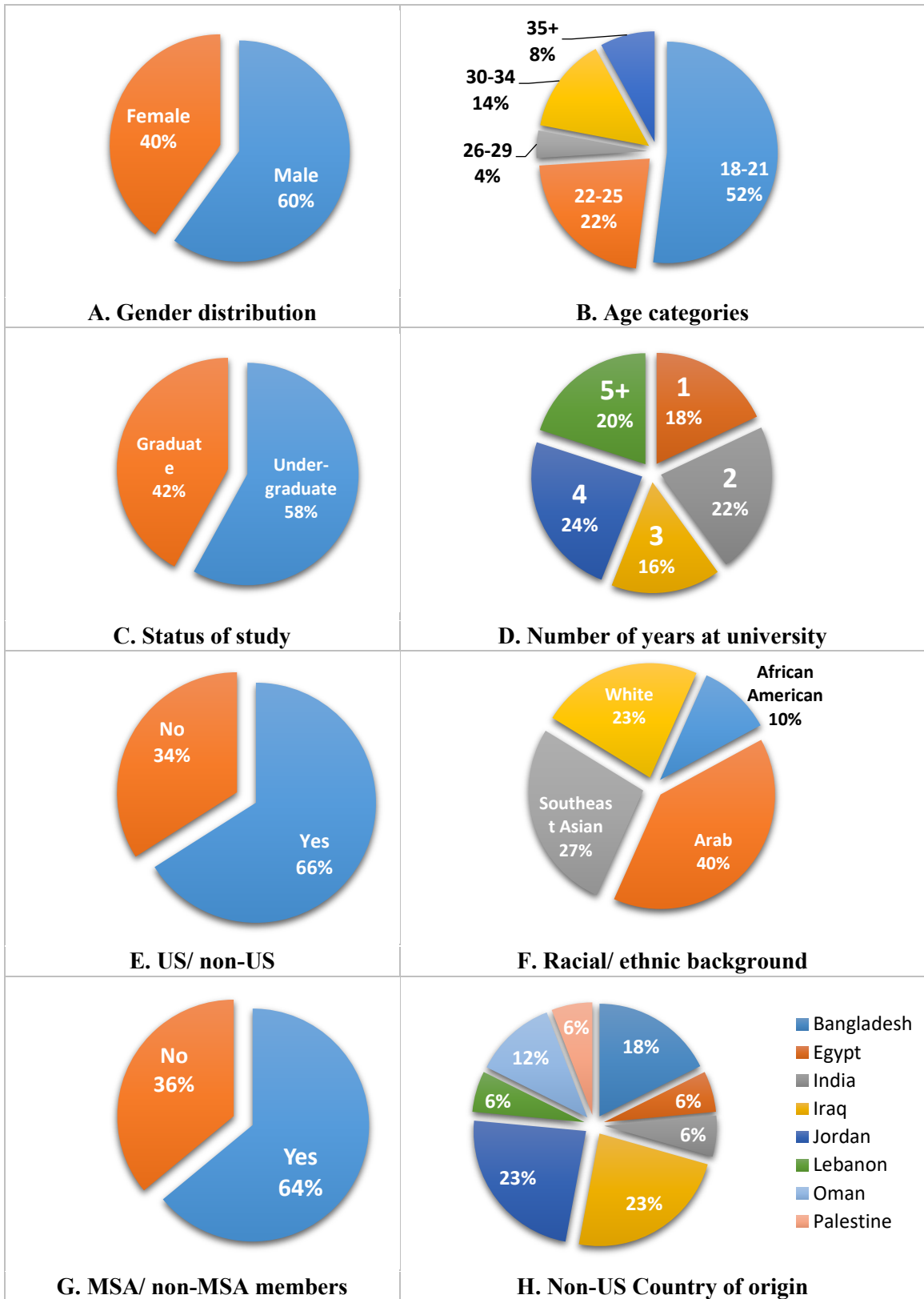


Figure 2 Descriptive statistics of the Muslim students surveyed in this study.

Overall, when it comes to the demographics of the students participating in this study, slightly more than half of the participants are 21 years old or younger. The study includes both graduate and undergraduate students. The proportion of the respondents who are enrolled in the science fields (Medicine, Engineering, Biology, Chemistry) are more than those enrolled in the humanities (Psychology, Arabic & Islamic studies, Social Work). Additionally, there is a variation in the number of years students have been enrolled in those campuses; nearly sixty percent of the participants have been students for three or more years. This denotes that the participants have an extended experience as part of the university's environment. Although over sixty percent of the participants are US students, the proportion of the non-US students who come from various regions in the world (Middle East, Asia, South East Asia) is important. This provides a useful comparative element to examine the pattern of involvement across the national/ transnational lines. Although the study does not address the students' racial and ethnic background in relation to their concepts of civic engagement, it was still important to highlight the diverse races and ethnicities of the participants. Highlighting the diversity gave a better understanding of the composition of the students in the sample. Also, although the 'mosque attended' question was included in the demographics' list of the survey, more useful information about students' affiliation with these mosques was obtained from the interviews than from the survey itself. The majority of the students indicated that they attend the mosque nearest to their dwellings. Finally, because the MSA platforms were used to announce, recruit, and encourage participation, more MSA than non-MSA members took part in the study.

4.3 Quantifying the Type, Frequency, and Intensity of Muslim Students' Participation

The questions of the student participation were divided into three groups that attempted to identify domains of students' engagement on campus, off campus, and online. For analytical purposes, the responses were also considered through a categorization aimed to define the nature of student's participation. Therefore, students' activities were classified into educational/ awareness-related activities, charitable work, advocacy, and inter-communal/ organizational. The characteristic that defined the educational and awareness activities is that they contribute to both individual and group development resulting from the knowledge gained through interaction. The charitable work is defined by Meriam Webster dictionary as the "generosity and helpfulness especially toward the needy or suffering." Advocacy is defined by Webster as "the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal." The questions presented in this set include social and political participation that aims to empower the communal bond among the Muslims and create a positive image of their identity. As for the inter-communal/ organizational activities, these are mostly focused on the enhancement of Muslim students' interconnection with non-Muslims in general.

Students were asked to provide their response to each question using a 5-point Likert (Likert, 1932) scale (always, most of the time, about half of the time, sometime, never). See table 3 for students' responses to the questions. See Appendix 1, Table 3: Frequency and intensity of Muslim students' participation in civic activities.

Based on the results, Muslim students are inclined to attend major public events which attract the larger community of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The public speaker

event, for instance, is important in the academic environment, because attendants usually make contribution by raising questions or provide constructive comments. Students also have preference for Muslim Student Association event (Halaqa in particular) where learning and interaction take place. Group activities attract wider engagement than one-to-one activities such as peer tutoring or performing arts. In general, it could be said that collective activities with broader participation of the community are more appealing to the Muslim college students. This could be attributed to the inherent characteristics of religious oriented organizations, which tend to have a collectivist attitude (Cohen & Hill 2007; Cohen, 2016; Ahmad, 2011; Musah, 2011).

On the other hand, the acts of charity practiced by the Muslim college students have material and non-material manifestations; it could either be through donating monetary funds or by providing support and helping to set up events. In this regard, the mosque is considered to be an important gateway to marshal efforts especially during the Friday prayer, which is an incumbent weekly ritual for Muslims.

It is also interesting to note that the Muslim students in this sample are less involved in political activities. Their efforts are more directed towards the social service work. Numbers show that there is low engagement in volunteering for political campaigns or collecting signatures for petition drives or even promoting voting. A similar pattern is found among the youth in US in general. (Putnam, 2015) However, it is noticed that these young students, called sometimes the millennial generation (Dimock, 2019), tend to use the social media in its multiple forms to improve how Muslims are generally perceived.

Inter-community and inter-faith activities are an important course of action that attract the Muslim students. They like to help people in need within the geographic scope

of their cities by serving food or providing medical service. Few of them, however, are engaged in individual initiatives such as blood donation. And since Muslims have their own service centers, they are less involved in volunteering for refugee center.

4.4 Correlation between Certain Demographic Characteristics and the Practice

The demographic questions were used to identify the main characteristics of the students participating in the survey. Certain descriptive categories of the participating students (gender, citizenship of the students, MSA vs non MSA membership, graduate vs non-graduate) have been selected to examine if they have any significant correlations to the answers provided by the students to the survey questions. Those variables were chosen to see if they have any statistical significance in relation to the 44 questions in the survey. It was assumed that they may have an association based on the information derived from the interviews that were conducted simultaneously. To do that, the responses were categorized as either 'Mostly' or 'Never'. "Always, most of the time, about half of the time, and sometimes responses were binned together as "Mostly", while "Never" was recoded as "Never". The purpose of this merger into two dichotomies was to divide the responses provided by the students into basically those who practice the activity regardless of the degree of involvement and those who don't.

A Chi-squared test was used to analyze the existing relationships. There are multiple reasons for using this method of analysis; the variable being used are nominal, the data in the cells are frequencies or counts, the variables are mutually exclusive where each participant contributed to the data to only one cell, and the sampling method used was the convenience sampling (McHugh, 2013, Nardi, 2018).

I started by examining whether the gender (male or female) has any correlation with the 44 items presented in the survey. See Table 4., Appendix 1. Chi-squared analysis of gender and activities (N=50). For the questions in the awareness/ educational group, no significant statistical relationships were found for those questions between males and females. However, three items listed within the set of awareness/ educational activities that occur mostly within the scope of the campus were found to have significant correlation with gender. For all of these three items, the results showed that considerable higher number of male MSA students participate in those activities than the female MSA students (See figure 3. A, B, C). Those three items are listed below:

- Attends events related to other minority groups, $p < .059$.
- Attending Friday prayer and other Salats with community members, $p < .008$.
- Deliver Khutbah on one of the Fridays, $p < .018$.

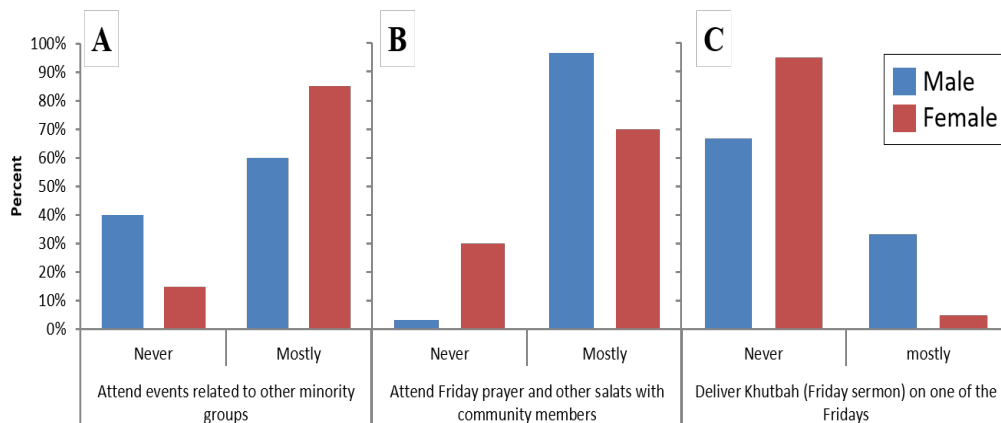


Figure 3 Students' gender and (A) attending events related to other minority groups, (B) attending Friday prayer, and (C) delivering Khutbah.

In the second set that consists of questions that deal with acts of charity, two items were found to have significant statistical correlation with gender. The first is making

donations to the masjid, $p < .012$. The proportion of female Muslim students is lower than the male students who are engaged in this activity. The second item is donating to support those in need, $p < .043$. The female students outnumbered the male in this practice. See figure 4 A, B.

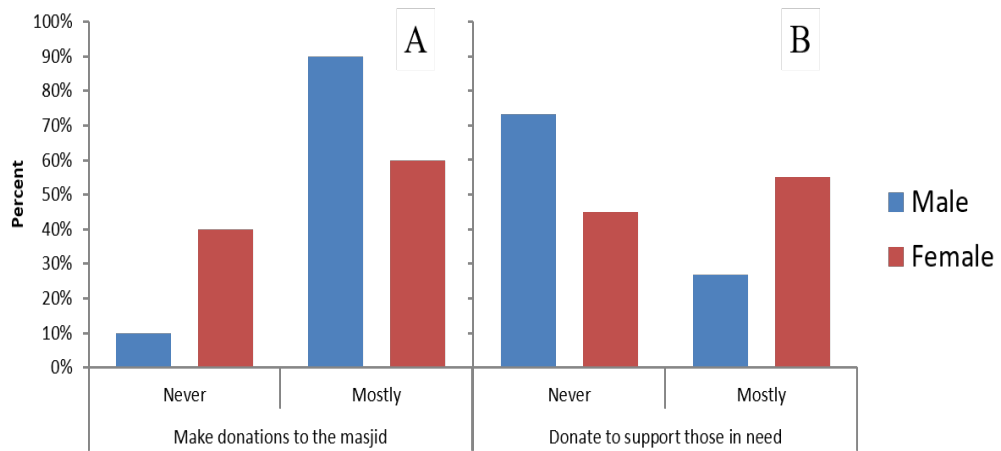


Figure 4 Students' gender and making donations to the masjid (A), and donating to support those in need (B).

None of the items listed under advocacy, which are related to standing by the Muslim community and reflecting active citizenship mostly through online activities, have significant relationship with gender except for one item; blog to dispel misconceptions about my religion, $p < .02$. The percentage of male students who are involved in this practice is remarkably higher than the female Muslim students. See figure 5, A.

As for the Inter-communal/ organizational activity that is mostly focused on the local community, those questions did not reveal correlation with gender of the participating students. One item in this group however, taking care of another family's children, showed

a significant relationship with the gender, $p < .05$. Females are statistically more likely to be engaged in this activity. See figure 5, B.

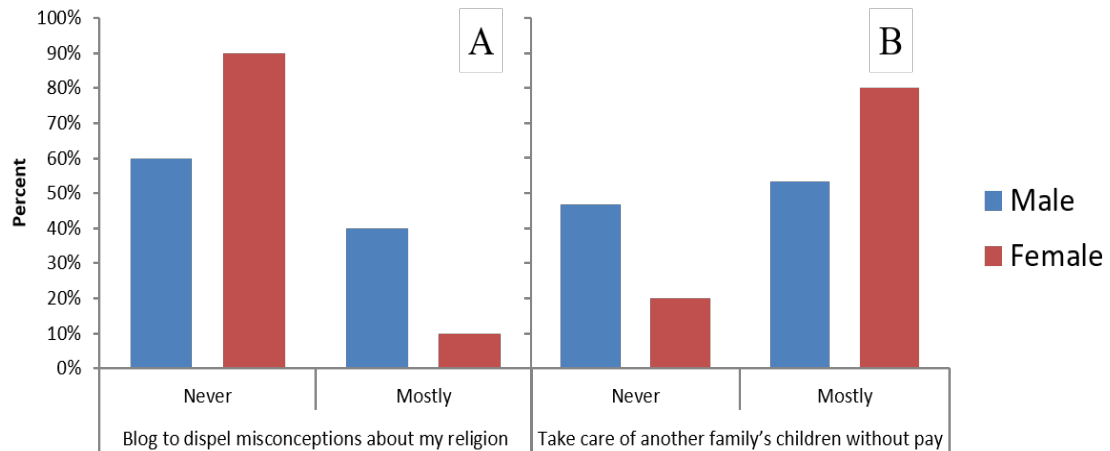


Figure 5 Students' gender and blogging to dispel misconceptions about their religion (A) and taking care of another family's children (B).

Another demographic indicator that has been analyzed using Chi-squared test to examine its relation to the items in the survey was the US versus non-US citizenship. See Appendix 1. Table 5., *Chi-squared analysis comparing the 44 questions comparing the US and non-US citizenship of the participants (N=50)*.

13 out of the total 44 items were found to have statistically significant difference. Of the awareness/ educational activities, five items out of 12 have statistical significance. For all of these five items, the results showed that considerable higher number of US students participate in those activities than the non-US students (See figure 6. A, B, C, D, E.) Those six items are listed below:

- Attending halaqa with other students to discuss faith related issues, $p < .005$.
- Attending an interfaith event, $p < .002$.
- Attending interstate events/ conferences related to Muslim students, $p < .02$.

- Participating in creative or performing arts, $p < .05$.
- Delivering Khutbah on one of the Fridays, $p < .048$.

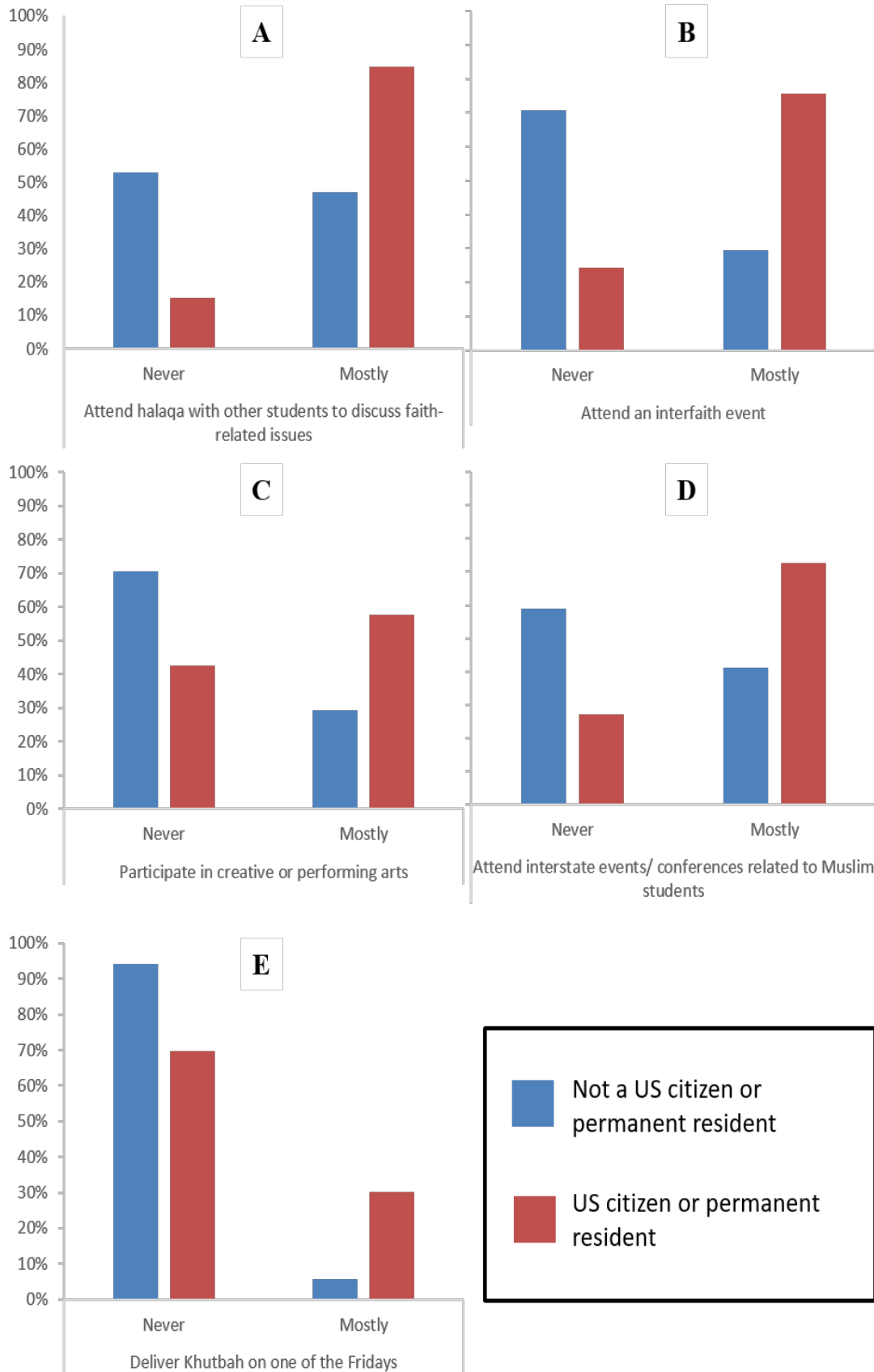


Figure 6 Comparison of US and non-US students engaged in Muslim religious practices.

Two of the charitable works items showed differences between the US and non-US Muslim students. First, donating to support those in need, $p < .006$. Second, volunteering to distribute food, $p < .003$. Both of these activities revealed that more US Muslim students than non-US tend to be involved. See figure 7. A, B.

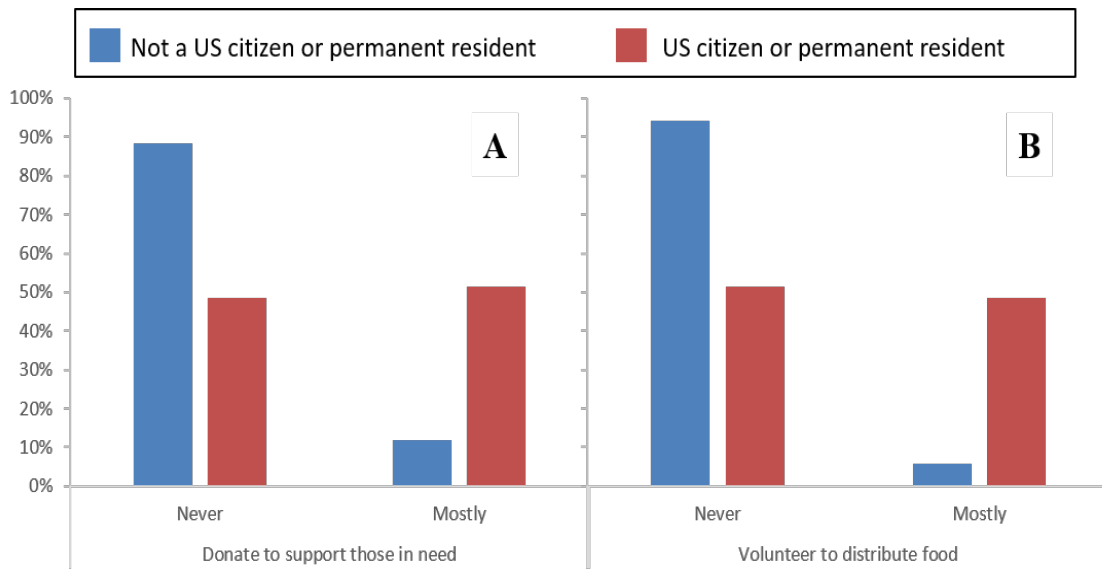


Figure 7 Comparison of US and non-US students making charitable actions (A and B).

Another two items listed in the set of advocacy activities that happens mostly online revealed statistical differences between the US and non-US Muslim students. Participating in protest to defend the right of Muslims, $p < .03$ and marching to challenge injustice against Muslims, $p < .02$. The results also showed here that the US Muslim students practice those activities more than their Muslim peers of the non-US citizens. See figure 8. A, B.

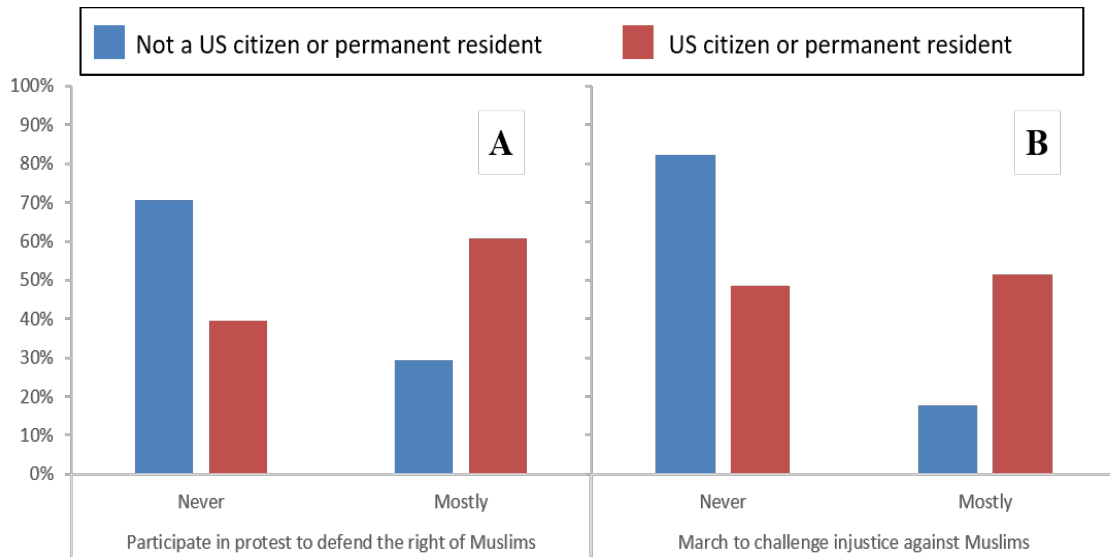


Figure 8 Comparison of US and non-US students defend the rights of Muslims (A and B)

When it comes to the inter-communal/ organizational activities, the US and non-US category also indicated statistical differences across 5 questions of the students' responses. Across all of these five activities listed below, results showed that the US Muslim students tend to be engaged at higher proportion than the non-US Muslim students.

See figure 9 A, B, C, D, E.

- Volunteering to help in a community outreach (service) center, $p < .01$.
- Volunteering to help in a food kitchen, $p < .01$.
- Helping to distribute or donate food, $p < .001$.
- Collaborating with other student organizations, $p < .001$.
- Helping plan or organize neighborhood or community event, $p < .03$.

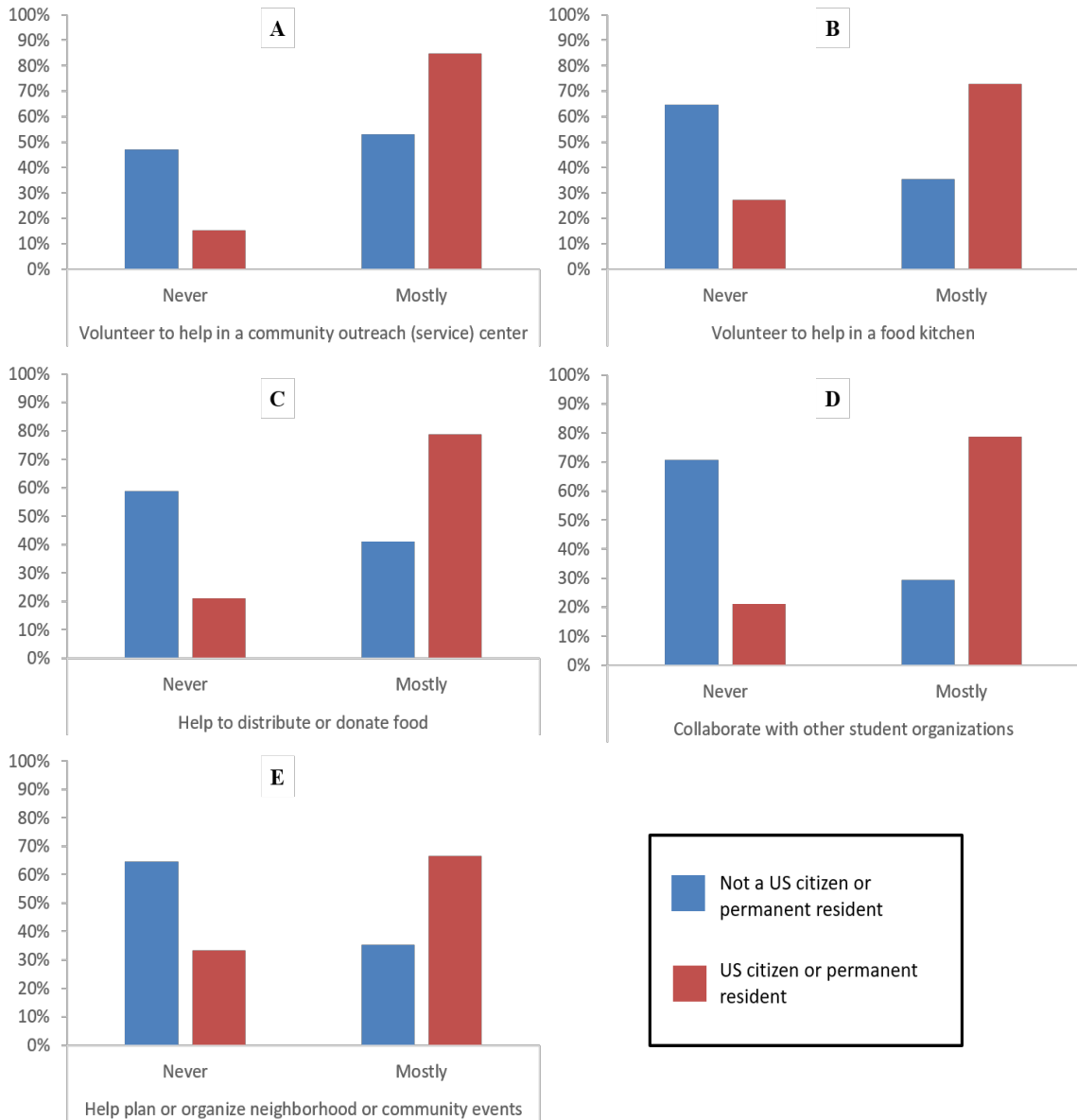


Figure 9 Comparison of US and non-US students engaged in civic volunteer work

The demographic variable that revealed the most differences between the participating students is the MSA and non-MSA Muslim students. *See table 6., Appendix 1. Chi-square analysis comparing the 44 questions comparing against the MSA and non-MSA Muslim students (N=50).*

Out of the 44 items included in the survey, there have been 15 items that revealed significant correlation. The set of questions listed under the educational/ awareness activities that take place within the scope of the campus showed 6 significant differences between the MSA and non-MSA members. For all of these six items, the results showed that considerable higher number of MSA students participate in those activities than the non-MSA members (See figure 10. A, B, C, D, E, F). Those six items are listed below:

- Attending halaqa with other students to discuss faith related issues, $p < .009$.
- Attending interstate events/ conferences related to Muslim students, $p < .002$.
- Attending interfaith event, $p < .00$.
- Attending events for distinguished public speakers, $p < .01$.
- Participating in discussion about a social or political issue, $p < .002$.
- Delivering Khutbah on one of the Fridays, $p < .005$.

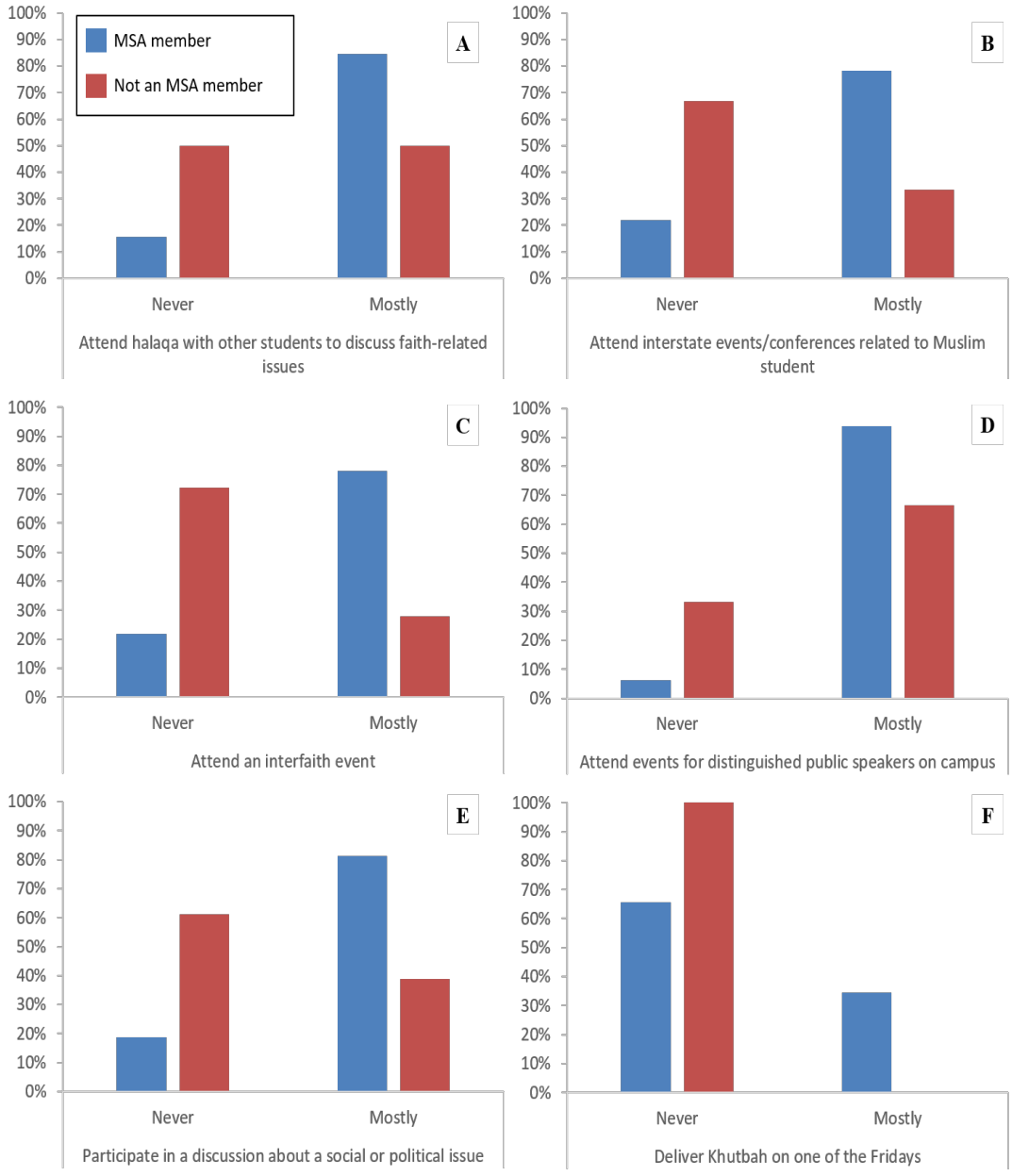


Figure 10 Comparison of MSA vs non-MSA participating in faith related events

For the set of charitable works, one item (volunteer to distribute food) have significant difference in relation to membership in the organization, $p < .01$. Non-MSA students are less likely to be engaged in this activity than their counterpart of the MSA members. (See figure 11. A)

Several items in the set of advocacy related activities showed correlation with the membership in the MSA. Out of the 17 items in this group, the results revealed 5 of them are correlated. These results showed remarkable differences between the MSA members and the non-MSA across all of these five practices listed below (See figure 11. B, C, D, E, F):

- Marching to challenge injustice against Muslims, $p < .05$.
- Following on social media advocates or activists who defend students' religious identity or empower the community, $p < .03$.
- Advocating for an issue or concern related to students' faith and other faith groups, $p < .006$.
- Participating in rally (march) for public cause, $p < .05$.
- Signing a public petition, $p < .004$.

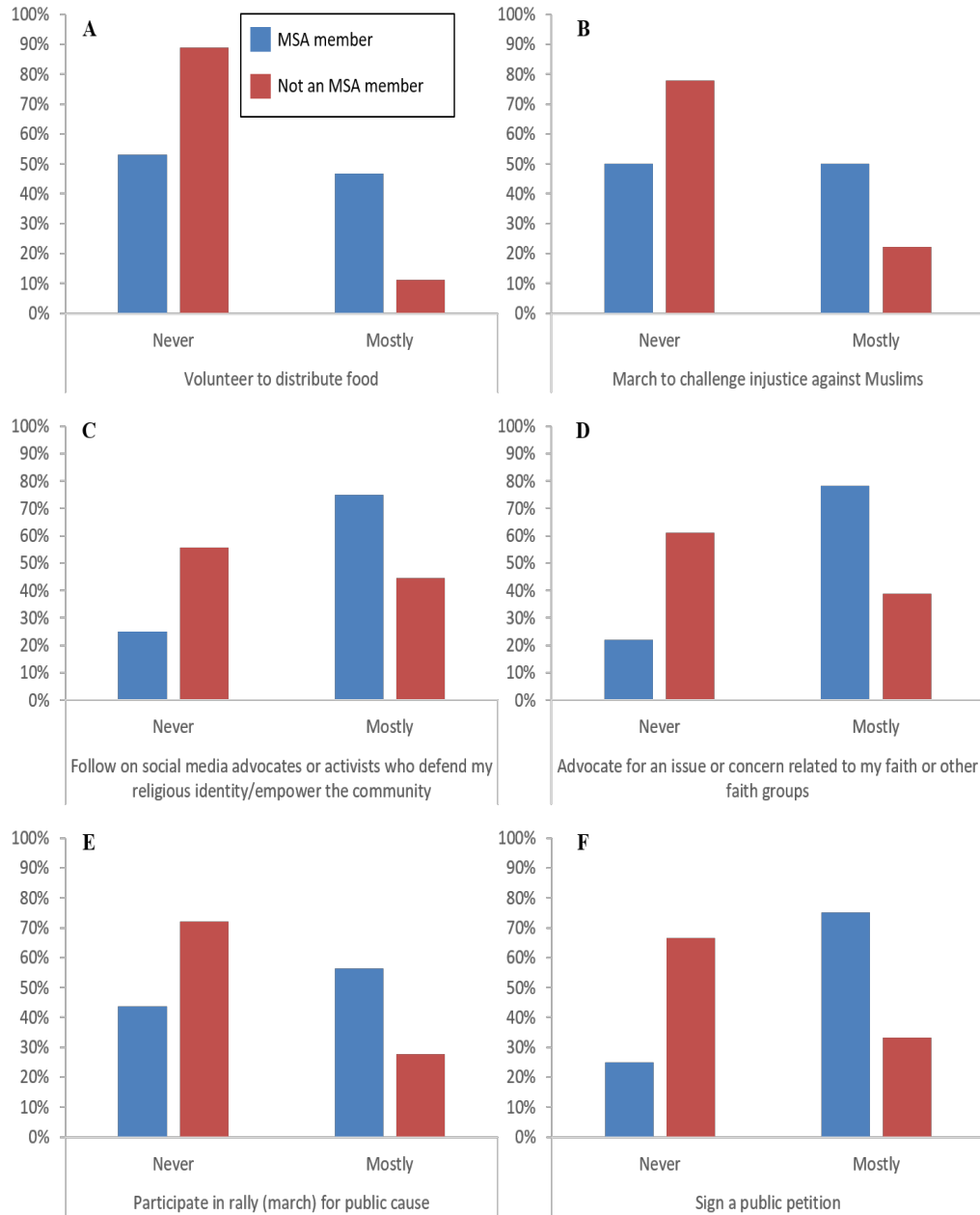


Figure 11 Comparison of MSA vs non-MSA engaging in activism

As for the inter-communal/ organizational activities that are based locally to a large extent, statistical significances appeared in 3 of 12 items in this set. For those three remaining items in this set of questions, the MSA members had comparatively higher counts than the non-MSA members (See figure 12. A, B, C). These three items are:

- Raising funds for the needy, $p < .03$.
- Collaborating with other student organizations, $p < .01$.
- Helping plan or organize neighborhood or community events, $p < .01$.

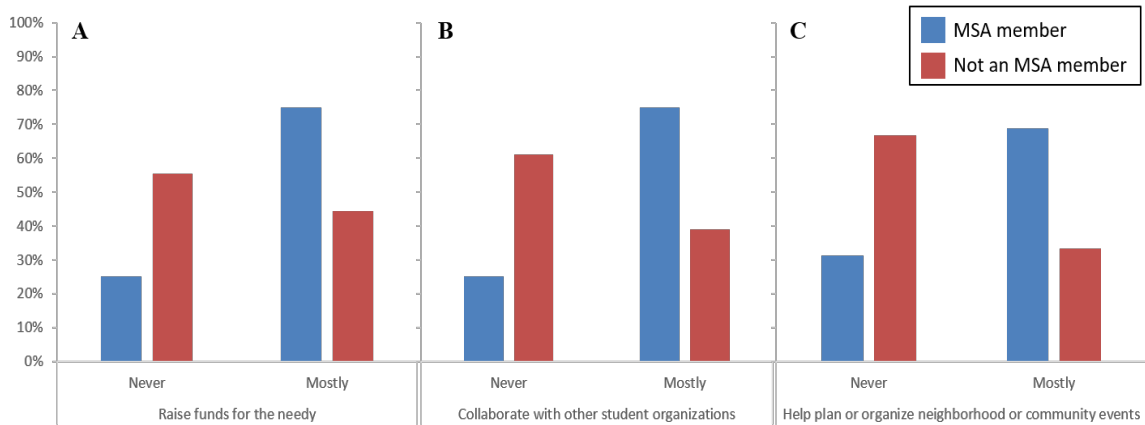


Figure 12 Comparison of MSA vs non-MSA engaging in civic activities

The last variable tested to examine any statistical significance using Chi-squared test is the relationship between the study status (undergraduate or graduate) of the Muslim students and the questions of the survey. See table 7., Appendix 1. *Chi-square analysis comparing the 44 questions comparing against the Graduate under-Graduate Muslim students (N=50).*

Of all the 44 questions in the survey, 6 questions were found to have statistical difference in the graduate/ undergraduate category. For all of these six questions the results reflect considerable differences in engagement between the two groups (See figure 13. A, B, C, D, E, F), where more of the undergraduate students being involved than the graduate Muslim students:

- Volunteering to distribute food, $p < .002$.
- Collaborating with other student organizations, $p < .01$.
- Volunteering or donation to blood donation center, $p < .02$.

- Helping to distribute or donating food, $p < .02$.
- marching to challenge injustice against Muslims, $p < .04$.
- attending an interfaith event, $p < .03$.

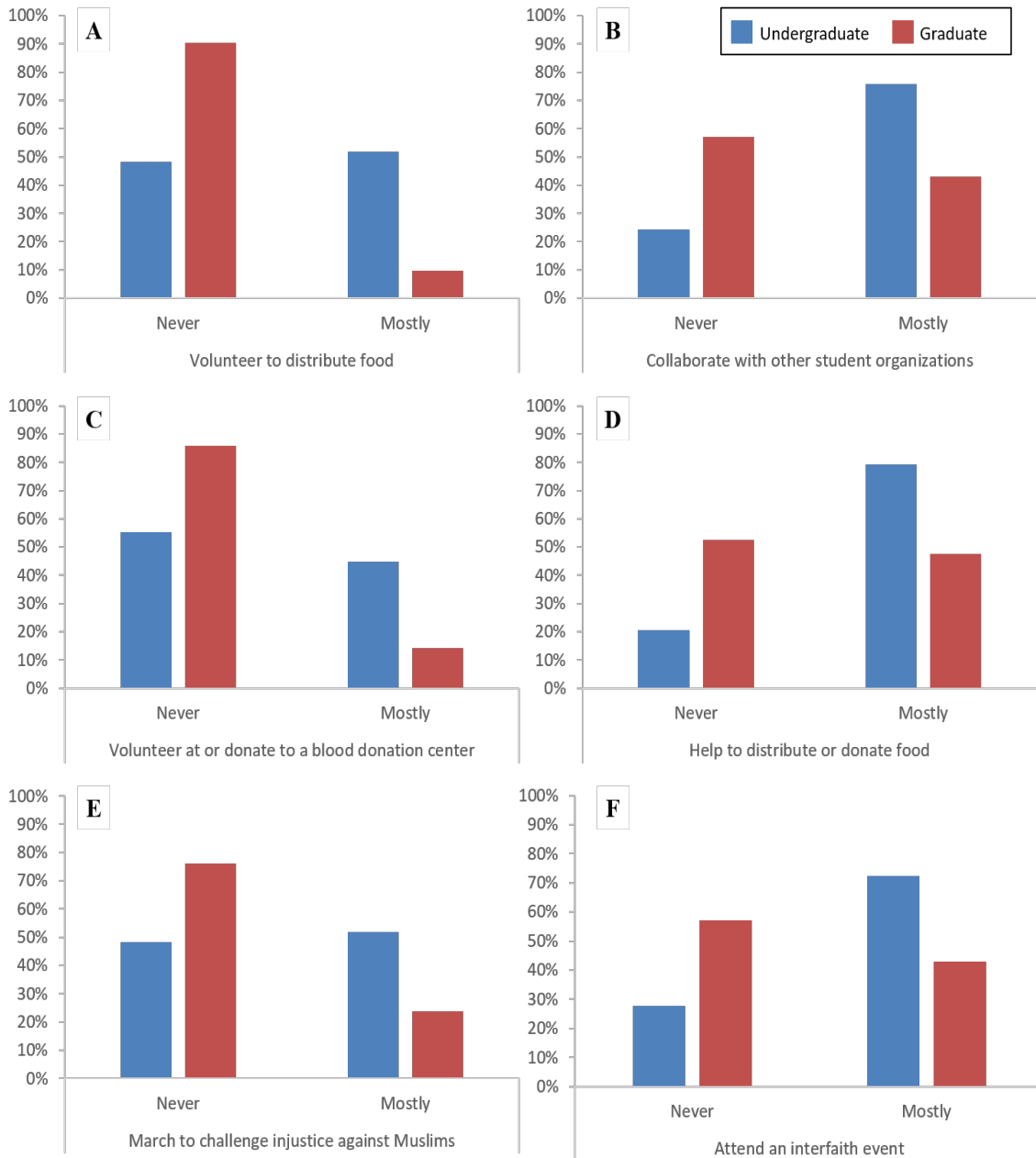


Figure 13 Comparison of Graduate and Undergraduate students engaging in activities

Two of the students responded to the open-ended question about other practices not mentioned in the survey. One of them said “work to implement inclusive policy on

campus”, and the other commented, “participate in different athletic teams, attend different international gatherings, arrange monthly gathering for my department students and summer retreats, fundraising for annual walks to fight epilepsy, Parkinson disease, AHA, and cancer, and other activities.” The points suggested by these two students could be classified as niche areas which are compatible with certain specific persons. Implementing an inclusive policy on campus is part of a comprehensive task adopted by the educational institution through designated offices and professionals who have the required expertise and skills. This research provides some knowledge on how to create an inclusive policy through broader civic engagement. The other suggestion mainly addresses areas in the athletic and medical fields. However, the survey of the research covered various practices not restricted to certain discipline or field.

For the major part of the activities, no statistical difference was found based on the gender of the students. The activities function as a common equalizer between the male and female students. Male and female Muslim students are equally involved but they differed in a few practices; such as attending Friday prayer and delivering Khutbah. The issue of gender and religious inclusivity is complex and controversial (Shannahan, 2013, Nyhagen, 2019). But, the explanation for that difference is probably the Islamic religious tradition. While the Muslim females have the freedom to attend salat in the mosque, prophetic teachings indicate a preference for the females to pray at home. This is why more males than females in general are usually present at the mosques and hence engaged in more activities organized there, such as making donations to the masjid which also showed similar statistical difference. However, female involvement varies both in terms of the activity and the mosque itself. Some mosques more than others encourage female

involvement in different activities such as teaching Arabic and basics of Islam. Female Muslim students scored higher than the male in taking care of another family's children which could also be ascribed to female's customary role not only in the Islamic culture but also in other cultures as well.

The nationalities of the participants, specifically US and non-US showed remarkable differences across numerous activities. Out of the 44 items, 13 revealed variations. Many studies have examined the differences between the US and the international students (Reid, 1997, Ladd and Ruby, 1999, Mamiseishvili, 2011, Ward and Kennedy, 1993, Zhou et al., 2008, Smith and Khawaja 2011, Cameron, 2016). Those studies address a range of relevant topics and are vary by discipline; psychological, sociological, socio-cultural and psycho-cultural. They tackle issues including the process of acculturation, cross-cultural transition, educational difficulties, and social challenges as well as other issues that the international students encounter.

Drawing a distinction between Muslim international students and US Muslim American students is a complex process due to considerable commonalities and striking differences between the two categories. Although an important aspect of their identity is shared, which is the faith, they have several other differences. This study is not making direct comparison between the two groups, but the difference is secondarily addressed as it comes up here in the quantitative part and in the qualitative part as well.

A dichotomy of participation and non-participation by CoP helps to understand the intensity of involvement across various practices of the US and non-US students. It could be said that the transnational experiences, the challenges the international Muslim students encounter, sense of belonging and attachment, language and cross-cultural considerations

as well as group identification, are all important factors that explain why the Muslim students tend to be engaged in some practices rather than others (Schatz, 2008, Abualkhair, 2013, Osburn, 2005, Tummala-Narra and Claudius, 2013, Mohammed Marzouk, 2012, Razek and Coyner, 2013, Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern, 2015, Hart, 2016). Moreover, non-US Muslim students may prefer to join their own national organizations on campus. Even the practice of Islam in the US and the kind of activities it promotes are somewhat different than what is culturally practiced abroad.

The two groups expressed different attitudes toward protesting to defend the right of Muslims or marching to challenge injustice against them. It could be said that the non-US Muslim students are less inclined to participate out of fear that they may incite suspicion being foreigners or out of doubt about the value of protesting or marching (Charles-Toussaint and Crowson, 2010). Although they do not get involved in activities promoting Muslim rights, they still participate in several other activities.

To be both a US citizen and an MSA member is another important indicator for engagement in MSA activities. The activities are developed, popularized and managed by members of MSA. They have the means, logistics, social ties, and service centers that facilitate their involvement. Also, most of those student members have tendencies towards social service. In other words, they have stronger belonging to the social environment than the non-US. Moreover, the US students have the leading position in the organization. The shared cultural practices, the friendships, social bonds with the local Muslim community are stronger among the US Muslim students which leads to higher involvement. Non-US students are largely newcomers who are still discovering way of life in this country.

The other categorical variation was between the MSA and non-MSA students. In general, it was found that organization's membership is the essential element behind this difference. Students who are affiliated with campus organizations were consequently more involved in activities. Numerous studies (Haslam, 2011; Dutton et al., 1994; Bowman, et al., 2014; Engberg, 2006; Harper and Quaye, 2007; Museus 2008; Pike, 2003) show the impact of organizational membership on identity and behavior. On the other hand, students who join an organization are supposed to be part of its body; they have a role to practice depending on their positions and statuses. Moreover, most of the activities are organized, resourced, and promoted by the student organization. This does not mean however, that the non-MSA students are not involved or do not have membership in other student organizations both on campus or even beyond. But the organizational affiliation encourages the student to be more active and increases the motivation for civic participation even beyond the scope of the organization. This could be attributed to student's appreciation of the value of the communal work.

The category with the least difference was between the graduate and the undergraduate students. Overall, students in those two groups are engaged in the activities albeit with different frequency. Undergraduate students are affiliated with students' organizations more commonly than the graduate students, which may lead undergraduates to have broader levels of involvement. The graduate students' academic and work commitments can be more intense than that of the undergraduate. Some graduate students have institutional and academic roles on their campuses such as teaching or working as research assistants which take from their time and energy.

The information derived from the survey drove my attention for the interviews to the effect and power of organizational involvement, the structure of the organization, and the way the students embraces CE. The survey also made me think about including in the interviews at least one participant from the international students to see his/her perspective on civic participation. Through the found correlations, for instance between gender and certain practices, I was interested in knowing more about the female role in the organization and whether the female participants have any peculiar perceptions about running the organization and involvement. In the survey, I thought that the online involvement deserves to be a separate category of civic involvement, but it was not that actively present in students' narrative during the interview. Moreover, the knowledge gained from the survey made the interview questions more focused on the manifestations of practice and its meaning, especially in relation to the local community.

CHAPTER 5: INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with the MSA members and is structured in line with the components of CoP. I start by examining the organizational composition of the Muslim Student Organization including the ethnic, racial, and denominational composition of its members. I also describe the supervision, guidance, decision making, received support, and the recruitment of students.

I then analyze the various sources that guide the vision behind the civic engagement of Muslim students. This vision is normally translated into actions and interactions with fellow students on campus and with the local community. Against this background, I also examine the tripartite relationship that combines faith, service, and participation, focusing on how the students use the service-oriented activities to express their faith. In addition, I examine how Muslim students perceive the concept of civic engagement and their individual perspectives of its different approaches. I also make an examination of how the Muslim students learn and acquire civic habits from their faith and their schooling system in the US.

The chapter additionally addresses forms of connection, shared activities, services and collaborations the MSAs have with campus and local community. In relation to the concept of boundary, the mutual and multivariate relationships between mosque and Muslim students are highlighted. I also analyze the students' views of their relationships with their campuses, their experiences in those institutions, and climates of civic engagement. Then I address the forms, pathways, and benefits of interaction, socialization, and discussion that occur between the Muslim students involved in the MSA and different

individuals and entities. After that, I examine the mutual effect of involvement in the MSA on the student members and on their environment through the various aspects of socialization, interaction, and service. The last section addresses the MSA challenges from the perspectives of students as they manage their organization and the way they encounter and solve problems.

5.1.1 Structure, composition and the characteristics of the organization

A fundamental aspect of US democracy is the freedom of religion and association. Those rights inscribed in the US constitution allow people of different faiths to form the organizations and assemblies they identify with. Organization, as a substantial component of CoP, is the nucleus around which the identities revolve and make concerted activities. The MSA is thought of as an organized social entity within the campuses. In fact, it is seen as an organization within a broader organizational structure which is the university.

In this section, I will examine the structure of the MSA, and the ethnic, racial, and denominational composition of its members. I will also cover the supervision, guidance, decision making, received support, and the recruitment of students. The descriptions presented here rely on the accounts of the students. No formal record or website that represents that organization is being utilized.

In order to better understand how the MSA operates as an organization, I borrow the ideas of theorists such Lounsbury and Beckman (2015) who stress the importance and vibrancy of organizational theory and its relevance to practice, networking, and institution. Part of the issues the organizational theory addresses is the relation between the structure of the organization and the manifestations of practice. I also take guidance from the seminal

work of Ashforth and Mael (1989) who theorized on the relationship combining social identity theory and group organization. This relationship is mutually interdependent; on the one hand, members of an organization derive their sense of self from the group they identify with, and on the other hand their collective practices shape the character of the organization.

I argue that the values, beliefs, and cultural characteristics are shared grounds that pull the Muslim students together. The organization they identify with is an extension of the world beyond the campus. The campus represents a free space for those individuals to cluster together and to practice activities consistent with the moral and behavioral aspects of their faith. Moreover, presence of Muslims in the US—the Muslim students in this case—allows them to acquire and adopt democratically oriented behaviors derived from the context they live in.

The MSA is composed of people with diverse ethnicities, backgrounds and nationalities. However, the majority of the MSA members are US-born while the international students have partial involvement. The leadership positions and the committee memberships are always occupied by the US born students. This composition and character have an implication when it comes to the practice of civic engagement and their overall orientation, as we shall see later. Speaking about the make-up of the MSA, Amal from the Eastern Liberal Arts University points out:

It is pretty diverse group of people, so we have a lot of children of immigrants, a lot of immigrants themselves, we have a student from Gambia, from Kenya, they moved to America when they were younger and then came to here, and then we have international student from Egypt and international student from Bangladesh, and then we have a good amount of Pakistani Muslims and Indian Muslims and they are all children of immigrants, myself included, and then we have a student

from Bosnia, well his family from Bosnia, but he grew up in America, and we have white American convert. Yes, there are a lot of people from different places, a lot of them from out of state, some of them in state, some of them international too.

Although there is a variation in the number of students and the size of each of the organizations studied, diversity of the students' backgrounds is a common characteristic across all of these organizations. This is noticeable in other Muslim students' organizations elsewhere in the US as recounted by some of the interviewed students. Most of the members are second generation students whose parents have migrated from different countries to the United States.

In addition to the ethnic, racial, and national diversity of the students, religious orientations are not symmetric among them. Some of them are conservative Muslims, others could be labeled as liberal Muslims; even their demeanor and the way they dress vary, particularly the female students. Some of the female participants interviewed wear the hijab whereas others do not. This could be attributed to several factors associated with the students' family backgrounds or the participants' perspectives of being a Muslim given the context of social freedom they live in (Oppenheim, 2004). Some think that America has its own version of Islam, as noted by one of the participants. Speaking about the diversity of the group, Tuqa from the Eastern Liberal Arts University (ELAU) explains:

If you look at our MSA, we have not only diversity in terms of the racial and ethnic background but also in terms of people relationship with Islam. Like honestly if you put us in a room together and ask people to come in pick out who is a Muslim, I don't even think figure out that all us where Muslim, we just don't fit into that stereotype that the people have, of what Muslims look like and act like and believe in.

This female participant spoke effectively about a key feature of Muslims in the US -- they cannot be reduced into a specific shape or image. Although they share the same

faith, they are different in many aspects. Their religious belief, perception, and practice of Islam is not monolithic. She thinks that it is necessary for the Muslims to do all they can to represent themselves in a different way from the conventional pattern promoted by the mainstream media.

Reflecting on the character of the Middle Public University (MPU), Othman characterizes the MSA as having tendencies towards conservative Islam. However, he explains that even the term conservative could have various meanings. He stresses that the organization has a strong bond with the community:

I think the MSA with the overall be considered more conservative, you know the term is relative, but compared to other MSAs is probably more conservative and more community oriented, very very connected to the other parts of the community.

The communal bond of the MSA comes through its connection with their affiliated Islamic centers. Some of the students have membership in the MSA as well as other Islamic organizations in the community, especially the masjid. Although the mainline denomination of the organization is Sunni Islam, the members are keen on accommodating the Shia Muslims and making an open space to all Muslims regardless of their madhabs (streams of Islam). Although Othman stresses that the overall orientation of the organization is Sunni Islam, he still thinks that they have a democratic attitude by allowing the majority to have what they want when it comes to religious rituals while still accommodating diverse orientations by respecting their standpoints.

Fatima thinks that it is better to do away with any categories when it comes to Islam. She says we are simply Muslims because using other categorization opens the way for politicization. The same idea is shared by another member who prefers not to use any

denominational categorization of the organization; they believe that members should refer to themselves merely as Muslims:

“So, I feel like we are a Muslim organization, I would not say we are moderate, conservative, we are just Muslim.”

Because it is situated in a country of immigrants, the MSA in the US combines diverse individuals who originally came from different destinations throughout the world. Living in a democratic environment encourages them to embrace and cherish the values of accommodating others across their racial, ethnic, and religious identifications. Across the different campuses included in the study, they consider diversity an important characteristic of the organization they are part of.

5.1.2 Designing, structuring activities, and making decisions

The MSA has an executive council that consists of the president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. It also has committee for service and justice, social events, public relations, and outreach, with each having its own chair. Involvement in the executive council allows the student members to acquire organizational skills and experiences such as collaborating, coordinating, networking, and implementing plans.

Activities are mostly organized on a local basis. The MSA members come up with a set of activities that are consistent with the goals of the Muslim community on campus. They have a democratic approach to running the organization as members elect the president, vice-president, and committee members. They come together to decide on the activities they would be doing throughout the semester. Huda from the MPU describes how the organization’s members convene and make plans each semester:

So, whenever we elect a new board that summer we would meet usually once or twice, just to kind of get the bigger events out of the way, get the speakers booked and things like that, then during the semester we could probably meet once every month, and so we would have the entire board, like the president, the vice president, the secretary of treasure and then we have the social chair, the Halaqa chair and the community service chair. And then all of those chairs will have their sub-committees. But in these meeting, there would be just the main people. And then during those meeting will figure out the dates for everything. Then the president and the vice president will reach out to the sub committees and ask them “oh, what the topic for the event, or do you need help with this” or the treasure needed to pay for food or something.

This former female president of the MSA, who at the time of the interview was a graduate student at the School of Dentistry, describes the way the organization puts things in order when they have a new board. In those preliminary meetings, the board members make the arrangements for the key events the MSA will arrange for the semester. Then they come again sometime during the semester to decide on the times and dates for the major events. Meanwhile, the leaders of the organization communicate with the sub-committees about the titles and details of the events they will be holding.

The MSA uses a similar structure of events across campuses with some variation. They have social events, halaqa, and service events. The vibrancy and vitality of the MSA depends on the size of the organization and the number of the Muslim students on campus. Because ELAU is a relatively small campus and has a small MSA, they have fewer regular meetings. They come together at the beginning of the semester to set plans for their activities and meet once a month to follow up on that. Other than the face-to-face interaction, the medium of communication among the members is usually social media and mobile apps such as GroupMe.

In comparison to MPU, ELAU has a limited set of activities; they usually set up an open panel where different people, Muslims and non-Muslims, come together. In these

public panels, students discuss their experiences and respond to the attendants' questions, including what it means to be a Muslim. They also hold big fund-raising events in which they serve food and collect donations for local, national and international philanthropic purposes.

A different aspect of the events for the larger campus pertains to the area of specialization of the students and the community members. Because many of the students are in the medical field, they organize activities according to this interest. They participate in a free medical clinic or free dental check for those in need in the community.

The events are structured in a way that does not interfere with the students' study commitments, classes, assignments or tests. So, there is some flexibility for when, where and how they do the events and activities.

Although the MSAs are technically connected to their mother organization—the MSA National—with which all the organizations in the US and Canada are affiliated, they are largely each an independent entity. The executive council usually has a bi-weekly or monthly meeting in which they discuss their plans and the activities to be implemented. Also, each committee chair such as the community service or Halaqa chair proposes the activity they want to implement within the set time frame. Omar explains:

It's kind of set by the MSA either weekly or every two weeks meeting and at those meeting you are deciding the schedule for that month, it is largely upon the chair of that committee, so if it is community service chair, saying alright what is your idea for the what we are doing for this month. So, it says so in this month I am planning to call Habitat for Humanity to set up a date that we can go and work with them or this month I am planning to do this.

According to this MSA member, who used to be a chair of the one of the committees for three consecutive years, the decision about the activity they want to

implement is made by the committee's chair in discussion with other members. Oftentimes, he takes votes on the topic the students would like to discuss.

The MSA thinks and acts autonomously with no intervention from a higher entity. They undertake their activities based on the ideas of individuals in leadership positions, the perspective of the members, and the local community's needs. They derive some ideas for the activities from the MSA National or replicate some of the programs, but their activities and events are autonomous and locally based.

The larger Muslim community in the city is deeply intertwined with MSA and hence they coordinate and communicate together, as Othman from MPU stresses:

So, there is a good connection I think between us and that's they can say, "what did you guys do" and kind of learn from each other and kind of continue it that way. There are some things that the MSA National puts out and the MSA takes on, like the chapters takes on, like the Central Zones Conference and some other things. But I think mostly it's from just us knowing each other, the current board knows the previous board and then being part of the previous MSA, and say ok we did this and this, let's do it again.

In this quote, Othman highlights the close ties between the local MSA organization and the community. He also draws attention to the decentralized nature that combines the MSA National and the local chapters.

The MSAs on different campuses sometimes replicate only a few of the programs implemented by the MSA national or they simply imitate the activities the former members have done earlier. Tuqa from ELAU also indicates how decisions about the activities are made on the campus in coordination with the Inclusion and Diversity Office. For one of the regular activities like the halaqa, students come together and vote for the topics they want to discuss or learn about. This reveals the democratic approach the organization has

when it comes to the different activities. It reflects the effects of the participatory approach common in various social and institutional circles.

5.1.3 Attraction, support, and the organization's supervision

The students' attraction and recruitment to the organization is not straightforward or mechanical. It depends on social dynamics such as the leadership's social intelligence, ability to connect and outreach to Muslims on campus. Some MSA leaders have strong charisma and personal qualities that encourage the involvement of Muslim students. Confidence, communication skills, knowledge, and friendliness are all effective attributes in this regard. There is also a variation in how the students are drawn into the MSA on each campus. Some of MSAs set tables with flyers during the freshman orientation week; they also give brochures to the students and promotional gifts. Students use the public orientation events on campus to advertise the organization and reach out to prospective students. In addition, they use social media extensively to announce their events and activities to be undertaken. Others, as in the case of the small liberal arts university, reach out to the Religious Life Office and send out emails to the students to introduce the organization and invite those who might be interested in joining. In addition, MSA members establish friendships with Muslim students who may end up joining the organization. However, the recruitment is somehow not an easy task for the members as this student states:

It was always kind of hard to get the new students join. What we would do is to take advantage of all the MPU events where they have, during the freshman orientation week that have table sessions, so we would go, hang up our banner and poster. So, students would come up and ask us; we would also hang up flyers for our first

meeting. Send out, have the international student association (office) there, let them know if there are any students going to be interested. So, we get a lot of students that way. But mostly it was by word of mouth or how you met people or at mosque if people would invite them.

Student recruitment oftentimes represents a challenge to the members. They use different platforms and occasions to invite the Muslim students to be involved in the organization, such as the orientation week where they use different promotional techniques. They also reach out to concerned offices on campus to recruit students who might be willing to join.

The MSA has a faculty supervisor and a graduate student representative who provide guidance, supervision, and intervention when issues or disagreements among the members of the organization occur. The supervisor provides support to the organization whenever needed; they also resort to him/ her when they have questions about whether certain social practices are compatible with the Islamic teachings. Sometime personal differences or disputes occur among the members due to differences of opinions. In this case, the graduate student representative may intervene to resolve quarrels or to offer solutions to the problem.

The ELAU's participant, Amal, states that the member students meet and agree on the activities they want to have; they go to the faculty advisor when there is a need or when they seek advice. She points out:

We usually come with the ideas on our own, our advisors are pretty laid back and they want us to have the opportunity, so they are pretty laid back. I mean if it is something difficult for us to figure out, if needs more administrative work, like collecting money for the dinners that we fundraise for, then we ask them to step in and help out, but usually their hands are more off unless we reach out.

Amal mentions that the students take the initiative and make plans and decisions about their different activities. The MSA faculty supervisor let them lead the way and provides the help in certain situations when they encounter a problem or need to deal with the administration regarding an issue. One of the participants (Omar) from MPU thinks that the supervisor's role is minimal and specific; it becomes available when requested. When asked why the students have this limited coordination and communication with the supervisor, he related it to students' willingness to feel independent and to manage the organization by themselves:

I think it goes back to self-sufficiency, you think that you are self-sufficient and we do not need kind of thing, may be it is not conscious statement, we do not need them, but it is just this idea that, you want feel independent, you want get through your problem on your own. You want with the group to get things through things. I have seen some MSA where there is a they are set by the university to be that is their only role, they are not teaching classes, they are not doing this, they are Chaplin, over the Muslims. So, there only role is to interact with Muslims and those people are very, their interaction with Muslims is a quite bit and they are always interacting with MSA I think. I know the NYU is very good at that with Imam Khalid Latif, but here Dr. Ameen's main role is teaching and his research and so it is different kind of thing and he is there for the advising, he is there for the connection, hey if you need something from above you let me know.

Besides the inclination to have independence and to be self-reliant running the organization, this MSA board member contends that the MSA supervisor's role is not the same across campuses. Some of the supervisors have the sole duty of providing spiritual and meaningful support to the Muslim community on campus. However, others as is the case with his campus, the MSA supervisors have other duties as professors. Still, the supervisor helps the student members to manage things and connect with the administration.

Support for the MSA comes in a systemic way through the student government at the university. Depending on the campus, support may also come through the Religious Life or Diversity offices. The mosque also provides financial and non-financial support if needed, which gives an important dimension to the connection between the MSA and the community. In the same fashion as other organizations on campus when they have an event, the MSA applies for monetary funds by filing some documents and getting them approved.

Amal from ELAU explains:

So, the student government, which is like bunch of students, they fund all the organizations. So, we have got financial support from them and before we had that financial support from them, so at my first year at CC, the Religion office and the Diversity Office would help us if we want to put something together, they would provide that financial support. So, again when it comes to professors on campus and what they can do and what in their hands they go out of the way, they support us so much, they are phenomenal, they are so good.

Commenting on the sources and means of support for the organization, this MSA female president in the liberal arts university points out that the student government (SG), a body of elected students that serves the interest and represents the students on campus, provides the organization with certain amount of financial support to implement their activities. Support for ELAU also comes through the religious life and diversity office.

Huda from MPU also elaborates more:

So, all of the student organization are able to go to a meeting with the student government and apply for funding for certain events, and I think it was like up to \$25 hundred a semester. So, you get \$5000 a year. So, there was a financial backing. They would also set up deals with T-Shirt businesses and business cards. So, that we don't have to spend too much money. So, they would take care of little things like that. Also, if you ever have trouble with like meeting something designed, student government has an office that you could go to and ask for help.

This other female president from the public university estimates the total amount of financial support that comes through the student government as \$5000 for two semesters.

The student government also helps getting discounts for T-Shirts with logos that promote the organization or when encountering problems, they also resort to the SG to help find solutions.

5.2 The Guiding Vision

The MSA is guided by the general and specific principles of Islam that nurture sisterhood and brotherhood. These are the halal and haram (permissible and impermissible) regarding the social practices and the relationships the Muslims have with each other. The organization's members hold the Quran and Sunnah of prophet Mohammed as the essential sources of guidance to navigate their spiritual journey not only as students on campus but also as Muslims through the course of lives. The interviewed students used certain quotations from the Quran or the Hadith that underscore solidarity and the reward of good deeds in this life as well as the afterlife.

Certain '*ahadith*' of prophet Mohammed (reports of statements, actions or his tacit approval or criticism of something said or done in his presence) that remind followers to behave morally and to stand for each other include, "كان الله في عون العبد ما دام العبد في عون اخيه" which translates into "God will help the 'abd' (believer) so long as he helps his brother. A similar quote that promotes and emphasizes the value of good deed states, "خير الناس أنفعهم" "خير الناس" which translates into "the best among people are those who serve (beneficial to) other people. There is also a saying that stresses the civic responsibility towards the community and neighbors which states, "والله لا يؤمن من بات شبعان وجاره جائع" that renders into "By God,

none of you is true believer if he rest to his bed having eaten to his satisfaction (limits) while his neighbor is hungry.

Most of the students indicated that maintaining an active relationship with faith and pleasing Allah (God) through their deeds is their ultimate goal. This perception draws the students together across their different racial, ethnic, and national identifications. For instance, Abdullah, an international student, believes that religion is the driving force to be engaged and to contribute to the community of Muslims on campus and beyond. Abdullah argues that the prophetic sayings urge the person to be good to the neighbors and to help others. Fatima quotes Quranic verses that indicate belief in Allah is a reason to be involved in the MSA. She believes that having sincere intentions to serve others in obedience of God is the best thing to do.

Serving people is a fundamental principle of Islamic teachings which is associated with the philosophy of faith and the purpose of life. A basic understanding of this faith is that people will be held accountable for their deeds in life—good or bad—and that these deeds would consequently determine the individual's destiny in the afterlife. Speaking about that point, Suhaib from the SPU states:

I think it is because we have purpose beyond ourselves. I mean if you can do something to help other people why not do it. So, I don't think that is something that is uniquely that is something that is unique to Muslims, but it comes out a lot in Muslim communities, especially MSAs.

An essential aspect of Islamic philosophy of faith is related to the purpose of human existence. Muslims, beyond the scope of their mundane interests and needs, believe that life is a temporary journey towards an eternal life. The better their behaviors and actions,

the more they will be rewarded. However, serving others is something that is encouraged by many streams of thinking beyond Islam itself, as mentioned in the above quote.

Elders in the Muslim community inspire the MSA in their vision. They offer their advice and guidance on the sort of activities implemented by the MSA. They also keep an eye on the social relations among the students to ensure that they maintain Islamic adab (morals), especially regarding the relations between male and female students. Omar sees the involvement of the community as a necessary element for the young Muslims because it helps to ensure unity and inter-connection:

So, then it is, we are part of the community, so that community help shapes our vision over what is allowed and what is not allowed and what should our main vision be, and we are asking for help from other people in the community.

Omar thinks that the MSA is part and parcel of the Muslim people in the city and the elders provide guidance on the practices student members do and the relations they have. It could be said there is an interdependence between the organization and the community; they complement each other with the latter serving as a source of guidance and vision especially the elders. Those elders could be students' parents, organizations' supervisors, imams of the mosques, or members of one of the Islamic community centers.

5.2.1 Faith, Service and Participation

Islam is not a set of cultural characteristics like rituals or dress codes, nor is it a set of racial features that some try to attribute to Muslims. The students view their faith as a way of life, a mode of thinking, and a source of spiritual inspiration. Many of those engaged

in the organization understand Islam as a service-oriented faith and they consider their organization as a gateway to translate that service into action.

Senior members of the organization argue that to be a Muslim means that you must act upon the commitments of this part of your identity which means to work and do something positive. Othman from MPU uses the phrase ‘manifestation of Islam.’ He says that expression of identity comes through your behavior. If the students want to represent their Islam in the correct manner, then they need to do that through service to their community. He also underlines the point that the embodiment of the real spirit of faith comes through service.

The service provided to those in need in the community regardless of their background makes the religion more relevant and realistic to the youth. Talking about representing Islam to the public and countering the negative manufactured image, Othman thinks that Muslims should be “doing something with their faith”:

if we can express our religion, that's I think at least personally, that is one of the reasons the young Muslims believing their religion do not see relevance in it, because they never see any even positive, any manifestation or if they see manifestation, a negative one. So, this is a manifestation of doing something with their faith and that way, we are interacting with non-Muslims too, because the majority of people we are feeding are non-Muslims. And even on the lunch boxes that we give out. We have little stickers on top that would have a Hadith in English of the prophet Mohammed (SAAWS), something about feeding the poor, something just you know a form of Dawah as well. You know, this is why we are doing this. So, that was I think most meaningful, the community service one was always.

A significant point highlighted by Othman is that service should not be provided to Muslims alone. Service and other aspects of help offered to the broader community especially non-Muslim of different racial backgrounds enhance the relationship with all sections of society. The relevance of faith to life is an essential point here. Service is a

practical manifestation of faith because sometimes formal religious institutions such as some mosques might seem aloof from the society. Serving the community firsthand and offering tangible solutions to social problems attract young people. This participant thinks that community service is the best way to make religion more relevant to the lives of youth.

Elsewhere in the interview, Othman emphasizes the importance of participation and action in Islam. He cites verses from the Quran and the prophetic sayings as evidence:

Number one, I think it is beneficial to establish the fact that in the Quran and Sunnah, there is plenty of evidence that show we need to participate, we have to be actors, we cannot be talkers and we cannot be just thinkers. We have to be based in action.

Othman's quote here echoes the theme that actions speak louder than words. Like other students, he thinks that the vision that gives guidance to Muslims for active service are the two primary sources: Quran and Sunnah emphasize doing good and common constructive participation.

The service-oriented understanding of religion by these students is linked to the way they perceive the concept of civic engagement from an Islamic perspective. Speaking about how the Muslims are supposed to present themselves and the reason they should focus more on the practical aspect of their faith, Suhaib from the SPU states:

So, you know go serve the homeless, is an expression of Islam and that help us to form our identity as Muslims, because we are doing something that our religion commands us to do. Not just doing whatever we are doing and just being Muslim while doing it, if that makes sense, because I think a lot of times that, even now, I think more so and so that, being Muslim is being a cultural think. It's not based on religion. It's just based on shared experience. And saying that yeah, we can do x y and z, but, if we are just a bunch of Muslims doing it. This is a Muslim Student Association. For me personally, if it is something that our religion telling us to do if it is, we are expressing our religion is some way, that can help build our identity in a meaningful way.

Translating the morals of Islam requires Muslims to be active and to serve their communities in every possible way. The above quote by Suhaib implies a concern that the religion turns into a set of cultural practices that distinguish a group of people who call themselves Muslims. This concern was also expressed by some other participants who talked about the transformation of religion into mere rituals embedded in a culture.

Islam is also thought of as a common denominator and a source of inspiration and unity. It is a shared identity of individuals who have several other identities including the national, racial, denominational, regional, and geographical. Islam is regarded as a point of intersection to the individuals who have different other identities. Another quote by Omar that refers to the element of common participation and collaboration is associated with the concept of ‘Ummah’ in Islam—an Arabic word cited in many Surahs in the Quran and has different meanings—the meaning intended for “Ummah” here is ‘one nation’:

So that’s a big way of getting involved with the community and ultimately what I enjoy about the most is that it goes back to the whole relationships we were talking about, as مسلمين we are not just worried about self here on campus. We have to be part of the community, we have to be Ummah, we have to be part of our city and our surrounding and help. So, many of the things that we do, and I think it is a general understanding among all of MSA members that we are here to help.

Although the term ‘Ummah’ means in the literal traditional sense the Muslims in particular, this participant adds a broader meaning to include people of different backgrounds who could communicate and coordinate their efforts using joint space.

5.2.2 Muslim Students Perception of Civic Engagement

The MSA practices civic engagement in a way that is consistent with the guiding principles derived from the Islamic faith. This applies to the activities its participants do and the ways of engagement in society. The students try to hold on to the religious aspect of their identity and to show it through their action. Membership in the organization and the activities they do provide the platform, space, and atmosphere to assert their identity as chiefly Muslims and to maintain connection with their tradition. The members of the MSA have no specific definition or understanding of civic engagement; they consider the various activities whether social, communal, or political as being subsumed under that frame. Each member may have his or her own interest when practicing civic engagement; however, Islam is the main motive. Most of the students, however, understand CE as being directed towards serving the community. When asked about how the Muslim students understand and approach CE, Othman from MPU stated:

I think they see it in a broad general view that anything really can be an expression of your Islam, as long as it is within the bounds of our religion. So, like I said a community service event that's a type of action and even that goes into politics, I think even now, even more so now the people are getting more politically active and they see that as, you know, that "our religion tells us the Hadith that if we hate something, eventually you know you hate in your heart, but then you try to change it and things like that. I think they take that as, let's take the outlet that are available to us to weather its voting or getting involved in society. In other way they see that, I think the people who are in MSA have their own way, everybody has their own way, they wanna express it and they wanna have some kind of action on the world using their Islam.

Othman who is a senior member of the organization identifies multiple ways of contributing which fall under the definition of CE. Individuals may also have different skills and capacities that allow them to contribute. They may choose the communal, political, or service-oriented approach. He also thinks that students may eventually develop

the interest to become political activists because they want to see change by improving conditions for Muslims in the US. The gateway for change, in this respect, is voting to choose the right representatives or doing something constructive in the community they live in.

Abdulrahman emphasizes the communal definition of CE; it is a community-oriented service which aims to make the community members have a more active role through mutual interaction between the community and student organization. He uses the Arabic expression فرض كفاية *'fard al-kifayah'* to frame the way the CE is understood:

I think the definition then from the perspective of Muslims is much more communal, so instead of it being I have an individual opportunity or obligation to do something. It is that as a community we are civically engaged. That shows up in two ways. One, that if we do something, like we do a Day of Dignity. We stress so much this is an opportunity for the community for everyone to get involved and do this. And this is true of most of the MSA events, that we try to get the community involved in these things, instead of me saying let's go do this as a group of. And the other way that it shows up, is kind of on the negative side, if somebody does something in the community or kind of on other scales. Somebody does something bad, that makes him not a good citizen, we all feel like you hurt all of us. And that shows up every time there is terrorist attack somewhere in the world. There is this feeling of we did all of this work and this person made it worse on us. (Sabotage the image of the Muslims). And so, I think this CE is different than Americans in most in the communal. And the idea of the community. It is the Muslim community that has to be civically engaged. That is kind of like فرض كفاية.

Abdulrahman mentions two points when he tries to explain how the Muslim students understand CE. First, there is the relevance of the concept to the broader involvement of the Muslim community and expansion of the scope of their participation. Second, he presents the expression فرض كفاية *fard al-kifāya*, derived from the Islamic jurisprudence which entails that Muslims as part of the US composition have an obligation and duty towards the whole society.

Noor from MPU mentions her own definition of CE, a definition that is consistent with the concept of citizenship, interaction and service. She states: "I define it as the interaction between citizens and that can be something like helping the community through community service or donations or just facilitating comradery throughout the community.

Across all the viewpoints presented by the participants, it could be said that the concept of CE is understood in a similar way to the definition adopted in this study, which is to do service for the common good. Additionally, the students assert that the services performed under the umbrella of CE are embedded in the Islamic faith.

5.2.3 Civic Engagement from Two Perspectives

The students' perceptions of CE show an intertwining between the two concepts of citizenship and civic engagement. On the one hand, civic engagement, in its various forms and manifestations, is taught to individuals from an early age. Islam as a religion commands the individual to behave responsibly towards fellow citizens and the community in general. Students in the US school system learn from an early age to contribute to the community and help their fellow citizens. The line between the two conceptual sources of civic engagement is a thin line. Both the US educational culture and Islamic faith teach the students to contribute to their society and to do good. Abdulrahman says:

I think there is a big similarity in that the idea of civic engagement is very stressed in American culture, right, there is a very good idea of good citizen. You know, I do not know of Boy Scouts, right, the Boy Scouts is a whole organization that is about producing a good citizen, who can clean up the streets and help the old people and help people vote, there is a set of things that make somebody a good citizen. So, that's an idea that is very meshed throughout your whole career in school. You learn in the preschool, elementary school, what are good things to do, because that's not only morally good thing to do. But, but good things to do as citizen. And so that is really stressed in American culture, and I think Muslim students are growing up here, they are going to have that as well. And I think it shows up in the kind of events they often do.

Abdulrahman thinks that good manners and community service are highlighted throughout the different stages of the US school system. He talks about the Boy Scouts as an example where the students are taught to take care of their communities. Muslim students learn from their faith to make positive contributions to society. Muslim students also acquire the value of care as inhabitants of this country.

Another important perspective added by Omar is that CE does not have to always be Islamic or framed within the scope of Islam. The Muslim students come together with other American friends and help their local community by participating in different activities like Habitat for Humanity, Refugee Gala, and Seed leaf which are big programs that attempt to care for the environment or help refugees. This indicates that doing good to the community is motivated by shared values and humanistic principles.

For Aisha from ELAU, CE is simply doing good for others; knowing that there are purposes beyond the narrow limits of our own interest. She also believes that helping others is not only about Islam or about being a Muslim; instead there are multiple motivations. Services should be equally provided to those who need it whether they are Muslims or not Muslims.

Omar pinpoints that activities associated with the faith barely attract non-Muslim students, such the Halaqa in which they come to discuss different faith issues. However, social service activities attract the non-Muslim as well:

It is hard enough to get non-Muslim students to come out to a lot of the halaqas, so that is one thing, but service oriented is very easy to get Muslims and other students organizations to come put, because it is the one idea where our goal interacts with their goal, for a lot of these organizations, they also have this idea of service and helping others and so they overlap and give common goal and we can both go

towards that, and so if we have event, that is cool they will jump in and we do the event with them.

Service and education are common denominators that combines Muslims and non-Muslims alike on campus. Activities in this regard whether helping the needy, providing free medical service, or raising funds for different philanthropic purposes create the opportunity for students of different backgrounds to come and work together.

5.3 Muslim Student Organization and the Community

In this section, I am going to address the forms of connection, shared activities, services and collaborations that the MSA has with the community. This term “community” might sound mercurial because it may refer to the community of Muslim or non-Muslim students on campus, the Muslim community in the city where the campus is located, or even the larger community where the Muslim students live and establish different interconnections and relations. I will try to be as precise as possible when used in different contexts. The basic concept that will be used to understand how the organization interacts with its surrounding is the concept of ‘boundary’ in CoP.

The organization is thought of as a catalyst of interaction and participation. The events and activities organized by its members create opportunities for people to gather and interact with each other. The MSA has various forms of connections and sometimes joint activities with people and entities on and off campus. This includes the various campus organizations, the non-Muslims in the larger community in students’ home cities, and the mosque. The organization’s members also have individual and cross faith/ ethnic personal relations.

The MSA has positive connections and relationships with other student organizations like the African American Association, the Jewish Student Organization, and the Socialist Student Association. Whenever the MSA's members organize an event, they usually invite the students from other organizations and may even have shared events. Sa'ad from the SPU talks about the mutual relation they have with non-Muslim student organizations in his campus:

So, collaborating with all other organizations on campus. They say hey, the MSA can benefit us, we can benefit them, so we are trying to work together a little bit more. One of the programs we are doing is the SAD is trying to have different people from different cultures, so people who greatly look different, just people from Asia and from China, these people from, different faces. And since Halloween is coming up, people are saying, the motto is: my culture is not your costume, So you have the person there and natural dress they would usually wear, so like from Pakistan, it would be me holding a picture wearing (Shalakame) or Saudi wearing a thawb ثوب that kind of stuff. So, we are trying to get our faces out in different ways, not just the negative like that, but positive ways as well.

Sa'ad speaks here about the shared cultural events on his campus where the students from different backgrounds interact and learn from one another. The minority students in general tend to be attracted to each other. Those events and occasions enhance their sense of presence on campus. Through the activities, they want to say, "we are here, and we have our own culture." The minoritized students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds represent the critical mass that ensures positive interaction and constructive collaboration in the campus community.

Amal from the ELAU speaks about events the MSA organized which were attended by non-Muslim students. Muslim students usually get support and approval of different groups and offices on campus:

Yeah, most of them are not Muslims, most of them are students who want to learn about Islam or who want to be supportive of Muslims, but it is organized by us. Other organizations and other people from those too attend. So, a lot of times, like the Jewish student organizations will show up and students in Center Faith which is trying to hold a lot of other Muslim communities or a lot of other religious communities they will come. There is one this organization that is service oriented Bonar, they will come too, they make effort to come. And people from the Diversity Student Union (DSU) or they used to come, there is this sit in at the last year, it has changed the campus dynamic, the dynamic that a lot of Muslim student have with the Diversity Student Union in general, but like also strengthen other relationships, but definitely changed the dynamic of some. So, that is a whole different thing. Other students from marginalized communities really try to come and to show their support, but also, we have a lot of random people who come, who just want to learn about Islam or have good food.

In this quote, Amal from the small Liberal Arts College explains that some students are interested in knowing about Islam itself. She states that students from different faiths usually attend such events, and the service-oriented organizations and diversity office join the fund-raising activity. Similar to the point mentioned by Sa'ad from the SPU, Amal's statement reflects how the minority students coalesce with each other. The current political climate in the US might have provided the grounds for these cross-racial/ ethnic coalitions. The minorities' sense of alienation has increased due to the rise of white nationalism following the election of Trump. Later in the interview, the two students from the ELAU expressed a sense of unease among the minorities on their campus.

Another aspect of contact and communication occurs between Muslim students and other faith groups, such as interfaith sessions between students on campus. There is also interfaith dialogue that is periodically held in one of the cities being studied by community's members. This is where Muslims, Christians, and Jews and other faith groups come together in a mosque, church, or synagogue on a preset date and time to discuss

different issues across their religions. When asked about the other forms of collaboration the MSA has with non-Muslims on campus, Huda from MPU responded:

So, I remember on couple of occasions I was asked; it was an interfaith panel hosted at a church, they found my email on the website and ask me to come speak on an interfaith panel, that was one thing. I remember when the Chapel Hill shooting happened, the local news LEX18 found my email online and asked to contact and asked a little news quip. And the advertised, not advertised, but they informed the people about the vigil we were hosting. So, interaction like that and then also on campus, we would have, there were a group, I think they were the, it was like a group of all the minority, students group can meet, and like interact and talk about challenges they are facing, whether it would be like fundraising or things they needed to work on. So, I had a lot of interaction with the Indian Student Association.

The interfaith panels represent typical occasions for different faith groups to meet and talk about the similarities and differences in the set of beliefs they have. The discussions and interactions that may involve opposing views create an atmosphere of critical thinking about the presumptions each group has towards their own faith and that of the other group. I have personally attended those sessions several times both on and off campus, and I learned a lot during these sessions. Probably the most beneficial outcome of these sessions is that they remove many of the psychological barriers people of faith may have towards each other. They also provide an opportunity to examine and scrutinize the presuppositions attendants hold towards each other. These events also open the way for mutual understanding and acceptance in a friendly atmosphere that respects difference. Following the presentation and discussions, the attendees enjoy a banquet that consists of various dishes, sweets, and fruits served by the host or brought by the attendants.

Most of the time, interaction between Muslim students and others comes through individual friendships between classmates which pave the way for the cross race/ faith interconnection. Abdulrahman from MPU states:

kind of having a certain number of people who personally have relation with the Black Student Union, there is another group called Poetic Justice; mostly Black Students who write poetry and they were involved in the MSA. And so, people have personal relationship. And so now I would say it is with the Black Students. Previously, I think probably was the Christian student Organizations. So, I think it changes, but I think at UK at the moment I think it is the Black Student Union.

These cross-boundary relations are personal by nature where the Muslim students establish friendship with their classmates. Some of the non-Muslims attend Arabic language courses; this is how they become friends with some Muslims and invite each other to different events. I observed this when I attended twice the Arabic Language Hour held in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies on one of the campuses.

Abdulrahman also points out that the relations of the Muslim students is dynamic and transformative with other groups. Sometimes they grow stronger relations with the black students or the white Christians depending on different situational factors. Sa'ad from the SPU states: *"I think we even have couple students that are not Muslims just people that are curious, and they have joined the program as well."* Fatima from the MPU:

Yeah, there are non-Muslims who come to the CCC and Day of Dignity, a lot of the non-Muslims come because you know to get charitable acts, like they like coming, versus MSA meetings and stuff, sometimes they do not come. It is like how much they would benefit from Halaqa versus.

As we noticed earlier, the non-Muslim students accompany their Muslim friends mostly to service events, which could be considered as neutral ground that attracts those people together. Noor from MPU is a perfect example of a student who has an inter-organizational connection. She has a membership in the MSA and in a sorority organization. She thinks that involvement in the MSA and other organizations on campus gives her the chance to know more people. This also helps her to feel more attached to the campus. Amal from ELAU thinks that Muslims cross-organizational involvement provides

the means to be engaged in politically oriented organizations. This opens the way to know more about other groups' issues and may create the coalition when they have shared interests or concerns. Abdullah, an international student, is actively involved in another Muslim organization that has different communal activities. The organization he is associated with consists largely of members from his home country who are now US citizens.

It has to be stressed that an important goal of the higher educational institution is to encourage mutual outreach and collaboration between the different students' groups and organizations. Most of the time, however, attending or contributing to another group activity is something that happens voluntarily. The MSA plays a vital role as the representative organization to the community of Muslims. It facilitates and expands the network of communication and connection with their fellow citizens in their cities.

5.3.1 MSA and the local Muslim and non-Muslim Community

As mentioned earlier, the term "community" can be fluid and has different usages depending on the context. I will try to focus here on the local community where the campuses studied are situated. The relation between MPU's MSA and the local community is closely knit. It is described as strong, healthy, and mutually beneficial. This is shown through the interconnection between the MSA and the religiously oriented entities in the city, mainly the Muslim Community Council (pseudonym), the private Islamic elementary school, and the mosque. This close relationship translates into community service and local events that are useful to the Muslims and the broader society in the city. Moreover, the

close connection with the community gives the organization a vantage point because of the various aspects of material and non-material support. An important aspect of the service the student organization provides for the community comes through Community Care Center (CCC, pseudonym). It is a community service organization that provides food, free medical service, and assistance to needy people.

Fatima from MPU points out that the MSA provides help and support for the community whenever it has public events that are usually organized by the Muslim Community Council (MCC/ pseudonym). One of the important points that inspires her to get involved is that she thinks the broader Muslim community is civically engaged; they like to be active and participate in the joint activities.

Speaking about how the members of the organization think when they participate in any of the big activities that benefit different populations in the city, Omar from the MPU states:

So that's a big way of getting involved with the community and ultimately what I enjoy about the most is that it goes back to the whole relationships we were talking about, as مسلمين we are not just worried about ourselves here on campus. we have to be part of our city and our surrounding and help. So, many of the things that we do, and I think it is a general understanding among all of MSA members that we are here to help. So, we have done things like Seed Leave, where we are helping plant trees in the areas of the town. We have helped Habitat for Humanity and many of the other things we try to help, and it does not have to be Islamic. Habitat for Humanity is we build houses for the homeless, it is huge organization across the US and even international. So, there is many different ways and they are not just kind of Islamic organization, like Community Care Center that we are doing. It is just any possible way that we can help, we have organized the Gala, the refugee Gala, it was our major event for the second semester, all based around the idea we are going to try and raise money for the refugees here in Blue and so we gave that money half of it to KRM and half of it to Muslim Community Council to help the refugees here in Blue. So, I feel it is one of the major temples in MSA in MSA as I see all across the US is that this idea, we are here to help people. We are here to

help make our society better around us no matter whether they are Muslims or not. It is just we are trying to make a better society.

Abdulrahman discusses the activities that aim to improve the city where he and other students live. Their contribution comes as part of collective youth efforts to make their home city better. The MSA gives a helping hand in philanthropic projects like Habitat for Humanity, where a group of volunteers give their time and efforts to build residences for the homeless people. Moreover, they volunteer at a state-level center that provides various kinds of care and service for the refugees. All these activities build stronger community relations and enhance sense of unity. Abdulrahman stresses that Muslims in his city are willing to help; they are part of the larger community and they care about it.

MSA also has a distinguished relation with local mosques. It has a multi-layered connection with the council members of mosques. Cooperation between MSA and mosques comes through organized events and mutual support. MSA members sometimes sponsor their activities by raising funds in mosques especially during the Friday prayer. There are also familial ties between some of the students and those involved in the management of mosques. Huda from MPU comments about the lines of connection with mosque:

We would work with the MCC a lot and also Masjid Assalam, and we would host some of our events at the mosque and so students from out of town were getting used to be there and feel more comfortable going there, because I grew up here. And so, I feel comfortable going there wherever and whenever, and kind of incorporating community members into our events. I think RA (Pseudonym) is one of our Halaqa speakers. So, she come in and show what we can do as members here and going to events.

Besides the mutual support between the MSA and masjid, students have spiritual connection to this place of worship. They feel emotionally attached to the masjid and hence

they like to provide service and contribute to make it a better place. This was expressed by many of the interviewed students who like to unconditionally serve what the Muslims usually call “Baitu Allah” or the House of God.

Omar from MPU sees the strong connection with the community members and the local Muslim institutions as advantageous because MSA and the local community help and benefit each other:

We have a lot of help from the MCC, we have a lot of help from Masjid Assalam, we have specific chairs who go to those meetings to get feedback from them about events and about this. And ultimately, I like this set up more because and this is my favorite (shpeel) that I always say to Abdulrahman and other people. Because we are Muslims, MSA is different than other college organizations in the fact that we grow horizontal connections and vertical connections. So horizontal connections with other people age with us, but because of the Ummah we have to be making vertical connections with the elders and to younger people. So, we are constantly asking for feedback from the MCC, we are constantly helping those who are younger than us here in the community.

Omar talks about the support they get from the community center and the masjid. One member of the student organization serves as liaison with the ICC to ensure they have direct communication. MSA members also appreciate the advice and guidance they get from the elders in the community on different issues.

Although the relation between MPU's MSA and the community's institutions takes many forms and aspects, it is characterized by being limited in scope at ELAU. Red City (pseudonym) has a very small community of Muslims, and the MSA interconnection does not go beyond familial visits and gatherings. It was clear that the relationship in one of the studied campuses was stronger with the local masjid than in the two others. This distinguished bond between MPU's MSA and the local community—manifested through mosques and local Islamic centers— compared to the other two campuses could be found

elsewhere as well. As a student who has been involved in a previous MSA on a different campus before joining the one on the MPU, Abdulrahman reflects on his experience as a member of both organizations:

If I could be a little judgmental, I think the relationship of the MSA here with the rest of the community has been healthier, in my perspective, it's not to say that the things were bad or that in the Green University (Pseudonym). But my initial perspective coming was that, the MSA here was stronger because of the kind of the closer relationship with the rest of the community. And it was not just with one organization it was with all of the masjid there was some connection. They have connection to the Muslim Community Council, even familial connection, right family members, with masjid Assalam and with Elementary Islamic School. On the one hand I think it gave them a practical advantage and they have a lot more resources. They are able to use the buildings. You know the school and the masjid for events. They are able to fundraise better. The community here I noticed, this happened to Madison as well, but it happened a lot more here that the community always attend the MSA events. If they bring in a speaker here for example, it will be mostly I think community members. So, that is one thing I think it gave them a practical advantage, it has a social advantage.

Abdulrahman's statement shows that the MSA at MPU have a network of ties with various communal entities in the city. Compared to the MSA at Green, the previously attended campus, he highlights the noticeable difference between the organizations' connection with the broader community. Regarding the composition of the MSA and the members' background, Abdulrahman provides an illustration of how the MSA at MPU differs from the one at Madison. He points out that the MSA at Madison still has interconnections with the Muslim organizations in the community such as the masjid, but the MSA there acts nearly as an independent unit. This is attributed to the fact that most of the student members are from out of the state. This fact has considerable implications when it comes to the kind of activities they do, purpose, and goals they pursue. Abdulrahman even states the MSA at Madison is independent to the point that members have separate negotiating power when it comes to their interests and concerns.

As mentioned earlier, though the interrelationship between the Masjid and the SPU is not as strong as that of the MPU, Sa'ad from the SPU states:

The local masjids around us do definitely help a quiet bit, even if it's not money, it could be resources. So, most masjids got a shop in the halal meat, so if we are going to make a barbeque or need to put right food for something, they will say hey, we will cover it, and that will be coming. And we will have just to pay for whatever room we rent that kind of small stuff. So, it is kind of give and take here and there, Sometimes the member here on the board and on the student body, they say hey, do not worry about it I will take care of it and that kind of stuff.

Sa'ad provides an example of how the Masjid offer help to the MSA. Sometime, when the MSA have a social event, the local masjid may reach out to the members and cover food expenses. There are Halal food stores and restaurants owned and managed by Muslims who support the Islamic centers in their cities. I noticed, for instance in one of the Arabic stores I often visit, a donation box to support mosques in their communal activities.

In contrast to MPU's MSA, ELAU's interviewed members mentioned that they have very limited relations with the mosque which do not go beyond performing salat (prayer). Even that has come to an end for this participant and her mom; they stopped attending the salat at the local mosque because she thinks the Imam has gender stereotypes. There is also no mention of financial support for the MSA at ELAU by the masjid, contrary to the stories the researcher heard at MPU. For Amal from ELAU, the relation with the masjid might be limited to being a space for prayer. The active connection and mutual relation the MPU's MSA has with the masjid is very limited when compared with ELAU's MSA. This is attributed to multiple factors including the small Muslim community in Red and the whole different context of ELAU's campus and its city. It needs to be remembered that even MSA's relation is not similar with all mosques in the same city. Some of the mosques are highly cooperative and have active ties with the MSA while others have

limited relations; they are more of a place for performing rituals than active centers in the larger community.

5.3.2 Civic engagement, the campus, and students' perspectives and experiences

In this section, I address the students' views of their relationships with campuses, their experiences in those institutions, and the climate of civic engagement therein. Civic engagement in its multiple manifestations occur in a particular environment. If that environment adopts an inclusive agenda of promoting cooperation, inclusivity, and real diversity, then involvement in the different practices of civic engagement would be broader and more extensive among people with different identities on campus. Conversely, if the students feel that the campus does not strike a balance in accommodating the students' different backgrounds and making them feel that they are part of an accommodating environment, then the overall engagement would be less effective. In other words, there is a mutual relation between involvement and inclusivity. I would also argue that the campus agenda of creating active lines of connection with the communities of minorities has an impact on students' willingness to participate in different activities initiated by the student organization or other entities on campus.

Although it is important to understand institution's culture, discourse, promoted values, and the way administration deals or creates connections with the minority students, attention would be focused here on the student's perspective towards their institutions. While I was mainly trying to learn about the practices and implications of civic engagement, many of the students seemed willing to convey their experiences as Muslims

on US campuses. The reason they might have opted to talk about it is that the living experiences on campus are part of the impulse for creating and sustaining civic engagement. Within this understanding, I am going to touch slightly on the experiences of these students and concisely review their thoughts about their campuses.

It was clear to me that the students' perceptions of their campuses are dissimilar. I would generally categorize those perceptions into positive, neutral, and relatively negative on those three campuses. The two students interviewed from the ELAU had mixed opinions. On the one hand, they cherish their relations with the faculty who are very helpful and do everything they can to assist the students. On the other hand, they do not have the same feelings toward the campus as an institution, particularly the way the campus deals with the minority's issues. Tuqa from ELAU provides an evaluation of the status of the minorities on her campus:

A lot of different marginalized communities on campus felt that way after the sit in that happened in May, a lot of student feel that way as if their experiences are invalid compared to other, and the Muslim students are one of those groups that have been affected in that way. We strengthened our relationship with Latin American Student Association, because they also got that feedback from other students. We joined forces and created better relationship with them because of that, but I think that is one of the big challenges, but then other challenges like having pressures like where ELAU has big party culture, I am sure MPU and SPU do too. So, I think there is a pressure in that regard of just understanding of how you want to practice Islam in American and what works best for you.

The participant here thinks that the campus' white culture and the associated dominating cultural practices including the big parties make minority students feel unwelcomed or marginal. That feeling may motivate minority students to enhance their connections and ties with each other. Moreover, part of the current challenges and difficulties for Muslims in general from the perspective of ELAUs participants is that they

feel that their concerns as Muslims were trivialized or considered less significant compared to other minorities. To be a Muslim on campus involves facing challenges as she recounted elsewhere in the interview; she had bad experience with a student who lump Muslims together in one box which is that of terrorists. Hyphenated identity and not feeling you are fully American is an issue that some Muslims continue to experience.

ELAU's participants think that the campus represented through the administration is not as accommodative as it is supposed to be of minority students. One could also feel an aura of discomfort when it comes to the students at ELAU in comparison to those at the MPU. This tells a great deal about the institutional climate and the attitude the students have towards their campus. Amal has the same tone towards her campus, especially the way it deals with minority students:

But ELAU as institution, I don't think really support any of their marginalized communities, any like students who come from different backgrounds. I don't think necessarily that they do not want to support us. I just don't think they do know how, which is not an excuse, because they are an organization that encourages student to come from different backgrounds, so you should know how to support those students, but they do not. I would not say that we get a lot of support in general from the Diversity Office, from the administration, our support come those professors who support us and just from different students and different organizations.

This student critically talks about the lack of support on her campus to minority students. She uses the word 'marginalized' to identify the communities of minorities on the campus. Although she does not think that the campus intentionally overlooks the students from different backgrounds, she could not find a reasonable justification for the lack of attention. Her attitude towards the campus administration is different when it comes to faculty whom she describes as being helpful.

An important distinction that must be made is related to the students' feeling towards their institution versus the personal experiences with different individuals on the campus as Muslims. Amal from the ELAU states:

Ok, so I would not say I have ever had any negative experiences, I will say at my first year at ELAU there was more anonymous social media things platform, so I do not know if you have heard of Yik Yak, but it is like this site basically like Twitter but it is all anonymous. My first year there was a complications on Islamophobia in America and a lot of people started talking about the complication on this App, and there was a comments about how Muslims are backwards, there is the honor killings, there is the Sharia law, they are going to take over the America, yeah all of these stuff. But I was shocked this is among student who I thought should know better, but I mean this is my campus. So, I think that this sentiment is still there, it is just not outwardly vocalized by people, because that they will be penalized, or they will get socially penalized by their peers. But I think that this sentiment is still very much on campus, it is just underline, I mean I don't hang around those people, so I don't see it, but I am sure people do.

The discourse of Islamophobia weighs heavily on Muslim students' minds. Amal expresses surprise at how some members of the campus community think about the Muslims on campus. The stereotypes and negative portrayals of Muslims are transmittable and there is no real action to confront this discourse whether on campus or beyond.

The students from the SPU interviewed in this study spoke neither positively nor negatively about their experiences and their relationships with the institution. Sa'ad says that he is motivated to be part of the MSA to create a space for Muslims and to establish a stronger presence on the campus. He did not speak about the relation members have as an organization with the campus administration or relevant offices.

In comparison to the two other campuses, the MPU's MSA has a healthy relationship with the campus and the administration. Abdulrahman presents an account of the support the MSA receives from the university and associated offices like the MLK

Center and Diversity Office. He highlights the good relationship the MSA has with the president of university. Other participants also mentioned the role of the president in welcoming and accommodating the needs of the MSA, showing support for the organization by organizing dinner for representatives of the Muslim students, and having iftar in Ramadan for the Muslim community on campus. Othman says:

The university does support, actually the president has been very helpful and supportive of the MSA. He has come to Masjid multiple times, host like I said the Iftar. Even he has a good relationship from what I understand with MSA supervisor. When things happen sort of events, I remember we met with him to discuss, I forgot what it was, no it was at the Iftar and shortly after one of the terrorist attacks. And he mentioned that the first thing he did was he talked to the faculty advisor and said what we can do to make sure students are safe. So, I think for the most part they are supportive. In terms of financially and as an institution.

This former president of the MSA applauds the leadership at MPU, which always shows support to the Muslim students and listens to their concerns especially when an incident occurs that affects the broader Muslim community. The Muslim students appreciate the solidarity shown by the university; it enhances their sense of unity and togetherness. Othman also ascribes this positive relationship with the campus in part to the Muslim community's willingness to have a cordial connection with non-Muslims in general in their city:

I would say that the Muslim community, in general, they have an ethic of we want to work with people, and maybe it is a little bit defensive, because the rumors about Muslims, we want to undermine the system, we want to spread Sharia's everywhere and collapse the government. And so, we may go a little bit further in saying. And so, we say you are the president, we want to work with you. Other organizations and may be that hurts the MSA with other organizations. I know organizations, may be feel more secure in their Americanness. There is a graduate student congress, and I am technically part of it and I attend some of the meetings and they have a very negative view of the president himself. And in some way, I share some of the negative things that he has done, but the Muslim students have very positive view of him. Which is something good, but there is also give and take. And so, may be if

the MSA have a good relationship with the administration, will view them as being, they support the administration and they are on that side. I do not know how that works, you know, there are things that I would critique the Mr. President for. But he has been good to us personally.

Othman speaks here about the Muslim community's tendency to have peaceful ties with the broader community. He considers this as a defensive mechanism adopted by Muslims who are always accused in the media as being a threat or a potential danger. They want to change this fabricated negative perception about their identity and show other non-Muslims that they are ordinary fellow citizens. MPU's Muslim students value the positive relationship they have with the president compared to the other MSA that criticized the administration on their campus. As was noticed for instance with the students from ELAU. However, the friendly relationship of MPU's MSA with the campus and community is not without disturbances. Certain situations have involved tension and discontent. Othman again speaks about the university:

I think for the most part they are doing a good job, I mean there has been instances in the past. I feel like our concerns were not heard as much as they should have been. I remember when I was a president, we had an issue where one of our ... there was a math TA in the Math Department who was essentially running an Islamophobic website, on his Facebook. And you know it's on Facebooks, it's obviously his own business, but on his things, it says identify him as an employee at the University of Kentucky and he has statuses and things that disparaging Muslim students not by name, but he called the MSA a terrorist organization and he said "oh, there is these Muslims at the pendix express hired a Muslim hijabi" these things, So. And when we went to the administration, we got nothing, we really got nothing, they said it's just Facebook, it's up to him. Whereas there was a double standard. And this is something that I whether the MSA wanted me to do it or not I was grad student and I voiced it to the president, that's OK if that's his standards, I think it's bad standards. Then something else happened where, there were very similar anti-Semitic event. Do a full press release that was emailed to everybody saying we are against this which is good I agree that anti-Semitism should not have a place. But at the same time if you are going to denounce that publicly you should have had our backs in this situation as well. I think it's a reflection of our overall society that certain things are very taboo, are shouted down, but when it comes to

Muslims and Islam the standards are a little bit different. So, that's one situation I felt there were little double standards. For, the most part I think they support in whichever way they can, and they are open to hearing criticism. You know they heard that criticism.

Although Othman from the MPU is pleased with the way the university treats the Muslims on campus, he still thinks that there is no equal treatment for the different social compositions of the students on campus. He relates the case of one math professor at MPU who made an Islamophobic posts on social media. When the MSA complained about this person's conduct, the university did not take any action against him. However, the university issued a public denunciation when a similar anti-Semitic incident was identified. Othman considers this a double standard by the university for not being equally supportive of all the faith groups on campus.

Another interesting point that Noor from MPU raised is about the MSA's representation in a tour offered to prospective students and their families. She states that many organizations are brought up during the tour as part of the campus body, but the MSA is never mentioned. She also talked about a website that presents promotional information about student organizations. Noor noticed that the MSA was not included in the list, which made her upset.

Omar describes the relation between the Muslims and the university as being positive, but he remembers an incident that he believes the university mishandled regarding the publication of an article slandering Prophet Mohammed:

So, in my second year on board, we have a huge problem, there is the editor Kentucky Kernel who was a student here on campus wrote an article why the prophet SAAWS was a rapist and was a murderer and these kind of thing ونعوذ بالله and we had a huge kind of argument, Abdulrahman wrote huge paper to Dr. Robert and the board saying how these things, this can't be said and all of these kind of

different things and so they heard us out, they invited us to talk about these things, but ultimately, nothing was really done. The only measure that was taken was that person is meeting Abdulrahman, the person who wrote the article met with Abdulrahman and met with other board members and they said may be we will take it down, blab la bla, but nothing was really done to help the safety of Muslims on campus, to help this idea of you insulting the very essence of our religion and the thing that we hold near and dear, the person that we love more than our parents more than ourselves, and nothing was done.

Omar talks about an incident that involved writing a smearing article about Prophet Mohammed. He thinks that the university should have taken stronger action against the writer whose article was published in the campus newspaper. He also thinks that Muslims do not possess the means to make the university take serious action and respond to their demands when it comes to insulting their sacred figures. So in comparison to the African American or Jewish students on campus, the Muslims have less power or influence. Minority students including Muslims might be more reactive either positively or negatively regarding issues of inclusion, symbolic presence, and representation. Their pre-existing sense of alienation might provide a partial explanation to this sensitivity.

5.3.3 Interaction and socialization of organization with different individuals and entities

In this section, I explore the forms, pathways, and benefits of interaction, socialization, and discussion. These interactions occur between the members of the organization and various entities and individuals. As I have done in the previous sections, I will mostly focus on students' accounts based on their responses to the questions presented during the interviews.

Huda from MPU speaks about the ways interaction and discussion take place among the members to set, organize and agree on activities. MSA members convene

regularly to talk about events and programs each semester. Tuqa, from ELAU points out that the discussions occur on two levels: one within the organization when they come together to think about planning and implementing events and the other when interacting with other students' groups. Sa'ad from SPU states that there is a cross-campus collaboration among Muslim student organizations. They learn from each other, and sometimes replicate certain activities on their own campuses. He gives "halaqa" as an example of an activity that he learned from MPU and Indiana University. Noor from MPU points out that a lot of interaction and learning takes place across the organizations rather than only within. Members come to discuss different issues that affect the presence of Muslims in the US including the relevant policies and political climate.

According to Fatima, some of the discussions that take place are related to the Palestinian cause, because part of the citizens who live in the city are originally from Palestine. So, they talk about the conditions and circumstances of Palestinians. This reflects US Muslim students' awareness of not only local but also broad international issues. This attitude towards national and global politics is not necessarily shared by other members or presidents of MSA. Some prefer not to be engaged in politics because it is always thorny and ambiguous. They prefer to focus on local community issues.

Yassir, a non-board member of the MSA, considers halaqa and the speaker event are important activities that draw him to the organization. Those activities involve meet ups, communication, and socialization:

I think the halaqas, when the MSA invite speakers, those are the most I made efforts to attend, what attracted me to them one is learning more about Islam and then afterwards, after the formal talk is done, going out to dinner with the speaker and talking with them. So, this is a chance to ask questions and get together with other

Muslims. So, the biggest attraction was the social relation part, because generally for people who are in the pre-med track for Muslims in the pre-med track, they see each other much more often in the classes, they have the same chemistry, bio through the years, me in different tracks, I had less of an opportunity to see them, so through the MSA it was easier.

For some students, as we see in Yassir's case, attending halaqa gives him an opportunity to make friends, socialize, and learn about Islam because he does not have Muslim friends in the department where he studies. So, he considers *Halaqa* as an optimal opportunity to get together with Muslim students and expand his knowledge about the faith.

An important element related to the way the students interact with each other is giving them the freedom to stay anonymous during Halaqa meetings, especially when they introduce the questions. Some students may feel shy to speak publicly. So, part of the process of interaction during those meetings involves allowing the students the choice to participate and to remain anonymous. Students also sometimes have the freedom to pick the topic they want to address. Omar who served as a halaqa committee chair for three consecutive years states:

I could maybe put a poll on Facebook, they can choose between three or four topics that I choose to put up there. But, ultimately kind of open decision leads up to the halaqa chair or if it is social event, the social event chair.

Another way the members of the organization come to establish contact and communication beyond the campus is during preparation to have their religious discussions. They go to Imams for consultation to be informed about certain religious matters. ELAU's participant adds an interesting twist to the process of interaction within the organization by bringing up the gender element, and the way the organization became feminist-oriented for a while when the male members stopped attending. They made the discussions focused on issues related to women in general and the Muslim women in

particular. Students also come to know and socialize with people from different backgrounds. The MSA opens its door for the out-of-state students to find home in this student organization.

Addressing another aspect of interaction on campus, Noor from MPU— who is a member of more than one student organization— talks about an interesting experience that involved non-Muslims students wearing the hijab for a whole day and then coming together to reflect on the feeling of this experience:

So, there is a lot to learn from everybody, but it is also great way to network and know other people. I have also met some other Muslims throughout that organization which is nice. But I really like the idea that it is multi-cultural sorority because to be multi-cultural is not necessarily having to look or act in certain way. I like to think of it as mind-set of openness, so leaning from one another and growing. So, there is an event that our sorority does across different campuses and different chapters, which is called scarves and solidarity which is a day where the sisters in the organization will wear hijab for that day, so they will go just like through their normal class schedule and then afterward there is a reflection on it. Like how, were you treated differently? Because you wear hijab and what did you like about it.

Noor, who is a member of MSA and a sorority, talks about the organization being a space for multi-cultural interaction. In the sorority, the members have an event that involves some female members wearing the Muslim scarf for a whole day on campus to see how it feels to be female Muslims. The shared experience and sense of empathy involved in this event is distinguished and unique. Same as Noor, many interviewed students appreciate the benefits of the learning they gained from interacting with different individuals. They also value the connections made as an outcome of membership in the student organization. Noor thinks that this involvement gives a ‘mindset of openness’ to those involved. Moreover, acts of empathy and solidarity among the students become

visible as seen in the example she offers. She also says that what she likes most about interacting with non-Muslims is that they bring up faith issues:

I really enjoy having religious discussion, and I do have religious discussions with my friends who are not Muslims and just, also because they do not know of the stuff, also because they do not know the similarities between the religions and especially with like the media portrayal of being Muslim and Islam, it is being completely foreign thing, and it is also something that people just because the way history is written, it's like something that came to America all of a sudden and that so many bad things happened. So, like no it has been here for a long time, it is just the way the history is told.

Noor sees a positive outcome for students who have different backgrounds to come to talk to each other about their beliefs. As we have seen earlier in students' accounts, Muslim students cherish the interaction and discussions they have with non-Muslims because it allows both groups to know each other face to face.

The value of interaction and socialization have slightly different meanings for international students. Abdullah thinks that interacting with students coming from majority Muslim countries mitigate the sense of loneliness. It even encourages those students develop a positive sense of belonging because of the presence of students with the same religious identification. Students feel mentally and psychologically relieved when they see Muslims on campus.

Students' socialization and peer interaction could be thought as a gateway for civic engagement. First, the students come into the organization out of willingness to make friendships or to learn more about their faith, and then gradually become engaged in service and community engagement.

5.4 Organization's Impact from leaders' perspective

We said earlier that the organization is thought of as a catalyst and contributor to civic engagement. Student participation in social, service, and philanthropic activities have multi-dimensional impacts. Participation in MSA leads in a variety of ways to members willingness/openness to CE. It also expands the scope of communication and collaboration with the local community which strengthen in consequence the civic engagement. In this section, I will examine impact and value as perceived by the students on different levels.

Studying the accounts given by the students in the interviews, I found two interlinked categories for the impact and value of involvement in activities via the MSA: personal and social. The personal impact was reflected in reciprocal ways. First, it is related to how the students develop due to engagement with the organization and its initiated practices. Second, it deals with the way the students see their impact on the organization, campus, and broader community.

In general, the whole experience for the students reveals a positive influence on their personalities. Students spoke about acquiring leadership skills, developing self-confidence, and learning to be critical and reflective. This development is an outcome of participating in different activities. Students also think that religious ethics stress and encourage self-discipline and commitment. Within the realm of the organization, students internalize religious ethics and morals because of interaction with other students who tend to stay connected with their faith.

MSA members in leadership positions are fully aware of the importance of the work of the MSA and the identity-formation effect this work has on the students. Participation in activities and the voluntary work they do on and off campus enhance positive character

formation. Through engagement in MSA activities, students come to discover the value of the work they present to the local community and how that work itself may foster good traits.

Another part of the character building which emanates from students' engagement in activities includes maintaining connection with Islam. Through those events, students perform salat together during the prayer times. This serves as an opportunity for the students to remember this important aspect of their obligation as Muslims and may also encourage their friends to join them. They also perform other seasonal rituals such as fasting in Ramadan and attending collective Iftar (the breaking of the fast every evening after sunset during the month of Ramadan).

Othman from MPU thinks that involvement in the MSA helps the students develop positive characters and leadership skills that prepare them to be active community members and future leaders beyond the scope of MSA. He and other senior leaders are also aware of the energy those youth have which should be channeled to the betterment of society. Suhaib from SPU showed a concern about the potential desire of students to try everything new without reservation when they first attend college. He believes that MSA serves as a haven for those students to use their time efficiently and direct their energy towards the right path.

Fatima thinks that serving as a president of the organization has expanded her skills. It gave her the opportunity to learn how to deal with opposing opinions and to make compromises when needed. Students also talked about the positive and enriching experience of managing the organization. Amal from the ELAU states:

I keep looking back at my first year at ELAU versus now. I think the MSA definitely become a presence on campus, a strong presence on campus and I think it is

valuable in that we have provided other students with the opportunity to learn more about Islam which I think was not there in my first year. So, I think it is valuable in that sense and I mean I know people who are excited coming to our events, so they ask us oh what are you having this semester, when are you having that event. So, they remember things from the past that we have done, and they look forward to it. So, I think that in that regard we have, we do have valuable presence on campus. I think it is also valuable for us as individuals, because we not only get the chance to meet other Muslims, we come from similar backgrounds, but we get the opportunity to fill in leadership positions, so being on such a small campus, everybody has to step forward and take on a position in order for us to remotely function. So, I think that is really beneficial in that sense like nobody else is good in step in and we have to step in and we have to assume leadership position and you have to speak out and you gain confidence and you gain your own personal growth. So, I think that one thing that is very beneficial about the MSA and just being on small campus community with few numbers of Muslims is that you are essentially forced to step into these roles. So, I think it is very valuable for Muslim students in general.

Although this MSA president admits that her campus is small and the number of Muslim students is modest, she still thinks that the organization is a “valuable presence.” The value of this presence manifests through the representation of Muslims as distinct on campus. As reiterated in their narratives, students have learned so many things about their religion because of interaction with other Muslims. The positive feedback MSA members receive from students who attend their activities along with their intent to attend events show the effect of the MSA on the environment of campus. The organization attracts Muslim students and guides them to useful social and civic activities. Yassir appreciates the presence of a community of Muslims on campus because it makes him feel more comfortable:

I think that the biggest impact for me was to be with other Muslims, may be feel more confident as a Muslim, so I did not feel I should go out of my way to hide anything, I think that was important for me because I grew up in, I went to high school where me and my brother were the only two Muslims. So, we used to be with non-Muslims and sort of feeling isolated. Then making friends to the MSA is also is very big part of the benefit I got.

Yassir talks in this paragraph about the profound impact of being surrounded by other Muslims and the assertion of their identity on campus. The presence of a group to identify with seems to be of paramount importance for some students. Living in an environment that has dominant customs, values, and behaviors might impose some hidden pressures on a group of students who have their own tradition and way of life. Although the campus in general represents an optimal space for accommodating cultural differences, the alienation and foreignness remain constant concerns for some ethnic and religious minorities.

Each one of the students has their unique capacities and potentials to influence the organization as they interact with different individuals. Omar from the MPU thinks that he has served as an active facilitator and liaison between the organization and Muslim community centers:

In terms of my influence on the MSA, I think as, I was a good connector between the community and the MSA itself, so, when there are the selected person to go to MCC meetings, when getting arguments with the MCC every time, so I was the first person that was brought up, saying ok that person stop going, Omar you are going to go, so that connection with the community was always there for me and I looked to make connection, what I called vertical connections with people that are older than me, so those helped a lot with the MSA. In terms of halaqas, I always tried to make relatable things that people can learn and make people say you know I am going to do something better today because of the halaqa.

For this participant having specific inter-personal skills are important for successful communication. He served as a good mediator between the organization and the Islamic community center in the city. In his other role as halaqa chair in the MSA, he was also keen on presenting and debating topics that are relevant to the lives of the students.

The international student considers involvement in the organization a valuable opportunity for learning through inter-communal contact and communication:

Yeah, so when I get engaged with people around other communities it helps me to learn about this so, if there is anything good which I can take from them any professional attitude or any etiquette, or any thinking perspective that helps me to build me more. And also trying to be practicing religious person, that also help me to give them a picture of what a Muslim should be, which may not have seen. So, changing perception about the person and about the religion they are carrying with them.

Being an international student who identifies as belonging to the Bengali community in the US, he believes that the inter-community interaction is beneficial for acquiring professional manners especially in an academic context. He likes to present himself to others as a committed and dedicated religious person. This could be thought of as an opportunity for changing whatever negative perception non-Muslims might have about Islam.

Although Abdulrahman from MPU appreciates the impact and influence of MSA, he thinks that the organization's role is becoming less viable for the Muslim students as they become fully adapted to the mainstream culture and way of life:

I think the MSA is becoming less important, I think the more you have American students, American Muslims, they still gather, they still do events. But it is not the MSA the one place for them. So, this is just an idea, I don't know الله اعلم But I see a lot more students now who do not need the MSA, they still hang out with the same group of people, there are still students who come and do a halaqa. If they want to learn more about Islam. They will attend events, because it is easier, I think it is easier for them being American students. I think the MSA will become less vital, it will probably still be there, it's still something the people will still want to do, you know its enjoyable, even useful. But there are other ways to survive as part of the Muslim community in America for them at least.

Abdulrahman believes that as time goes by, the MSA will be less needed as a nucleus for Muslim students. This is attributed partly to the fact that it is easier to adopt

American ways of life. Despite this pessimistic prediction, he believes that the organization will remain a unit for social activity and service.

MSA members embrace the principles and guidelines of those who came before them. After leaving MSA, students can remain involved by staying connected to the realm of community service. An instance of this is Yassir who moved to Ohio State to start his graduate studies; however, he became involved with the MSA at his new school and is engaged with community service there as well. He is helping with an activity called Downtown where the community members distribute food to those in need. He was also asked by the community members to lead a youth organization. Some of the former MSA members stay inherently connected with the organization by providing support, consultation, and advice to the newer and current members. This was clear throughout the campuses studied. Abdulrahman states:

I see people who are involved with the MSA, they remain service-full. Othman and Hassan and many other people who were involved with the Care Center, they want to continue doing these things after they graduate. Most of the people who are working on the Day of Dignity and the Free Clinic, they started it as an MSA students. And now they have been graduated for three or four or five years and they still want to do those kinds of things. So, I think it has a massive impact on us. I do not know if it has huge impact on other people. So, I think that ultimately the MSA value of in the future is to continue to have a community that wants to give.

5.5 Broader Social Impact

In their narratives, students talked about the MSA's impact on the social environments in which they live, interact, and build relationship. Making the presence of Muslims felt, reconciling the Islamic and American identities, and combating Islamophobia are themes embedded in the students' accounts.

Abdulrahman views the MSA and the activities they practice as an opportunity for Muslim students to represent who they are. Yassir from the MPU also thinks that through the MSA's engagement, they stress and uphold the principles and attitudes of being Muslims. From Yassir's narrative it could be understood that making an active presence on campus helps those students feel less alienated or ostracized. Because of the people they identify with makes them more confident about their identity and to express who they are with no intimidation. Noor from MPU, for example, thinks that being a hijabi female is something that makes her feel a stranger on campus which is why it is important to find other hijabi students to make her feel more comfortable.

A central motive that drives engagement and the overall course of the MSA is the willingness to make contributions in different ways to bridge the gap between their two identities as Muslims and Americans. Civic engagement is considered the gateway for that purpose. The aggressive discourse against the Muslims have produced a conflict or division between the two national and religious identities. But, this young generation of Muslim students seems to be more aware of that conflict and they are keen on creating a harmony between these two parts. Compared to the recent past, Omar thinks that the Muslims are more interested and involved in local community concerns:

We have been noticeably silent on these issues. Previously when my sister was here there is a big SJP, student for Justice in Palestine and that the MSA members were very big part of that and there were many other things about international issues, specifically about Muslims in the international sense, it might be related to the kind of the promotion of American Islam, I do not know if it is good or not, but we were trying to prove that Islam can be Americanized or Islam can be as viable in the US and we are making the society better here. I do not know if that is good we are trying to prove that to people or whether that should come from within us that this is our duty, but I feel like that a major thing that we are try prove our spot here in America in American culture, we do want to make a better difference here.

As was mentioned earlier, MSA has shifted its concerns from transnational concerns to local ones. Omar, whose sister previously served as an MSA member, observes that a considerable share of the organization's interest used to go towards the international issues concerning the Muslim world such as the Palestinian cause. But in recent years, MSA members became largely focused on the local challenges as US citizens and how to assert their identity as American Muslims. This represents a shift over two lines: First, there is probably more acceptance to their own position as American Muslims. Second, there is a change in the priorities of the Muslim population in the US. The two interpretations could be linked to political and social dynamics not only in the US but in the world as well. Over the past years Muslims in America have gained political representation in the US government. Two female Muslims were elected in 2018 for the US Congress. On the global scale, the political rhetoric tone that reached its highest point during the war on terror seem to have become less intensive.

Muslim students come together to combat the negative discourse against their identity. They organize events to counter approach or change the misconceptions and to educate others about Islam. Through positive communal actions, participants believe that they can counter the negative discourse that is pervasive in the media about Islam. Feeding the poor, distributing food for the homeless, and other social activities that are encouraged or promoted through the Islamic values send an opposite message to what is being circulated in the media. Besides, interviewed students believe that this sort of action is a neutral and more effective than engagement in political argument and conflict. This approach is considered uncontroversial and more practical in realizing their goals. Othman

from the MPU talks about choosing the humanitarian approach of doing CE instead of activism and politics:

You know when we see Islamophobia and all this racism and these stuff that ... it is very hard, if you are serving somebody for them to be racist towards you. You know what I mean... that was the one that ... And I think it is uncontroversial thing even among the Muslims, non-Muslims, like I think everybody can agree that feeding the homeless is good whether you are this sect or whether you believe this sect, xy and z. you know we have so many political differences, but with this there is such a common denominator, no matter what religion you are, whether you have a religion. Feeding the poor is like ... you have to be a very bad person to say let's stop feeding the poor. So, it is very uncontroversial, simple, and it's something we can do easily I think.

For Othman, a former member of the MSA and is currently a member of the Islamic Community Center, providing help to the needy people regardless of their backgrounds represents a neutral course of action. This philanthropic approach is accepted across difference. He personally prefers to use that path of promoting social collaboration and understanding and encountering Islamophobic agenda. The social service might be well received by different sides instead of engagement in politics. Noor from MPU also thinks that students' contribution to service events is a way to change the negative perceptions about Muslims and is considered the best way to improve your community, especially through Community Care Center that provides food and clothes to those in need. She also thinks that the organization provides the opportunities to interact and mix with students who come from different places and who might have certain perception about Islam or never met a Muslim before.

Abdulrahman mentions his own way of countering Islamophobia in the context of the campus:

There was somebody who wrote an article, in the Campus Newspaper, critiquing Muslims, very against Muslims. And there was this immediate feeling amongst all the students and I just got here, and I was graduate student and they were all undergraduate and I just got to know them. And almost right away they were asking me what we do, like we do not know, there is this feeling that we feel bad that somebody has said this, these things. But we do not know how to respond and so I wrote a response for them and they were so happy, because in my field I do writing, and I am able to write. And I am able to express these ideas, because that's what I am trained to do. I published an article, it is still there, you can find it online. It is in the Campus Newspaper. It was literally the first thing I did for the MSA when I came here. Just like couple days after arriving. I was struck by the fact that they were very, you know a lot of them were Freshman students, and the biggest challenge was they did not know..., they were so used to hearing people on the news and all sort of people who know how to speak and know how to write, critique Islam and they did not know how to defend. They love Islam, they want to defend it, but they do not know how. They are not trained in writing, and when they go through college most of them will go to medical school and so they get a lot of that training, they get their experience through the MSA they want to use the MSA to get experience in knowing how to defend Islam, in Knowing how to talk to other people.

Even in the campus context, acts that could be designated as Islamophobic occur from time to time. Abdulrahman talks about his own experience when he first joined the MSA. An article was published in the university's newspaper that made the Muslim students feel insulted because the writer smeared the Prophet Mohammed and called Muslims terrorists. The Muslim students did not know how to respond to the article that left an emotional impact because of this demonization. Because of his writing skills, Abdulrahman wrote an article to refute the falsifications against the Muslim community. The above quote also reveals an intense willingness of Muslim students to learn how to efficiently respond to anti-Islam propaganda. ELAU's participant thinks that being active and showing presence on campus as Muslim organization is a significant way to counter the negative perception and to let others know who the Muslims are.

Despite the organization's efforts to keep the organization's mission focused on the community as a whole, some students, even Muslim still question its motives. A significant

point mentioned by Abdulrahman is related to how the negative discourse about Islam might keep even some Muslim students away from the organization. This steering away from joining the organization could be attribute to different reasons such as fear of being associated with Muslim organization on campus and the massive distortion in the media about Islam and Muslims that is assumed to have conservative or extreme views or behaviors. However, he thinks that this discourse simply does the opposite to other Muslims because it encourages to be more assertive of their identity and to come even more closely together. Huda from the MPU mentions that the MSA counterbalance the hype and exaggeration in the media by organizing events that show Muslims as being an asset to their society.

A recurrent idea is that those students see themselves a valuable source to the campus to educate students about Islam itself. Being in an educational context, they think of themselves as active agents who contribute in their own way to the process of learning. Some students also see the discussion and interaction they have with non-Muslims as an important opportunity to present their faith in the right way. In fact, showing the positive face of Islam represents an important motivational factor that drives some of the students. It could be said that their aim is something that is beyond their own direct benefit, instead they want to please Allah, as many of the interviewees mentioned. Othman from MPU highlights the Muslims responsibility to learn better about their faith and to be ready to provide knowledgeable answers to those who might be interested in knowing about Islam. He thinks that the Muslim students must have structured knowledge about their religion. Therefore, the MSA presence is an asset for the campus as an educational instrument for acceptance and coexistence. Omar states:

In terms of the value to the campus at large, I think the potential value is really important, because we have this idea in the US specifically of diversity and points of diversity, is that people from different backgrounds and people who come forward have different ideas and have different ways to get problems through and to solve through problems and to solve different ways of dealing with the world and when those come together those beneficial, and so if the MSA continues on their track and they have done good with this in campus outreach in community outreach ideas, hopefully we have beneficial outcome on society here in city area at large, through our ideas, through our backgrounds and all our backgrounds coming forwards whether we heard on campus, kind of things. So, that value is increasing because we have noticed that.

Omar is aware that the main purpose of diversity is to address shared problems in the society. He is proud that the notion of diversity reverberates in the US atmosphere. He considers the MSA as contributing factor to diversity through outreach and service. The service-oriented path and the collaboration with different identities on campus is making positive effect. Presence of Muslims is an asset for constructive diversity and collaboration. Muslims in their localities could come together with people of different backgrounds to solve the problems together as one larger community. Through dialogue and discussions community members across their different titles could generate ideas to serve the place they share together.

5.6 Students' perceptions of challenges

One of the issues I wanted to explore with the students that may influence civic engagement experience is the students' perception of the challenges they encounter. It was assumed that the students' participation and degree of engagement might be affected by situational or contextual factors. Based on the students' responses, the challenges they face can be classified as institutional, personal, and interactional.

A female president from MPU mentioned a minor issue in communication with one of the offices when they were trying to set up a prayer room for the students. She said that the office was not responding to her emails, but they finally did, and they were able to have a shared prayer space for different faith groups. The same student talked about a tense situation she encountered when she was invited to an interfaith panel:

The only thing that I remember happening was when we were going to one of those interfaith channels at a church. And there was one guy that got up and started to talk about how Islam is violent, and blah blah blah, that was one of the only negative things, while I was undergraduate student.

This student relates an incident that occurred in one of the interfaith events she used to attend when she was an undergraduate. The verbal attack on Islam by one of the attendants in a church left a negative impression on her. Although anger or excessive reaction might be anticipated by some individuals during the exchange of ideas across the ideological lines, the dialogue itself is very beneficial for being a civilized practice.

Fatima from the MPU talked about the problem of not having enough money to sustain the activities. For one of the students, the distance between the campus and the masjid represents a logistical challenge because the students may have limited interaction with the community. The members of the local community may not have an easy access to the campus to attend or support the events.

From an organizational dimension, students also talked about involvement as one of the major issues they encounter when they implement any of their activities. They attribute the low involvement to different reasons. The participation of the students is not systematic over the semester and they usually send reminders of the activities repeatedly. Huda from

the MPU thinks that keeping the MSA members engaged is a recurrent issue the organization must deal with:

I think the main difficulty that we have was keeping our members engaged and keeping them coming back to meeting. We would always have a surge of the members at the beginning of the year and then they would taper off and then at the end of the year people would start coming back. Also, the only other thing that we have trouble with was how many times we have to contact.

Misconception about Islam and hence the organization directly affects involvement and may keep people away. There is also a prevalent negative perception about religious people who are often seen as narrow minded or backward which makes people hesitant to be involved with a religious organization. Another aspect is related to the involvement of international Muslim students on campus who mostly prefer their own national organizations on campus. Interviewees also talked about students' willingness to be identified with Muslim group or not, their whole relationship with the religion, the way they were brought up and their familial background as significant factors. Omar from the MPU speaks comprehensively about why some students steer away from the faith organizations and may have their own presupposition about religion itself:

I think the biggest challenge is just people having certain ideas of Muslims themselves, having certain ideas of what other Muslims are like of what Islam is supposed to be. And I don't think a lot of people see it as a welcoming thing, and that keeps them away from MSA. Because maybe in their own personal experience or our society just kind of tells us that if you are religious you are backward, you're narrow minded, you are intolerant. And when someone coming into college say I want to explore all of these things, but the last thing they wanna do "I don't wanna go to listen to an Islamic talk, I don't wanna be one of those. I think that is a big problem. It's a misconception people just don't wanna be associated with that, especially at that time of their life, you know, maybe I can do that when I am older or something, but you know I don't want to spoil my fun now. I think that's a biggest think. Some of this is a misconception, but I think a lot of people, young people, have had that experiences with religion, from their childhood or whatever, just not feeling welcomed, just not feeling relevant in any way or sense. So that's it just not

hostility, negative feelings or just apathy to it. They say there is no point in doing that. I think the best way to do that is to make personal connection and to just kind of ... I would always feel conscious of that when I am talking who I am not sure how practicing they are, I am always self-conscious that I hope I am not coming off to be conservative or over-bearing or judging them, because that's a big thing, because people do not want to feel judged. And you can only control that in a certain extent, some people will feel judged if you ask them if they wanna pray. Right, but that's not something I am going to stop. Because, you know. But to a certain extent, but I always encourage our members be very welcoming and try to bring people in and realize that not everybody is at the same level of practicing, and not everybody believe is the same thing. And we should try as much as possible to make it welcoming. Those are the biggest things and I think the personal connections go the furthest there.

In essence, this student notes the prevalent negative stereotypes or view of what they perceive as religious people. Religiosity is viewed negatively. People may have a prejudgment about those who tend to practice the rituals or adopt the religious manners. Moreover, some students think that if one is a religious person in the college context then one is going to miss a lot of fun. Overcoming some of these misconceptions from perspective of the MSA may require keeping the door open and accommodating everyone regardless of how they think, feel, or interpret religiosity.

Noor from the MPU thinks that the whole demeanor of the Muslim students, including the way some of them dress or behave, may also stand as one of the reasons for disengagement:

I have also talked to people in the past who may not feel as comfortable being in the MSA because they identify as Muslim, but they may wear shorts or do this or do that, they may feel judged about, So, I usually try to reach out to more those people and encourage them to come because the individuals in our organization are very non-judgmental. A lot of people come from different backgrounds, and they all understand that, so I personally will reach out to few Muslims who I know, who may not feel as accepted I guess within the group and try to encourage them to come, because we try to be an open space because it is difficult to be a Muslim on college campus in general and also in America, especially after the elections, especially what happened with the sit in, it is just more difficult, so I try to reach out to a lot of people.

Two main points are made by this participant: the first is related to the outward appearance of those involved in the MSA especially the female Muslims who usually dress modestly which might be thought of as one of the mental borderlines that curtail even other Muslims from involvement in the organization. However, this participant tries her best to invite everyone regardless of the way they dress or think. She considers it important that the female Muslim students themselves should approach other students to break the mental barrier. The other point she makes is associated with the broader political and social climate for Muslims in the US in Trump's era. Muslims and other minorities feel it has become more difficult to openly show and express their identities.

Another covert tension is related to the connection between the community and organization. Omar from MPU thinks that the MSA in the last two years is trying to be self-sufficient and reduce interconnection with the local community, mainly the Masjid and the Muslim Community Center (MCC). He previews this independence negatively, because he thinks of the organization as an inherent and integral part of the larger community. MSA is not only there for the campus as other organizations might be; it should be for the whole Muslim community. So, he stresses the importance of the active connection with the masjid and the MCC. Omar attributes this change to a recent shift in the composition of membership which is becoming more out of state students who want to divert the organization to be more independent by having Jumm'a salat on campus instead of the larger the mosque in the city. He Omar criticizes this approach and foresees the potential negative consequences that may show up later.

It is believed that the separation of the MSA from the community has definite implications in terms of doing the CE itself. Students' awareness of their community's

concerns and problems comes through their active communication and connection with the local community. Therefore, the weakness of that relationship entails a transformation in the way they approach CE. Additionally, it seems that Omar's account reveals a concern that the MSA may internalize the American culture of excessive independence and individuality, so he wants the MSA to maintain that connection to sustain that sense of collectiveness and togetherness with the larger community. He also fears that the MSA may change to be more of a 'social club' for students than an instrument and vibrant community entity that maintains connection and relation with all Muslims. The community's elders provide most needed advice for the MSA members. So, if the MSA gradually becomes exclusively for the student, it may lose a crucial source of guidance and wisdom.

Participants also talked about interpersonal problems among some members who fail to get along with each other. A student who was a member of an MSA on another campus says that tension and split may develop within the organization as a result of the internal or personal differences to the point that a whole group in the organization may leave it. This is partly because the members are not from the community itself or they are out of state students. If the organization has strong ties with the community then the kind of problems would be different because the community's members who have stronger ties with the organization may help to alleviate the possible disagreements or differences. Another aspect of the problems that is mentioned by Sa'ad from SPU is related to students having their own stance and acting stubbornly. Those problems are usually settled with the intervention and help of the graduate student representative.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Drivers of Muslim student civic engagement

The main objective of this study was to understand the nature of civic engagement of Muslim college students in the U.S. The study argues that civic engagement has an idiosyncratic nature; each social identity group or community may have their own vision, purpose, approach, and distinctive practice. Within this US context, conditional factors might influence the trajectory and practice of civic engagement. The study attempted to examine civic engagement as practiced within a faith-oriented campus organization. It sought to find the vision and purpose that gave guidance to Muslim college students as they became involved on campus and with their local community. For Muslims in general and the Muslim students examined in this study in particular, conditional factors that may help explain their civic behavior span across campus, national, and global domains. The diversity climate of campus, relationship of Muslims with other identity groups, and rise and fall in trends of Islamophobia are key conditional elements. The US campuses have significant enrollments of both international and domestic, i.e., international Muslim students, however, most of the students included in this study were American Muslim students.

The study addressed the broad topic of civic engagement and its various communal, social, and political entanglements. The study used Wenger's (1998) CoP to examine this topic. This theory served as the analytic framework to uncover the nature of Muslim college students' civic engagement. CoP provided a coherent and integrated structure to investigate and understand the tie, interaction, and reciprocal relations among the fundamental components of the theory: practice, organization, meaning and identity. The component of

organization considered the various aspects of MSA, including, for instance, the structure, social composition and set of conducted activities. The meaning as significant component of CoP helped to explore different intersected dimensions of the topic including the explicit and implicit meanings of interaction, relations combining students with social environment, and students' perceptions of different objects. Identity as part of CoP was utilized to make sense of learning embedded in various interactions, and growth and development of students. The CoP construct pointed toward the process and outcome of learning that results from involvement in various practices in the organization that affect the identities of students. The patterns and types of practice were central in the process of exploration, including the practice of reciprocal relationships with all the other components of CoP. Additionally, the concept of boundary as an integral part of CoP helped make sense of the aspects and domains of Muslim students' relations in the context of their social and civic practice.

Anadolia, et. al. (2002) highlighted the significance of understanding a community's system of values to help analyze behavioral patterns. Being a group that respects its religious values, I found that Islamic teachings and the foundations of this faith served as a guide and motivational force for the Muslim Student Association groups. For them, the Islamic values and ethical principles transmitted from generation to generation represent the moral grounds of interaction and interrelation. Despite the wide diversity of Muslims who participated in this study, their religion was a strong unifying frame of guidance and inspiration.

For the Abrahamic religions, studies have shown a strong relation between faith and willingness to engage in civic activity. Smith (2007), for instance, found that civic

engagement is closely associated with faith because it emphasizes care about common concerns. Religious principles also highlight the importance of providing help to tackle social problems such as helping those in need or providing assistance through service to the community. Smidt (1991) found a positive correlation between church attendance, volunteerism and civic contribution. However, some scholars such as Driskall, et. al. (2005) think that action is more important than mere attendance because the focus should be on the outcome when civic participation is examined. The students in this study could be described as religiously committed based on the survey results pertinent to mosque attendance and performance of rituals. I contend that attendance and involvement are closely related because mere presence may increase an attendee's awareness about the issues and create the motivation to have some role in the local community. Both the organizations the students operated and the mosques they attended are two important entities that clarify Muslim students' efforts to be civically engaged.

An important observation that was derived from the qualitative data is that Muslim students are driven by divine cause when they make service to their local community. This is consistent with the findings of social researchers such as Read (2015) and Johns, et. al. (2015). Most of the students expressed that service provided to the community is intended to please God. Their intentions could be subsumed under altruism (Peucker, 2016). Altruistic organization is normally empathetic to the hardships and challenges of disadvantaged people. Using Giner and Sarsa's (1996) criteria, altruistic association represents an informal group of individuals who come voluntarily together to serve the common good or help solve a social problem. The group may have some form of connection or attachment to an enterprise or institution. They remark that "co-

responsibility between the public administration and altruistic association promote pluralism and increase the opportunity for minority group to flourish” (1996, p. 148). Developing and embracing pluralistic attitudes and common core values that surpass the limits of one aspect of the identity whether religious, racial, or ethnic was the theoretical framework adopted in this study. The study found an association between the students’ willingness to offer service to the community and common core humanistic or plural values. Care, tolerance, justice, and common good represent travelling plural values that facilitate the creation of opportunities for Muslim students to connect and collaborate with other students and people on and off campus of various backgrounds.

Beyond altruism that may explain Muslim students’ willingness to make civic contributions, the students also considered service a commitment. They did not think of community service as a favor but rather as a sort of responsibility towards their society. An often quoted saying by the prophet Mohammed which they regarded as a frame of reference and inspiration is *“Every one of you is a guardian and is responsible for what is in his custody. The ruler is a guardian of his subjects and responsible for them; a man is a guardian of his family and is responsible for it; a woman is a guardian of her husband’s house and is responsible for it, and a servant is a guardian of his master’s property and is responsible for it.”* This saying highlights the social and common responsibility of people in their different roles towards each other. It also implicitly means that across those different roles, each person will be held accountable for those he or she is in charge of. This saying besides several other quotes and concepts from the Quran provided substantial moral principles that gave encouragement to the students to be involved civically. In addition, the community elders and the students’ families were another factor in the whole

process of guidance and participation. The familial ties of students in the organization added another important dimension to the network of guidance, support, and collaboration. Students families and elders in Muslim community usually attended and encouraged the events. This expands the scope of involvement, gives legitimacy, and provides emotional support to the organization. This finding was observed firsthand in several attended events in one of the campuses.

The students also revealed attitudes of identity assertion; students were assertive of their being Muslim. The Muslim Student Association (MSA) represents a social configuration of religious identification through which Muslim students tried to show the values, behaviors, and symbols associated with their identity. The social and the service activities across different platforms and interactive encounters with different students were the vehicles and means of self-expression, as described by Haslam (2011) and Dutton et al. (1994). They want to say, “*we are here, and this is who we are*”. Most of the students either said they want to express themselves as Muslims or make active presence on campus by initiating different activities. They found in the organization and campus an optimal environment to connect, communicate, speak out, and reach out to people of diverse identities.

Muslims in the US in general have been in the spotlight due to national and global events relevant to their identity. Several studies have documented the negative impact of Islamophobia and the negative discourse adopted by the powerful media platforms against the religion and its followers (Peek, 2011, Khader, 2015, Kazi, 2015, Bazian, 2015, Kumar, 2015, Selod and Embrick, 2013, Alsultany, 2013). This has motivated the Muslim students to take a defensive position to confront this discourse and to change the perception in the

minds of non-Muslims. Events held on the campus in which renowned Muslim speakers were invited to give talks to the public were one of the pathways to change misconceptions in the mind of the public. In fact, the sum of activities organized by the MSA including the social, community service, and other activities on social media convey messages of defying Islamophobia, consolidating peaceful relations and coexisting with different people.

6.2 Civic Engagement as Point of Intersection of Identities and Pluralistic Values

Although Muslim students have their own purpose, motive, and approach consistent with the core values of their faith identity— a main argument of this study— this does not mean that those are the only values that drive or lead their civic engagement. Examining the results in the survey, the interviews, and the program observations, the study found that the practices and the ideas expressed by the students convey a national sense of belonging as American citizens. In fact, they use the activities, interactions, collaborations, social and service events as gateways to complement their two halves as Muslims and Americans.

There are indicators that manifest students' tendencies to make their civic involvement harmonious with their religious beliefs on the one hand, and with their sense of national belonging on the other. This was shown through the shift in discourse adopted and the nature of activities held on campus and in local community. Issues, challenges, and concerns of the Muslims around the world used to take a great deal of the route of Muslim organization. This was attributed to global events that brought the Muslim identity into the spotlight for nearly the last three decades. Sweeping stereotypes and demonic generalizations caused the Muslims to feel that their faith identity was being targeted. The

so-called global war on terror and the rise in the scale of Islamophobia provoked Muslims to take a defensive position. Although the climate of xenophobia and fear of others continues to thrive in the US, Muslim students, as we could infer from the data in hand, have become more concerned about their local community issues and with balancing their faith and national identities. Most of the public events on campus organized by the Muslim Student Association in which one or multiple speakers gave talks about an issue of concern to the Muslims, usually addressed topics that encouraged or called on the students to take an active role as citizens. This was observed in two regional conferences attended by the researcher. The thematic concentration of these big events which witnessed wide participation of MSA members was composed of dealing with social and political participation in American life. Speakers encouraged the attendees to be informed about local issues and to take an active role in their communities. From a theoretical perspective this shows that the practice of civic engagement is influenced by conditional factors. Time and contextual events help to explain the civic behavior of Muslims or any other group. As indicated earlier, local and global events may influence Muslim students' civic behavior. They may also drive Muslims in the US to build connections and coalitions with different groups. If we want to think about that from a national political perspective, we could see that a greater proportion of Muslims in the US have Democratic Party affiliations/tendencies because of the democratic establishment accommodative agenda of minorities including certainly the Muslims. Pew Research Center confirms that "Muslims constitute a strongly Democratic constituency" (2017, p. 84).

Pluralism as envisaged by thinkers such as Putnam, Arendt, Bellah, and Ramadan provided the theoretical frame to help clarify the purpose, drive, and meaning of Muslim

student civic engagement. Core concepts of pluralism include wide and equal civic participation, tolerance, and acceptance. It also embraces ideas such as inclusiveness and representation through organizational involvement. I found an echo of those ideas through the analysis of the data. The pluralistic values that drive people of different identities and provide reasons for persons of various backgrounds to be civically engaged were actively manifested in important aspects of the activities and the narrative of interviewed students. Care for the community, standing for justice, and collaboration with diverse students are important themes in this regard. For instance, some of the interviewed students mentioned that the reason they get involved through the service activities and raised donations for philanthropic purposes could not only be attributed to Islamic and religious teachings. Instead, there are set of morals which they learned from school and society. Philip Gorski (2014) talks in this regard about the concept of ‘vital center’ that consists of shared values and brings different people together. This concept is useful in two ways. First in relation to Muslims as a religious group who try to find shared grounds with other groups or democratic entities that accept and accommodate difference. Second, the MSA as an organization adopts a neutral position towards various sects of Muslims and have an equal relationship with all of them. While the shared religious identity might be important to group cohesion, within it are still shared values that represent points of intersection and intermingle with other identities.

The service-oriented activities create suitable grounds for Muslim students to interact and collaborate with their fellow non-Muslim students. The community service center and the organized events where medical care for instance is provided attract Muslim and non-Muslim students alike. Those neutral territory activities were found to serve as

vital elements that unite or bring students together. Serving people in need, regardless of their racial, ethnic, or religious identities, represent occasions for unity across difference. Although other small social activities on campus may motivate certain individuals to get together with their Muslim friends, the big service events were more effective with regards to integration and constructive collaboration. The study also found a willingness by the interviewed students to connect with different students on the campus. Most of the students appreciated the organization and the campus climate for creating opportunities to interact and communicate with diverse students. Some students have multiple organizational memberships including the MSA and other non-religious organizations. Those students were glad to expand the network of identity cross-border ties. Although the MSA's organization is configured with faith as the main nucleus of recruitment and involvement, member students showed an attitude of tolerance and a sense of connection with others.

The political climate in the US appears to draw minority students including the Muslims together. This was mainly noticed in one of the campuses where the students expressed a sense of alienation amid the rise of white nationalism in the aftermath of the 2016 elections. Muslim students felt driven to create an alliance with the Black and Latino students. Those minority students attended each other's events to show support and solidarity. This tells us that civic engagement might take different forms and manifestations (Boland, 2012, Skocpol and Fiorina, 2004, Andolonia et al., 2002). It also reveals that contextual and institutional factors may influence how civic practice emerges. This point also raises questions about the campus agenda for accommodating different students and the adopted approach to create a welcoming environment for different identities. This finding was one of the relative differences marked across the three campuses included in

the study. Overall, the comparison between the campuses revealed differences in domains related to MSA structure and involvement of students, campus' civic agenda and accommodation of minorities, and students' attitudes towards their campus. All of these differences have an effect on civic manifestations. The relative differences among the examined organizations are related to conditional factors. The size of an organization and number of Muslim students involved on each campus are significant elements. The bigger the MSA, the wider the scope of involvement and participation. Moreover, students' opinions towards the diversity climate and the treatment of minority and Muslim students impact their civic engagement. In addition, the strength of the relationship between the organization and the community was not identical across the examined campuses which has ramifications on the scope and vibrancy of civic engagement and overall connection between campus and community. Another factor that may be conceptually connected to the holistic relationship between identity and place (Proshansky, 1978, Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff, 1983, Babacan, 2006, Qazimi, 2014) is whether the students in leadership positions were born and raised in the campus' city. Proshansky argues that attitudes, feelings, and emotions are enmeshed with values, concepts, morals, and a set of various subjective meanings associated with place. Sense of belonging and attachment to the place differ from one person to another and hence the concern and interest about local community issues. This issue was identified by the interviewed students as they expressed concern about independence of MSA which could lead to separation from community.

6.3 The significant role of student organization in the practice of civic engagement

This study used the community of practice (CoP) theory to understand the nature of civic engagement of Muslim college students. CoP served as a technical instrument to uncover the meaning of the civic practice. The MSA organization represents the central unit that connects members who have a shared identity and leads their activities. The study found that the MSA organization is regarded as the engine and gateway of socialization, interaction, civic practice, learning and development. Within the scope of the organization, students made friendships, develop and implement social events for the Muslim students on campus, discuss and come up with ideas for services and educational activities. The organization is considered the spearhead for the civic practice in its multiple dimensions and shapes.

From an associational perspective, the study found that the MSA organization creates the platform for adopting civic practices, building and sustaining connections within the Muslim community, and collaborating with non-Muslim students on campus. The organization also mediates connection and collaboration between the university and the community of Muslims. The MSA is considered a religious organization concerned with cultivating Islamic identity and promoting Islamic practices. Greek, racial, ethnic, and religious are negatively viewed by some researchers who think of those organizations as monocultural enclaves that enhance a sense of victimization, prejudice, and ethnocentrism (Harper and Quaye, 2007, Sidanius, 2014). That does not mean that the MSA does not have an active role in furthering civic practice. A major part of the practices that were examined in the survey are civically oriented. The interviews also showed that the students were well aware of the value of their community service activities, fundraising events to support

philanthropic purposes, medical services provided through the community center, and other online activities that involve standing for justice or issues of common concern. Despite the misconception of student organizations as mere ethnic enclaves, other studies (Bowman et al., 2015, Lott, 2013, Erbur, 2007) show that faith-oriented organizations and their student members are valuable civic agents.

Being a constituent part of the campus body, the MSA organization also serves as a link between the university and the community of Muslims. It creates opportunities for collaboration or possible partnerships especially ones that foster social cohesion between Muslims and other identity groups in the local community. In one of the study campuses, I attended social events such as the Iftar in the Month of Ramadan hosted by the university for consecutive 3 years. An event like this which celebrates one of the primary holidays on the Muslim calendar, sends an important message of integration and accommodation. During this event, campus and Muslim community representatives gave talks focusing on the shared values across faith lines. They were also joyous occasions for the community as a whole to socialize and enjoy dining together.

In one of the universities of the study, the Eid prayer (end of fasting celebration) was held in a newly established building of the campus. This event was attended by a large number of Muslims. It undoubtedly helped to make the students and the community at large feel they were welcomed and that they were an inherent part of the mosaic of the larger community. There were also other events either supported by the MSA or involving active participation of its members such as the ones that advocated the rights of Muslim immigrants or minority communities in the US. An example was protesting the Muslim ban law and Black Lives Matter. Those events reflected the active civic role of the

organization and its contribution to civic agenda. In addition, those events created opportunities to foster diversity and collaboration with people of different identities in the society where the Muslims reside.

A vibrant aspect of the cross-boundary relation between the organization and the Muslim community manifested itself through the MSA's tie with the local community mosque. The study showed that the MSA and the mosque have an organic relation of spiritual inspiration and guidance, mutual benefit and support, and civic oriented participation. The survey showed that most of the students attend the mosque to perform their prayers (*salat*) some days of the week and during the Friday prayer in particular. This presence enforces the organization's connection with the community and opens the way for increased awareness of the concerns and the problems the community may experience which incentivizes providing solutions. This positive relation is not the same in each one of the campuses examined; some of the mosques as expressed by the students were either small or had a limited role in the community as merely a place of worship. The study also found that the location and the attitude of the leaders or council members in the organization and the mosque may have interfered with the intensity and degree of collaboration.

The value of the organization in promoting and spreading awareness about civic practice and behavior might be observed through the MSA members' intensive involvement compared to the international students who took part in the survey. The results showed higher involvement of the MSA members compared to Muslim international students. Membership in the organization is a significant factor that demonstrates greater participation in different activities. To understand the involvement of the international

students, I interviewed an international graduate student who was also a member of the MSA. The issues, challenges and concerns of international students are different from those of the US Muslim students, which lead to the former adopting their own organizational interests. They tended to join small national organizations based on their own nationalities. Nevertheless, the MSA represented an important unit of attraction to Muslim students regardless of their national, ethnic, or racial backgrounds.

The question that merits further discussion here is whether we can consider the MSA as purely a civic organization? While a yes/no response might not be satisfactory, analysis of the survey and interviews show that the MSA is largely a social organization that plays a productive role in civic engagement based on the pattern and type of activities. The organization members have attachment to their identity as Muslims. The principles of their faith make it incumbent on them to be concerned with the public issues and to exert an effort to improve the social environment they live in. The organization is also considered to be an entity for socialization, making friendships, engaging in educational activities, entertainment, learning about Islam and educating other about their faith.

In more general terms, it could be said that despite the distorted image portrayed for the Muslims in the powerful media outlets and Islamophobic machine that represented them as sources of menace and threat which impacted social trust, hindered coexistence, and weakened social cohesiveness, this study showed that Muslim students encountered that with various forms of civic engagement. The organization, hence, played a significant role in correcting the image of Muslims by promoting and adopting various set of civic practices. It also mediated connection, communication, and collaboration between the Muslims and people of other identities on campus. The scope of the organization's

influence may extend beyond the domain of the campus to include the community of Muslims in their local contexts and non-Muslims through the service provided.

6.4 Civic practice, growth and development

This study used CoP's fundamental components of practice, organization, identity, and meaning to examine how these components come coherently together to facilitate understanding the nature of civic engagement of Muslim college students. CoP is primarily a social learning theory that helps find out how those components (practice, organization, identity, meaning) generate learning, growth, and development. The study found that the different forms of practice, organizational involvement, and associated generation of meaning yield civic, personal growth and development that exhibit an identity-related aspect. Although several factors interfere with the process of learning and development, the study focused largely on the perspectives of the participating students.

Overall, the study found that learning and development take two primary pathways. First is the development or enhancement of civic attitude that results from the whole experience on campus and organization. Second is learning personal and leadership skills that comes out of interaction, taking responsibility, managing and running the organization. Weidman, (1989) Ashforth and Mael (1989), and Sherrod (2007) theorized about the formation of values and ideals that ensue from the social and academic context of the university and organizational involvement. Interaction within the university environment has a formative impact on the attitude, perception, and identity of students.

Management of the organization, involvement in the executive board, and participation in educational, social, and civic activities help the students to learn democratic practices as they get engaged in the process of debating, decision making, voting, and executing of set plans. The acquired democratic behavior is consistent with the key Islamic principle of *Shura* that requires Muslims to only make decisions on issues of governance and social life after inclusive discussion and consultation (Shafiq, 1984). This principle ensures that members of the group are involved; and that they have their share in negotiating the benefits and risks relevant to their interests. While democratic practice is thought of positively because it ensures wider participation, and prevents exclusion or keeping the power in the hands of few individuals, it may also cause differences, divisions and quarrels (Harrison and Freeman, 2004). The study found that disputes occurred among members within the scope of the organization, but they usually resolved the problem with the help of senior members or faculty advisors. The study also found that the organization operated independently. Although it was attached to the MSA national as the mother organization, decisions about the activities and the orientation of action were made locally based on the vision of the leaders and the needs in campus and local community.

From a general perspective, it might be said that the presence of a Muslim student organization creates the grounds for interaction of Islam as values, principles, and concepts with democratic values and ideals. This might not be a comprehensive scholastic or ideational interaction, but a limited one that encourages students from all sides to think, ponder, and question those two streams. First and foremost, it allows Muslim students to think about the ideas they learn through their faith and compare them with the stream of ideas in the US with its different religious, non-religious, or secular dimensions.

Involvement in the organization and participation in service and social activities strengthen the students' religious and national identity and close the gap between them because of the space available and the plural values they share with other students. Justice, care for others, and tolerance are common values the Muslim American students - instilled in them as they participate in philanthropy and community service with other students on campus. In addition, the study found that the students develop several personal and leadership skills. Leading the organization helped the students acquire confidence dealing with people of different dispositions, and to be self-dependent. They learn how to manage the financial issues of preparing and implementing big and small activities alike. Different forms of interaction the students have with other students of different identities, with the administration on campus, and various people in the community enriched the personal skills of communication, collaboration, and emotional intelligence. Leading the organization also allowed the students in leadership positions to distribute the roles among the members according to their personal qualifications and capabilities. For instance, one of the interviewed board members was specifically assigned as liaison between the organization and the mosque, and other religious centers in the community. He was specifically chosen to perform those tasks because he knows how to communicate and coordinate effectively more than his fellow members. I also found that most of the interviewed students had distinguished ability to express their ideas eloquently and to speak in an effective manner.

Community Service activities as well as the forms of engagement that involve supporting the rights of Muslims as a minority group was found to increase the students' political awareness. Through indices in the survey and the students' own narratives, I

noticed that certain students developed interest in public political issues. This knowledge and interest may grow at a later point to make some of the MSA students become political activists as it could be noted through former MSA members who graduated earlier. Most of the undergraduate members continued their community involvement even after the graduation. (Sherrod, 2007, Youniss, McLellan, and Yates, 1999)

One of the important findings of the study is related to empowering female Muslim students. Four out of the five interviewed female students were presidents of the MSA. They showed a sense of comfort being Muslim organization leaders. They did not encounter problems or concerns being female students managing the organization. Instead, they reflected on the set of skills they learned through this experience. In the environment of the university, the student organization, and the whole set of non-curricular activities, female Muslim students can take active civic roles and influence other females in their community.

6.5 Conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for future research

This study started with the assumption that civic engagement is idiosyncratic by nature. Faith gives peculiar meaning and manifestation to civic engagement. Muslim college students as a group who have their own values, traditions, beliefs, purposes, histories and contemporary conditions were chosen to investigate how and why they get civically engaged. In order to understand the collection of practices that could be categorized under the umbrella of civic engagement, the study did not restrict the scope of civic practice. Instead, a broad definition was adopted that emphasizes the sense of responsibility in participation for the common good through various means and approaches. The study relied on the ideas of pluralistic thinkers whose theories about

inclusive democratic participation are comprised of having shared collective values. The definition of pluralism used by the study emphasized a wider and inclusive participation and shared values as part of the drives for civic engagement. Adopting pluralism as a way of thinking in this study does not mean that people should have the same set of beliefs or ideologies, but that there is a wide area in which their values and purposes may intersect. Although Islam is considered to be the main drive for Muslim students, the principles of Islam serving as motives for those students do not contradict with plural human values, or more accurately other identity group values.

The literature cited in the study shows that the concept of civic engagement is broad, fluid, constantly changing, and multidimensional (Boland, 2012; Adler and Goggin, 2005; Skocpol and Fiorina, 2004). The study confirmed this dynamic nature of civic engagement. It also indicated that for Muslim college students, civic engagement is understood and approached not only through an Islamic lens but also through diversified pathways. The issues of Muslims in the US determine the overall directionality of the students' civic involvement. Some Muslim students defined civic engagement as related to Islamic understanding as an obligation towards the wider community. But even among those students who think of their faith as the main drive, there was an individualistic tendency in the sense that some of these students were more attracted to social, educational, service, or political practices of civic engagement. Another distinctive feature of civic engagement for Muslim students is that it is not limited to students; it should always entail the involvement not only of the Muslim community but the community at large.

The civic engagement of Muslim college students was not purely driven by religious purposes, although Islam itself was a core motivational force. Through different

activities, students were trying to reconcile or close the gap between their identities as Muslims and Americans. They also wanted to express themselves as Muslim Americans who could make positive contributions to their environment. As students who were mostly still developing their sense of self, their civic belonging was significantly influenced by the campus climate, the atmosphere of the organization, and the interaction with their community. Through the discourse adopted and the activities undertaken, the social and civic participation of the MSA inspired Muslim students, non-Muslim students, and the larger community to get engaged.

The MSA is regarded as a catalyst of civic involvement. As an organization that is part of the campus body, it plays a significant role in attracting Muslim students and channeling their interests and efforts towards a set of social and service activities that help them grow civically. This civic growth is significantly driven by the moralities of the Islamic faith that instruct Muslims to be a positive force in their local communities. Through its service, educational, and social activities, the organization contributed to enhancing a sense of belonging, developing leadership skills, and building constructive relations among students of different identities. The MSA could be considered in this respect as an ingredient of diversity that helps students with asymmetric social and cultural backgrounds to learn to increase their awareness about the value of accommodating and accepting each other. More importantly, the MSA could be regarded as one of the minor fronts of combating the pernicious impact of Islamophobia that causes harm not only to the Muslims but to non-Muslims as well because of the consequent anger, division, and mistrust it creates at the society's fabric.

Considering the mixed methods used in this study, the generalizability of this research could be viewed from two perspectives. First, regarding the quantitative part of the study, it could be said that the limited number of the participants (50) was associated with non-availability of formal record for Muslim students and their small population as religious minority on the three campuses. This gives a limited generalizability to the results. Second, regarding the findings of two components of the study (survey and interviews), they might be applicable to other settings in MSAs in other educational institutions in the United States, since the MSA as an organization has a similar profile in general. However, the size of the organization, diversity climate, educational institution civic agenda, and holistic relation between campus and community are all variables that mitigate against transferability and generalizability. The findings in this study could be validated or invalidated by future studies that address the civic engagement of Muslim college students.

The value of the study stems from both topical and timely considerations. Understanding how and why a group engages in a set of civic practices— not only within the scope of the university but in the context of the local community— provides knowledge on how to approach and deal with this group. This knowledge and understanding boost the chances of successful communication, collaboration, and social thrive. Additionally, what makes this study relevant is that the climate in the US is experiencing politically motivated acute divisions and fissures. Muslims and non-Muslims in the US should not be the ones who pay the price of politically driven disputes. Regardless of the inherent differences in religion, color, or ethnicity, people have shared interests in living in peaceably through mutual understanding.

This study carries multiple messages to various audiences that include in the first place the institutions of the higher education, concerned offices on campus, and practitioners who care about building constructive inter-communal relationships. Overall, the results are consistent with previous research (Weidman,1989, Weidman et. Al., 2014, Enburg, 2007, Lott, 2013, White-Johnson, 2015) that show the value of students' organization in pushing the civic agenda forward. The campus needs to have enhanced relations with those organizations whether Muslims or non-Muslims to encourage and support programs with civic goals. If those organizations get genuine support from the campus that is based on good understanding of their vision, values, and purpose, they could be effective civic partners or mediators with the local community. The university might need to have an active line of communication with the Muslim student organization to better understand their needs and to see how they could support their civic plans. The concerned individuals and offices on campus could invest in service-related programs to attract faith-oriented students. Based on the interests and tendencies of students as this study showed, campus can support activities that match the interests of faith organizations especially in those areas oriented towards volunteering, helping needy people in the local community, and increasing inter-communal dialogue and cooperation through shared projects. Moreover, campus through the concerned offices must be able to distinguish the personal interests and skills of individual students and find the suitable service outlets.

The university also needs to maintain a balanced relation with different identity groups and provide equal support regardless of their background because students can be sensitive and observant. Students weigh and examine how the university treats the students based on their racial, ethnic, or religious identities. This undoubtedly influences their sense

of belonging and their academic and non-academic performance. It may even impact student retention based on their attitude towards the campus climate. Comparing the three campuses included in this research, the study found a mix of positive and negative students' attitudes towards the administration and the respective diversity climate. It is certainly not enough to proclaim accommodation, inclusivity, and equal treatment in the mission statements of universities. Those mottoes need to be put into effect in daily practice; one of the best ways to test them is asking those who are impacted, i.e., the students.

Relying on the ideas embedded in social trust theory (Jennings and Stoker, 2004), the more the campus adopts an inclusive agenda that provides an open space for minority students, the more involvement is anticipated by those students, and vice versa. The university plays an important role in making minority students feel that they are an integral part of the campus' big family and that they are seen as valuable components of the US society and citizens who could make positive contributions. This might require university officials to take steps that ensure organized implementation of pluralistic vision both on campus and in the community.

To take this research a step further, future studies need to examine the relation between Muslim college students and civic engagement by including participants from the local community of Muslims who assume an active role in social and civic life. This will give a better understanding of how the community of Muslims coordinates and builds networks of relations with different parties within their settings to enhance and promote their engagement. An issue that needs to be explored in this frame is how to make religious institutions that have ties with student organizations increase their civic involvement in terms of the discourse they adopt and the action they take. It is also important to think of

how these religious institutions could expand the scope of service and voluntary work to include not only those who share the same identity but also those with different cultural or religious background.

The current study has basically focused on the engagement of Muslim students within the scope of university campus and community. A different study might focus on the whole community of Muslims' engagement in political life - the approaches and pathways they adopt to further their political interest and to ensure having representation in different governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Another study might specifically examine the Muslim females as civic actors. This could be conducted within the scope of public universities or beyond to see females' roles, the Muslim community reception of their civic contribution, and the power they obtain taking this mission. If a larger database of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish students exists, I would propose a more comprehensive study that examines similarities and differences in their pattern of civic engagement. Such a study would be beneficial to find out the scope of integration and collaboration between the students across their faith identities and uncover the networks of support, collaboration, and alliance each group might have.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. SURVEY TABLES

Table 2 Demographic Characteristics of Participants in the Survey

Variable	Categories	Count	Percentage
Gender	Male	30	60%
	Female	20	30%
Age group	18-21	26	52%
	22-25	11	22%
	26-29	2	4%
	30-34	7	14%
	35+	4	8%
Study status	Undergraduate	29	58%
	Graduate	21	42%
Majors according to track	Agriculture	1	2%
	Arabic and Islamic Studies	1	2%
	Biology	5	10%
	Chemistry	4	8%
	Dentistry	1	2%
	Educational Science	1	2%
	Engineering	3	6%
	English	1	2%
	Finance	1	2%
	Geology	1	2%
	Information & Communication Tech (ICT)	1	2%
	International Studies	1	2%
	Mathematics	1	2%
	Medicine	3	6%
	Neuroscience	4	8%
	Nursing	1	2%
	Nutrition and Food System	1	2%
Psychology	4	8%	
Social work	2	4%	
Number of years at university	One	9	18%
	Two	11	22%
	Three	8	16%
	Four	12	24%
	Five or more	10	20%

Table 2 (continued)

Variable	Categories	Count	Percentage
Citizenship	US	33	66%
	Non-US	17	34%
Non-US students' nationalities	Bangladeshi	3	6%
	Egyptian	1	2%
	Indian	1	2%
	Iraqi	4	8%
	Jordanian	4	8%
	Lebanese	1	2%
	Omani	2	4%
	Palestinian	1	2%
Race or ethnicity	Middle Eastern	17	34%
	White	12	24%
	African American	6	12%
	Asian & South Asian	13	26%
Mosque attended	Near-Campus Mosque	19	38%
	MSA Affiliated Mosque	9	18%
	None/ NA	5	10%
	Small local Mosque	4	8%
	Big community Mosque	2	4%
	Local community Mosque	1	2%
	Community Mosque A1 + Community Mosque A2	1	2%
	Community Mosque B	1	2%
	Community Mosque C	1	2%
	Community Mosque D	1	2%
	Community Mosque E	1	2%
	Community Mosque F	1	2%
	MSA membership	MSA	32
Non-MSA		18	36%

Table 3 Frequency and intensity of Muslim students' participation in civic activities]

Activity	Always	Most of the time	About half the time	Sometimes	Never
Awareness/ Educational Activities					
Attend halaqa with other students to discuss faith-related issues	1 (2%)	10 (20%)	7 (14%)	18 (36%)	14 (28%)
Attend interstate events/ conferences related to Muslim students	2 (4%)	5 (10)	7 (14%)	17 (34%)	19 (38%)
Distribute pamphlets to raise awareness about my faith.			3 (6%)	11 (22%)	36 (72%)
Attend an interfaith event	2 (4%)	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	20 (40%)	20 (40%)
Attend events for distinguished public speakers on campus	7 (14%)	11 (22%)	6 (12%)	18 (36%)	8 (16%)
Attend events related to other minority groups	5 (10%)	5 (10%)	9 (18%)	15 (30%)	16 (32%)
Do peer tutoring	2 (4%)	6 (12%)	1 (2%)	16 (32%)	25 (50%)
Participate in creative or performing arts	1 (4%)	5 (10)	6 (12%)	12 (24%)	26 (52%)
Participate in a discussion about a social or political issue	5 (10%)	4 (8%)	7 (14%)	17 (34%)	17 (34%)
Perform salat with other students on campus	6 (12%)	5 (10%)	3 (6%)	25 (50%)	11(22%)
Attend Friday prayer and other salats with community members	21(42%)	11(22%)	3 (6%)	8 (16%)	7 (14%)
Deliver Khutbah on one of the Fridays		1 (2%)	1 (2%)	9 (18%)	39 (78%)
Acts of charity.					
Give sadqa to members of community in need	3 (6%)	7 (14%)	7 (14%)	23 (46%)	10 (20%)
Make donations to the masjid	3 (6%)	5 (10%)	5 (10%)	26 (52%)	11(22%)
Donate to support those in need	3 (6%)	16 (32%)	8 (16%)	20 (40%)	3 (6%)
Volunteer to distribute food	6 (12%)	11 (22%)	3 (6%)	20 (40%)	10 (20%)
Advocacy and active citizenship					
Advocate for an issue or concern related to my faith or other faith groups	2 (4%)	4 (8%)	9 (18%)	17 (34%)	18 (36%)
Participate in protest to defend the right of Muslims	2 (4%)	4 (8%)	5 (10%)	14 (28%)	25 (50%)
March to challenge injustice against Muslims	3 (6%)	4 (8%)	2 (4%)	11(22%)	30 (60%)
Post/ tweet to change negative perception about my identity	6 (12%)	7 (14%)	3 (6%)	11(22%)	23 (46%)
Promote a positive image of my identity on social media	12 (24%)	7 (14%)	2 (4%)	16 (32%)	13 (26%)
Blog to dispel misconceptions about my religion	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	8 (16%)	36 (72%)
Follow on social media advocates or activists who defend my religious identity/ empower the community	16 (32%)	6 (12%)	4 (8%)	6 (12%)	18 (36%)
Use the web to make da'wah and disseminate knowledge about my religious identity	2 (4%)	4 (8%)	7 (14%)	9 (18%)	28 (56%)

Table 3 (continued)

Activity	Always	Most of the time	About half the time	Sometimes	Never
Participate in rally (march) for public cause		5 (10%)	4 (8%)	14 (28%)	27 (54%)
Advocate for an issue or concern related to my faith or other faith groups.	2 (4%)	4 (8%)	9 (18%)	17 (34%)	18 (36%)
Sign a public petition	7 (14%)	5 (10%)	3 (6%)	15 (30%)	20 (40%)
Collect a signature for a petition drive	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	2 (2%)	11 (22%)	34 (68%)
Help prepare a verbal or written presentation to organizations, agencies, conferences or politicians	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	13 (26%)	31 (62%)
Work on or volunteer for a political campaign				7 (14%)	43 (86%)
Publish/ post/ share material to encourage voting	5 (10%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)	8 (16%)	31 (62%)
Sign an email for a common cause	5 (10%)	5 (10%)	7 (14%)	12 (24%)	21 (42%)
Write an email petition.	2 (4%)		3 (6%)	8 (16%)	41 (82%)
Inter-communal/ organizational					
Volunteer to help in a community outreach (service) center.	6 (12%)	7 (14%)	7 (14%)	16 (32%)	14 (28%)
Volunteer to help in a food kitchen	2 (4%)	5 (10%)	4 (8%)	19 (38%)	20 (40%)
Volunteer at or donate to a blood donation center	2 (4%)	1(2%)	6 (12%)	7 (14%)	34 (68%)
Volunteer at a refugee center		2 (4%)	5 (10%)	9 (18%)	34 (68%)
Help to distribute or donate food	3 (6%)	7 (14%)	5 (10%)	18 (36%)	17 (34%)
Volunteer at a local medical clinic.	3 (6%)	5 (10%)	5 (10%)	13 (26%)	24 (48%)
Raise funds for the needy	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	8 (16%)	15 (30%)	18 (36%)
Collaborate with other student organizations	4 (8%)	5 (10%)	8 (16%)	14 (28%)	19 (38%)
Work with people in my neighborhood to fix problem or improve something	2 (4%)	8 (16%)	6 (12%)	14 (28%)	20 (40%)
Visit or help people who are sick or elderly	6 (12%)	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	22 (44%)	14 (28%)
Take care of another family's children without pay	7 (14%)	27 (54%)	6 (12%)	17 (34%)	18 (36%)
Help plan or organizes neighborhood or community events	2 (4%)	7 (14%)	4 (8%)	15 (30%)	22 (44%)

Table 4 Chi-squared analysis of gender and activities (N=50).

<i>Activity</i>	<i>X²</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Awareness/ Educational Activities			
Attend halaqa with other students to discuss faith-related issues	.066	1	.797
Attend interstate events/ conferences related to Muslim students	.057	1	.812
Distribute pamphlets to raise awareness about my faith.	2.79	1	.095
Attend an interfaith event	1.38	1	.239
Attend events for distinguished public speakers on campus	.893	1	.345
Attend events related to other minority groups	3.57	1	.059
Do peer tutoring	.33	1	.564
Participate in creative or performing arts	1.92	1	.166
Participate in a discussion about a social or political issue	1.20	1	.237
Perform salat with other students on campus	.17	1	.676
Attend Friday prayer and other salats with community members	7.08	1	.008
Deliver Khutbah on one of the Fridays	5.61	1	.018
Acts of charity.			
Give sadaqa to members of community in need	.00	1	1.00
Make donations to the masjid	6.29	1	.012
Donate to support those in need	4.08	1	.043
Volunteer to distribute food	3.82	4	.43
Advocacy and active citizenship			
Advocate for an issue or concern related to my faith or other faith groups	.52	1	.47
Participate in protest to defend the right of Muslims	3.00	1	.083
March to challenge injustice against Muslims	1.38	1	.23
Post/ tweet to change negative perception about my identity	.48	1	.48
Promote a positive image of my identity on social media	.01	1	.89
Blog to dispel misconceptions about my religion	5.35	1	.021
Follow on social media advocates or activists who defend my religious identity/ empower the community	.52	1	.47
Use the web to make da'wah and disseminate knowledge about my religious identity	.21	1	.64
Participate in rally (march) for public cause	2.63	1	.10
Sign a public petition	.34	1	.55
Collect a signature for a petition drive	.06	1	.80
Help prepare a verbal or written presentation to organizations, agencies, conferences or politicians	.69	1	.80
Work on or volunteer for a political campaign	.02	1	.86
Publish/ post/ share material to encourage voting	.69	1	.40
Sign an email for a common cause	.12	1	.72
Write an email petition.	1.44	1	.22
Inter-communal/ organizational			
Volunteer to help in a community outreach (service) center.	2.09	1	.14
Volunteer to help in a food kitchen	1.38	1	.23
Volunteer at or donate to a blood donation center	.06	1	.80
Volunteer at a refugee center	.13	1	.71
Help to distribute or donate food	.01	1	.90
Volunteer at a local medical clinic.	1.92	1	.16
Raise funds for the needy	1.17	1	.27

Table 4 (continued)

<i>Activity</i>	<i>X²</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Collaborate with other student organizations	.90	1	.34
Work with people in my neighborhood to fix problem or improve Something	.34	1	.55
Visit or help people who are sick or elderly	.06	1	.79
Take care of another family's children without pay	3.70	1	.054
Help plan or organizes neighborhood or community events	.48	1	.48

Table 5 Chi-squared analysis comparing the 44 questions comparing the US and non-US citizenship of the participants (N=50).

<i>Activity</i>	<i>X²</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Awareness/ Educational Activities			
Attend halaqa with other students to discuss faith-related issues	7.94	1	.005
Attend interstate events/ conferences related to Muslim students	4.74	1	.02
Distribute pamphlets to raise awareness about my faith.	.68	1	.41
Attend an interfaith event	10.04	1	.002
Attend events for distinguished public speakers on campus	3.44	1	.06
Attend events related to other minority groups	1.53	1	.21
Do peer tutoring	2.22	1	.13
Participate in creative or performing arts	3.56	1	.05
Participate in a discussion about a social or political issue	.59	1	.44
Perform salat with other students on campus	.28	1	.59
Attend Friday prayer and other salats with community members	.10	1	.74
Deliver Khutbah on one of the Fridays	3.89	1	0.048
Acts of charity.			
Give sadqa to members of community in need	1.42	1	.23
Make donations to the masjid	.035	1	.851
Donate to support those in need	7.52	1	.006
Volunteer to distribute food	9.07	1	.003
Advocacy and active citizenship			
Advocate for an issue or concern related to my faith or other faith groups	3.20	1	.07
Participate in protest to defend the right of Muslims	4.36	1	.037
March to challenge injustice against Muslims	5.36	1	.021
Post/ tweet to change negative perception about my identity	.24	1	.62
Promote a positive image of my identity on social media	.08	1	.75
Blog to dispel misconceptions about my religion	2.21	1	.13
Follow on social media advocates or activists who defend my religious identity/ empower the community	.30	1	.58
Use the web to make da'wah and disseminate knowledge about my religious identity	2.29	1	.13
Participate in rally (march) for public cause	2.85	1	.09
Sign a public petition	1.79	1	.18
Collect a signature for a petition drive	.079	1	.77
Help prepare a verbal or written presentation to organizations, agencies, conferences or politicians	2.28	1	.13
Work on or volunteer for a political campaign	.10	1	.74
Publish/ post/ share material to encourage voting	.80	1	.36
Sign an online for a common cause	1.26	1	.26
Write an online petition.	.002	1	.96
Inter-communal/ organizational			
Volunteer to help in a community outreach (service) center.	.59	1	.01
Volunteer to help in a food kitchen	6.55	1	.01
Volunteer at or donate to a blood donation center	.84	1	.35
Volunteer at a refugee center	2.43	1	.11
Help to distribute or donate food	7.07	1	.00

Table 5 (continued)

<i>Activity</i>	<i>X²</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Volunteer at a local medical clinic.	2.88	1	.09
Raise funds for the needy	3.20	1	.073
Collaborate with other student organizations	11.61	1	.001
Work with people in my neighborhood to fix problem or improve Something	.53	1	.46
Visit or help people who are sick or elderly	.02	1	.87
Take care of another family's children without pay	3.20	1	.073
Help plan or organizes neighborhood or community events	4.48	1	.034

Table 6 Chi-square Analysis Comparing the 44 Questions Comparing Against the MSA and non-MSA Muslim Students (N=50).

<i>Activity</i>	<i>X²</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Awareness/ Educational Activities			
Attend halaqa with other students to discuss faith-related issues	6.75	1	.009
Attend interstate events/ conferences related to Muslim students	9.81	1	.002
Distribute pamphlets to raise awareness about my faith.	.001	1	.979
Attend an interfaith event	12.16	1	.00
Attend events for distinguished public speakers on campus	6.28	1	.01
Attend events related to other minority groups	.149	1	.70
Do peer tutoring	.00	1	1.0
Participate in creative or performing arts	.14	1	.70
Participate in a discussion about a social or political issue	9.21	1	.002
Perform salat with other students on campus	.46	1	.49
Attend Friday prayer and other salats with community members	1.57	1	.20
Deliver Khutbah on one of the Fridays	7.93	1	.005
Acts of charity.			
Give sadqa to members of community in need	1.06	1	.30
Make donations to the masjid	.54	1	.45
Donate to support those in need	2.97	1	.08
Volunteer to distribute food	6.56	1	.01
Advocacy and active citizenship			
Advocate for an issue or concern related to my faith or other faith groups	7.69	1	.006
Participate in protest to defend the right of Muslims	1.38	1	.23
March to challenge injustice against Muslims	3.70	1	.05
Post/ tweet to change negative perception about my identity	1.03	1	.30
Promote a positive image of my identity on social media	.78	1	.37
Blog to dispel misconceptions about my religion	.39	1	.52
Follow on social media advocates or activists who defend my religious identity/ empower the community	4.66	1	.03
Use the web to make da'wah and disseminate knowledge about my religious identity	1.29	1	.25
Participate in rally (march) for public cause	3.760a	1	.053
Sign a public petition	8.333a	1	.004
Collect a signature for a petition drive	3.039a	1	.081
Help prepare a verbal or written presentation to organizations, agencies, conferences or politicians	1.24	1	.26
Work on or volunteer for a political campaign	.19	1	.65
Publish/ post/ share material to encourage voting	2.97	1	.08
Sign an email for a common cause	2.12	1	.14
Write an online petition.	2.95	1	.08
Inter-communal/ organizational			
Volunteer to help in a community outreach (service) center.	.04	1	.83
Volunteer to help in a food kitchen	1.17	1	.27
Volunteer at or donate to a blood donation center	1.23	1	.26
Volunteer at a refugee center	1.23	1	.26
Help to distribute or donate food	3.20	1	.07
Volunteer at a local medical clinic.	.045	1	.83

Table 6 (continued)

<i>Activity</i>	<i>X²</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Raise funds for the needy	4.66	1	.03
Collaborate with other student organizations	6.37	1	.01
Work with people in my neighborhood to fix problem or improve Something	.23	1	.63
Visit or help people who are sick or elderly	.001	1	.97
Take care of another family's children without pay	.87	1	.35
Help plan or organizes neighborhood or community events	5.86	1	.01

Table 7 Chi-square analysis comparing the 44 questions comparing against the Graduate under-Graduate Muslim students (N=50).

<i>Activity</i>	<i>X²</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Awareness/ Educational Activities			
Attend halaqa with other students to discuss faith-related issues	1.83	1	.17
Attend interstate events/ conferences related to Muslim students	1.42	1	.23
Distribute pamphlets to raise awareness about my faith.	.006	1	.93
Attend an interfaith event	4.43	1	.03
Attend events for distinguished public speakers on campus	1.64	1	.20
Attend events related to other minority groups	1.13	1	.28
Do peer tutoring	.082	1	.77
Participate in creative or performing arts	1.42	1	.23
Participate in a discussion about a social or political issue	.27	1	.60
Perform salat with other students on campus	.18	1	.66
Attend Friday prayer and other salats with community members	.002	1	.96
Deliver Khutbah on one of the Fridays	.18	1	.66
Acts of charity.			
Give sadqa to members of community in need	.021	1	.88
Make donations to the masjid	.18	1	.66
Donate to support those in need	3.09	1	.07
Volunteer to distribute food	9.66	1	.002
Advocacy and active citizenship			
Advocate for an issue or concern related to my faith or other faith groups	.06	1	.79
Participate in protest to defend the right of Muslims	.73	1	.39
March to challenge injustice against Muslims	3.95	1	.04
Post/ tweet to change negative perception about my identity	.03	1	.84
Promote a positive image of my identity on social media	1.01	1	.31
Blog to dispel misconceptions about my religion	.31	1	.57
Follow on social media advocates or activists who defend my religious identity/ empower the community	.73	1	.39
Use the web to make da'wah and disseminate knowledge about my religious identity	.01	1	.89
Participate in rally (march) for public cause	.91	1	.34
Sign a public petition	.12	1	.72
Collect a signature for a petition drive	1.11	1	.29
Help prepare a verbal or written presentation to organizations, agencies, conferences or politicians	1.36	1	.24
Work on or volunteer for a political campaign	.002	1	.96
Publish/ post/ share material to encourage voting	1.36	1	.24
Sign an email for a common cause	3.40	1	.06
Write an online petition.	.33	1	0.65
cross communal/ organizational			
Volunteer to help in a community outreach (service) center.	1.01	1	.31
Volunteer to help in a food kitchen	2.31	1	.12
Volunteer at or donate to a blood donation center	5.22	1	.02
Volunteer at a refugee center	2.79	1	.09
Help to distribute or donate food	5.45	1	.02
Volunteer at a local medical clinic.	.27	1	.59

Table 7 (continued)

<i>Activity</i>	<i>X²</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Raise funds for the needy	.73	1	.39
Collaborate with other student organizations	5.63	1	.01
Work with people in my neighborhood to fix problem or improve Something	.123	1	.72
Visit or help people who are sick or elderly	.006	1	.93
Take care of another family's children without pay	2.12	1	.14
Help plan or organizes neighborhood or community events	.19	1	.66

APPENDIX 2. THE SURVEY: MUSLIM COLLEGE STUDENTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Q1.1 I am

- 18-21 years old (1)
 - 22-25 years old (2)
 - 26-29 years old (3)
 - 30-34 years old (4)
 - 35-+ years old (5)
-

Q1.2 What is your gender?

Q1.3 I am:

- Undergraduate (1)
 - Graduate (2)
-

Q1.4 What is your major?

Q1.5 Number of years at this university

- One year (1)
 - two years (2)
 - three years (3)
 - four years (4)
 - five or more years (5)
-

Q1.6 Are you U.S. citizen or permanent resident?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
-

Q1.7 If not U.S. citizen or permanent resident, Please identify your nationality

Q1.8 What is your ethnicity/ race?

Q1.9 Where did you grow up?

Q1.10 Which mosque do you mostly attend?

Q1.11 Are you an MSA member?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q1.12 Section 1-3. On Campus engagement
The following section asks you to provide answers about your contribution to a set of activities that are mainly situated within the domain of the campus, such as helping the needy, collaborating to enhance a sense of community, volunteering, and public action.

Q1.13 Donate to support those in need.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.14 Volunteer to distribute food.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.15 Perform salat with other students on campus.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.16 Attend halaqa with other students to discuss faith-related issues.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.17 Do peer tutoring.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.18 Volunteer to help in a community outreach (service) center.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.19 Volunteer to help in a food kitchen.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.20 Attend events for distinguished public speakers on campus.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.21 Attend events related to other minority groups.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.22 Attend interstate events/ conferences related to Muslim students.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.23 Collaborate with other student organizations.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.24 Participate in rally (march) for public cause.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.25 Advocate for an issue or concern related to my faith or other faith groups.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.26 - Is there any other activity not mentioned above you would like to add, please identify:

Q1.27 Section 2-3. Off Campus Engagement
This section asks you to provide answers about your contribution for a set of activities that happen within the domain of the community you identify with off campus. This includes, for instance, participating in congregation, volunteering, helping others, advocating for your community, and serving the wider community.

Q1.28 Attend Friday prayer and other salats with community members.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.29 Deliver Khutbah on one of the Fridays.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.30 Volunteer at or donate to a blood donation center.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.31 Volunteer at a refugee center.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.32 Help to distribute or donate food.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.33 Volunteer at a local medical clinic.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.34 Give sadqa to members of community in need.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.35 Raise funds for the needy.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.36 Make donations to the masjid.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.37 Work with people in my neighborhood to fix problem or improve something.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.38 Visit or help people who are sick or elderly.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.39 Distribute pamphlets to raise awareness about my faith.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.40 Take care of another family's children without pay.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.41 Participate in creative or performing arts.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.42 Participate in protest to defend the right of Muslims.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.43 March to challenge injustice against Muslims.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.44 Help plan or organizes neighborhood or community events.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.45 Attend an interfaith event.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.46 Participate in a discussion about a social or political issue.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.47 Sign a public petition.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.48 Collect a signature for a petition drive.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.49 Help prepare a verbal or written presentation to organizations, agencies, conferences or politicians.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.50 Work on or volunteer for a political campaign.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.51 - Is there any other activity not mentioned in the previous section you would like to add, please identify:

Q1.52 Section 1-3. Online Engagement
This final section asks you about the online activities in their various forms, such as blogging, posting, following popular characters, and so on.

Q1.53 Publish/ post/ share material to encourage voting

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.54 Post/ tweet to change negative perception about my identity.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.55 Promote a positive image of my identity on social media.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.56 Blog to dispel misconceptions about my religion

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.57 Follow on social media advocates or activists who defend my religious identity/
empower the community.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.58 Sign an email for a common cause.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.59 Write an online petition.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.60 Use the web to make da'wah and disseminate knowledge about my religious identity.

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Q1.61 - Is there any other activity not mentioned in the previous section you would like to add, please identify:

Q1.62 Thank you so much for completing the survey. As part of the study, this survey will be followed at some point by interviews with the MSA members to better understand their thoughts about civic engagement. The interview will take about 60-90 minutes. We will cover multiple issues related to the practice and meaning of civic engagement. Students' identity will remain anonymous and the responses will be kept confidential. If you would not mind sharing your thoughts about this topic, please provide your contact information by clicking or copy pasting this link:

<https://goo.gl/forms/NgTvC1YYNwT9EHtZ2>

APPENDIX 3. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARTICIPANTS

Within the overarching frame of the study, the questions of the interview will cover the way the MSA members ascribe meaning to civic engagement. The questions will try to understand the structure, purpose, process, value, implications, and consequence of being a member in this organization, and the way those members steer the course of action for the MSA. Although the questions that will be introduced to the participants will generate individual responses, the researcher is more interested in knowing about the organization itself. The idea is that the access point to the information about the organization is through its members; the organization derives its existence from those members. Awareness of this point in a historical time with all the contextual complexities will come up as the researcher interviews the students. These main questions will be points of departure and will lead to expansion and discovery.

- 1- How would you describe the overall structure and types of activities the organization is engaged in?
 - Could you provide a description of the activities the MSA is engaged in? Which are regular activities (daily, weekly, monthly) and which are special or one-time activities? Describe in detail a typical activity.
 - How does the MSA organize those activities?
 - o How is it decided who will organize which activities?
 - o How are people encouraged to participate?
 - What are the domains of practice?
 - Could you tell me about the various environments in which your organization does its activities?

- 2- What is the primary vision that guides the organization's course of action?
 - What are the tenets or ideological grounds on which the organization builds its agenda?
 - Where do the MSA members derive their principles from as they do their activities?
 - How does the MSA understand action and engagement?
 - What motivates you to be part of this organization?
 - What discussions and debates have there been within the MSA about guiding principles and how they are translated into action?

- 3- Introductory note: Civic engagement is a broad and common term that can mean different things to different people:
 - What is your own understanding of the term?
 - How would you define it?
 - How have you been personally involved in civic engagement?

- 4- Introductory note: As being part of this organization, the members experience a series of various interactions and processes of engagement with different people and entities. The following questions address the procedural aspect of being involved with the MSA:
- Could you tell me about your role within the organization? What are the forms of interaction with other people on and off campus.
 - Within the scope of the campus, how would you describe the MSA interrelation with other entities or student organizations?
 - Beyond the campus, what are the aspects of interconnection?
 - Given the current political climate in the U.S., how does the MSA influence change both to its own community and the broader society?
 - What are the constraints, limitations, and challenges encountered as part of the work in this organization? (How do you deal with it)
 - How does the university help support the MSA in their efforts to promote civic engagement?
- 5- Introductory note: While it might not be straightforward to speak about the outcome of the work of the organization, I would like to hear your thoughts about that aspect:
- What is the value of the work that is being done by the MSA?
 - How would you describe the MSA's ability to attract students to serve their community/ies?
 - Which communities have been engaged? With what effects for those communities?
 - How does engagement in activities influence you, your community, and the broader context?
 - In what ways did you impact the character of the organization and in what ways did it affect you?

APPENDIX 4. INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Muslim College Students and Civic Engagement

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in this study to help the researcher understand Muslim college students' perception and understanding of civic engagement. The research would also be exploring the various aspects of civic engagement the Muslim college students are engaged in. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a Muslim student. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of around 20 people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is Aus Abdulwahhab of University of Kentucky, Department of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation. I am being guided in this research by Dr. Beth Goldstein.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

As graduate student, I am particularly interested in conducting this study to generate knowledge about the way Muslim college students contribute to their campus and community. The research intends to find out the peculiar meaning of civic engagement as practiced by a religiously oriented group of students. To understand this topic, Muslim Student Association is being targeted through this research.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you are not a student and under 18 years of age you should not take part in this study.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The research will be conducted at the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, and possibly Center College at Danville. The method of study consists of two parts; a survey that will be completed online and an interview which will take 60-90 minutes. Students participation in this study will be confidential. The study will be conducted over a period of approximately two years.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

You will be asked to take an online survey and participate in an interview. The survey cover aspects of your involvement in civically oriented practices that include different domains. You will also be asked to share your understanding and experiences with civic engagement. The interviewer will document responses to questions and ask for elaboration when needed.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

To the best of my knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. However, your willingness to take part may help society, as a whole better understand this research topic.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you do not want to participate in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. Also, we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you decide to take part in the study, you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individual conducting the study may need to withdraw you from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions they give you or if they find that your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

There is a possibility that the data collected from you may be shared with other investigators in the future. If that is the case the data will not contain information that can identify you unless you give your consent or the UK Institutional Review Board (IRB) approves the research. The IRB is a committee that reviews ethical issues, according to federal, state and local regulations on research with human subjects, to make sure the study complies with these before approval of a research study is issued.

Contacting Research Subject for Future Studies

Do you give your permission to be contacted in the future by the investigator regarding your willingness to participate in future research studies about your experience as a Muslim student?

Yes No _____ Initials

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky between the business hours of 8am and 5pm EST, Mon-Fri. at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

__Aus Abdulwahhab_____
Name of (authorized) person obtaining informed consent

__ / / 20 __
Date

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Aus Abdulwahhab

VITA

EDUCATION

<i>M.A.- Translation</i>	<i>University of Mosul</i>	2008
<i>Bachelor of Arts – Translation</i>	<i>University of Mosul</i>	1999

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teacher/ Dept. of Translation/ Mosul University 2008-2013

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Translator at the College of Arts/ University of Mosul

Freelance Translator at:

- Raman for Translation
- CulturaLink
- Day Translations
- MVP Translations
- Focus Interpreting

Exam Proctor/ Disability Resource Center/ University of Kentucky 2019

Graduate Studies Office Assistant/ EPE/ University of Kentucky 2019

Volunteer Tutor Fall 2017-2018

PUBLICATIONS

Abdulwahhab, A. (2007). Avoiding communication failure in translating English

journalistic texts into Arabic: a psycholinguistic approach (Unpublished master's thesis). Mosul, Mosul, Iraq.

Al-Bazzaz, T., Hussein, M., & Abdulwahhab, A. (2012). Language and linguistic terminology: Dictionary with explanation. Baghdad, Iraq: Dar Al-Ma'moun/ Ministry of Culture/ Iraq.

Naoum, A. B., & Abdulwahhab, A. (2012). A conceptual Framework to translating informal English idiomatic expressions into Arabic. *Al-Tarbiya wal Ilm*, 1-22.

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PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Title	Subject Presentation	Name of Conference or meeting and Location
New trends in translation and translation assessment	A conceptual Approach to Translation	Dept. of Translation Symposium/ Mosul University
Muslim Students and Diversity: An Exploratory Study	Diversity and Higher Education	CIES2017 Comparative and International Education Society
Muslim Students and Civic Engagement	Community of Practice	American Anthropological Association 2018