To what extent, if any, is anti-blackness a problem within Muslim communities in Britain?

MA Islam in Contemporary Britain

2016/2017

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Words: 19,992

Abstract

This work identifies and fills a gap in the current literature on British Muslim Studies. This dissertation discusses the problem of anti-blackness within the British Muslim community. It is the first study of its kind carried out on British Muslims and finds that anti-blackness exists to a large extent within the British Muslim community. It combines an analysis of literature and qualitative research to explain the situations, reasons and effects of anti-blackness in this context. It applies Critical Race Theory to analyse anti-blackness within the British Muslim community. This work demonstrates how anti-blackness in the British Muslim community is experienced; analysing microaggressions and interracial marriage in particular. It ends with suggesting ways in which conditions for black British Muslims can be improved in light of the effects found from the interviews.

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Introduction

This dissertation examines the extent to which anti-blackness is a problem within Muslim communities in Britain; arguing that anti-blackness is a large problem within Muslim communities in Britain. [1] It begins with thematic analysis of the literature, starting with a discussion of the meaning of blackness and how it pertains to this study. Then, this work will study of the experiences of black American Muslims. It looks at black Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and colourism in South Asia, and the different reasons behind anti-blackness from each group. Literature on the USA, MENA and South Asia has been used as scholarly background literature as there are not enough relevant works on the subject in UK or European cases. Comparatively, the USA has significant literature on the subject because of its history of slavery as well as its civil rights movements. This work covers literature on interracial marriage as this is one of the ways the interviews sought to measure racism and anti-blackness. The last theme discusses the limited amount of literature on black British Muslims. Similar studies are included to provide a comparison, where possible, to this work. Through obtaining data, this work organises experiences into themes. These are: the experiences of anti-blackness, mainly found through microaggressions; anti-blackness seen through marriage; and the overall effects of anti-blackness. Whilst the literature covers a great deal of information, it fails to cover, in detail, data on anti-blackness within Muslim communities in Britain. This is where this dissertation fits into the literature and fills a much-needed academic gap.

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[1] *Anti-blackness is used rather than the broader term of racism because the study is within a minority group; it specifically refers to racism against black people. Racism is used where the literature has used it, however the literature has been selected where their use of "racism" equals my use of "anti-blackness". I have been mindful of this when literature gives a broad use of "racism". In some studies of racism, those who are not white come under the umbrella of "black", therefore, this work was explicit in its use of "anti-blackness".*

The Methodology gives an explanation of Critical Race Theory and applies it to the black British Muslim context. It includes an explanation of the methods chosen and why each approach was valid. It ends with data collected from interviews and analyses them alongside a discussion of future studies. Through this work, I provide a premier academic study detailing the experiences of black British Muslims to further discussions of anti-blackness within the British Muslim community. Starting with a coherent summation of the limited literature on the subject as well as similar and linked studies, it shows the gap which this work fills. This work is increasingly necessary following the formation of the Black Lives Matter movement, which aims to combat systemic racism against black people. It was established as a result of police killing innocent black citizens in the USA.[2] Anti-blackness against black Muslims within the British Muslim community is beginning to be at the forefront of conversation, with the history of black Muslims in Britain being subject to a conference in 2017. However, this conference only touched on their experiences of anti-blackness.[3] It is important to understand the history surrounding the position of black British Muslims to understand the anti-blackness faced. This work identifies these as contributing factors and uses them as a basis to discuss experiences of anti-blackness. Racism in general is a subject which has been extensively written about but the specificity of racism and anti-blackness within Muslim communities has been less so, especially in Britain.

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[2] *USA and America are used interchangeably in this work.*
[3] "Black British Muslims in British History and Heritage," Everyday Muslim, accessed August 10, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0tha0stCY_78F5nr7SW-OadaA4ZZ9JMO.

Literature Review

This review provides an examination of literature pertaining to anti-blackness within Muslim communities in Britain. There is a severe lack of academic literature on this exact subject, with sources often limited to blog posts and informal information. Therefore, this literature review analyses research on this subject's broader themes. It begins by analysing definitions of blackness to provide a coherent lens to analyse further sources. It provides a thematic evaluation of current literature. My research notes that there are four overarching topics within the current literature which enhance my own theories. These themes were chosen to add sustenance to the intention and argument of this dissertation; that black Muslims face anti-blackness within the British Muslim community to a large extent. This section is sizeable to show that whilst there is a lack of literature on the subject, all efforts were taken to dissect as much information as possible to allow for a coherent background study.

The first theme discusses black Muslims in America. I have included research on this topic as many of these studies can offer a comparative to my own by presenting information on a problem which has been written about to a greater extent in the American context. Within this theme I examine literature on the history of Muslims in the USA, the Nation of Islam (NoI), and the anti-blackness faced by black Muslims within American Muslim communities. This analysis provides an interesting juxtaposition to the data collected in Britain. As a Western country, it allows a comparison to Britain, especially to understand the factors contributing to the anti-blackness. Due to the limited nature of the information on Britain, studying the situation in the USA permits one to understand approaches used, and decide their applicability in the British context.

The second literature theme is black Muslims in the MENA and colourism in South Asia. Colourism can be defined as discrimination or bias against people with a darker skin colour among individuals of the same ethnicity. This is common within black and South Asian communities. In the South Asian community, it existed before colonialism with the caste system playing a large role in projecting colourism. These ideas were exacerbated with the British colonisation of India, whereby notions of white supremacy increased. This theme involves analysing the anti-blackness faced by black Muslims in the two regions. It is important to understand the differing contexts between the two regions which allows anti-blackness to manifest. Through this, we can understand the problems that emerge in Muslim communities in Britain. We can then see that through data collected, there is a difference between racism perpetrated by Arab Muslims and by South Asian Muslims. This is an important distinction to make as it aids in discussing analysis because the expressions of racism may differ. Within the USA, the majority of the Muslim population are black and Arab, in contrast to Muslims in Britain who are mainly of South Asian heritage and this can add to those differences.

The third theme surrounds interracial marriage. To analyse anti-blackness within Muslim communities in Britain, this dissertation concentrates on how it manifests through marriage. Whether it is family rejection because of race, or problems a couple has faced once married, the literature on interracial marriage enhances the qualitative data collected. They provide key theories behind interracial marriage which are applicable in this instance. It discusses these themes more specifically in the *"Similar Studies"* section of this work because it analyses empirical works and studies to base my research on.

The fourth theme discusses black Muslims in Britain. There exists a small amount of literature on this subject. The main focuses of those works include black converts in Britain, a

comparison between Muslims of African background and Muslims of Caribbean background in Britain, and, a generalised history of British Muslims. The "diasporic identities" of black Muslims in Britain are important in terms of the experiences faced.[4]

Discussion

Blackness is generally defined as a "racial designation" ascribed to people dependent upon physiognomies like "skin colour and hair texture".[5] These attributes are unchangeable, unlike factors such as cultural, religious, or moral traits.[6] However, this is only a simplistic approach. Blackness in the West is characterized by more complex concepts such as the "historical, cultural and political contexts" in which it exists.[7] The idea of what it means to be black has been under constant change throughout various historical events. Slavery, the civil rights movements, and decades of inequality have continuously redefined blackness from a negative attribute given to them by slave owners, to "a positive self-identity".[8]

Blackness can be tied to religion within the context of slavery. Paul Harvey argues that as many black people began converting to Christianity, blackness was created as a contrast to whiteness to ensure that black people remained in a state of "perpetual servitude"; ensuring that even post-conversion, white people could maintain their view of superiority.[9] The problem

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[4] Edward E. Curtis IV, *The Call of Bilal: Islam in the African Diaspora* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina, 2014), 82.

[5] Angellar Manguvo, "Negotiating the Boundaries of American Blackness: The Experiences of African Students in the United States," in *Exploring the Social and Academic Experiences of International Students in Higher Education Institutions,* ed. Krishna Bista and Charlotte Foster, (Hershey: IGI Global, 2016), 81.

[6] Sherman A. Jackson, *Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 13.

[7] Manguvo, "Negotiating the Boundaries," 81.

[8] Frederick L. Ware, *Methodologies of Black Theology* (Eugene: The Pilgrim Press, 2002), 12.

[9] Paul Harvey, *Through the Storm, Through the Night: A History of African American Christianity* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Inc., 2011), 19.

with these sources is that they only discuss evidence in the American context. There are elements of black American history and culture that are country-specific and would not be applicable elsewhere. It is important to keep this in mind during the analysis of literature because this work focuses on blackness in the British context.

The definition of blackness based on physical traits is used here. The concepts of historical and cultural capacities of black people in Britain is not be ignored, and is addressed when needed. It is important to define blackness for the purpose of this thesis because of the wide variety of interpretations in use in public discourse. For the purposes of the qualitative study in this dissertation, blackness is also based on the idea of self-identity.

Another concept used in this dissertation is *microaggressions*. They are defined as minor gestures of discrimination because of attributes one is born with, such as race or gender. This term was developed during the 1970's to mean "everyday subtle 'put-downs' aimed at black Americans".[10] These slurs may be considered inadvertent or unintended but can negatively affect the victim. Microaggressions may include "verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities".[11] Examples are instances like judgemental looks; which may seem acute, but are vital when investigating anti-black discrimination faced by black Muslims, as microaggressions are more prevalent than acts of discrimination such as violent aggressions.

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[10] Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* (New Jersey: Wiley, 2010), 5.
[11] *Ibid*

Black Muslims in America

Black Americans have had a long and troubled relationship with wider society and black Muslims are no exception to this. This contributes to the anti-blackness experienced by this disenfranchised group. It is important to note literature on Islam in America because there exists limited literature on the situations of Black Muslims in Britain. Studying the American case gives a comparison to Britain, and due to the limited literature, builds credibility to this study as it allows for background research. To understand historical discrepancies allows for an effective comparison of the problems faced. It is important to understand the factors in America and Britain as they each have different relationships with the different ethnicities of their respective Muslim communities. The USA has had a long time to develop theories on blackness. Their history with slavery produced a distinct 'black' category. In comparison, within Britain, groups are defined as 'white' or everything else. Unlike the USA, Britain does not have an extremely defined history and relation within blackness. The situation with minorities in Britain is because of the colonial relationship it had with a wide variety of countries. Often, the distinction was not made between the different races, so minorities were placed in the non-white category. One must understand this to be able to effectively situate findings in the British context, within the background literature from the USA. Due to these differences, there is a distinction between the classes of minorities in each country. Because of the after effects of slavery, black people in the USA tended to be of lower class. Comparatively, Arabs or South Asians in the USA tended to be middle class because they largely immigrated to the USA out of choice, usually for business opportunities. Conversely, in Britain, because of the colonial legacy, minorities including African-Caribbeans, Arabs, and South Asians tend to be of lower class. This is because they often immigrated to Britain to work in low paying

jobs. Therefore, class is an important factor to consider when analysing the literature from both countries.

History

It is a misconception that the history of black Muslims in America began in the twentieth century.[12] To assume this completely ignores black Islam as an indigenous product of African Americans in America. It wrongly speculates that Islam arrived in America as a result of "twentieth century immigrant influences" from the Middle East.[13] Before the mid-nineteenth century, Islam in America was monopolised by an "indigenous black presence".[14]

Many sources discussing Islam in America begin their arguments with the rising popularity of the NoI during the 1960s.[15] However, Muslims began arriving to the Americas as slaves "a few years" after the Slave Trade started, often as a result of African Muslims being deported from non-Muslim majority regions in West Africa because of their faith.[16] One source estimates that as many as one fifth of the African slaves brought to the Americas during the slave trade were Muslim.[17] It is important to understand that Muslims were victims of the slave trade as the prevailing anti-blackness that exists in the USA has its roots in slavery. This is

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[12] Samory Rashid, *Black Muslims in the US: History, Politics and the Struggle of a Community* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 103.

[13] Rashid, *Black Muslims in the US,* 160.

[14] Sherman A. Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking Toward the Third Resurrection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3.

[15] Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience: Second Edition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 239.

[16] Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas – 15th Anniversary Edition* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 38.

[17] Junius P. Rodriguez, *Slavery in the United States: A Social, Political, and Historical Encyclopaedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2007), 347.

similar with anti-blackness perpetrated by Muslims of other ethnic groups and by non-Muslims.

Many Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity by their slave-owners. They had a suspicious view of Islam and prohibited the slaves from practising fundamental tenets such as prayer and fasting.[18] This method was used by some slave-owners to encourage and often force their Muslim slaves to convert to Christianity.[19] Adversely, some slave owners had a preference for Muslim slaves as they were generally more educated than their non-Muslim counterparts. This meant that they were often put into positions of superiority to other slaves.[20]

Muslims who arrived in the USA after the turn of the twentieth century were "without the handicap of slavery".[21] They entered America searching for opportunity and work. They were not forced and were immigrants, unlike black Americans who were imports into the USA. These immigrants came from South Asia and the MENA and for the most part, arrived out of their own volition. The different reasons as to why these groups of Muslims came to America and indeed Europe, are important because a sense of superiority can prevail from this. With roots in slavery, Muslims of African origins are more likely to be disenfranchised socio-economically, politically, and educationally, in comparison to Muslims of other ethnic origins who came to the USA out of choice and were generally economically better off. This differs in the British context due to Britain's colonial relationship with South Asia and parts of the MENA. The role of slavery is important when viewing anti-blackness in the USA, because it is used by the NoI as a way of attracting members.[22]

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[18] Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery: A Detailed History* (Maryland: Writers Inc., 1995, 84.
[19] *Ibid*

[20] Rodriguez, *Slavery in the United States*, 348; Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery*, 42.

[21] Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery*, 2.

[22] Turner, *Islam,* 240.

Nation of Islam

The NoI was officially established "between 1930 and 1931" by Wallace Fard Muhammad, and in 1934, Elijah Muhammad took over as leader.[23] The NoI was preceded by another "proto-Islamic" movement, the Moorish Science Temple, founded by Drew Ali in 1913.[24] Whilst the latter is not subject to the same popularity as the NoI, they are important to mention as the two are "ideologically related".[25] This demonstrates that black Muslim movements in the West did not begin with the NoI. Some do not regard the NoI as an inherently Muslim group, even going so far as to deem it "heretical".[26] One cannot argue that the Nation did not have a significant impact on the discourse of black Muslim thought especially when influential figures such as Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali joined the group. Whilst they both eventually seceded from the group, the affect they had on the popularity of the Nation was paramount.

The NoI was responsible for a number of conversions to Islam. Whilst many mainstream Muslims disagree with many of the Nation's values and disregard them as un-Islamic; the contribution they made to Islam in America is unequivocal. When W.D. Muhammad, took over the Nation, he began to attempt to change the movement into one more in line with classical Islamic values. He dissociated himself from the Nation and took some high-profile figures such as Muhammad Ali with him. The NoI was then lead by Louis Farrakhan, once Elijah Muhammad's top aide. In Britain, the NoI and especially Malcolm X,

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[23] Jackson, *Islam,* 8.
[24] Jackson, *Islam,* 8; Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery*, 3.
[25] *Ibid*
[26] Suleka Hassan, "The Denial of Racism Within the Muslim Community," *Islamicate*, July 29, 2015, accessed June 3, 2017, http://islamicate.co.uk/the-denial-of-racism-within-the-muslim-community/.

inspired Michael de Freitas, known also as Michael X. During the 1960s de Freitas began, to use the NoI as a starting point in his involvement of political Islamic activism.[27] Whilst the NoI in Britain did not have large numbers, it did have a few high-profile members who helped change the scene of black political Islam in Britain. Negative associations to the NoI often project onto black Muslims who are not part of the association. These associations add to the anti-blackness experienced by black Muslims from Muslims of other ethnic groups.

Anti-Blackness in the Muslim Community

Racism affects almost all features of American life.[28] The Muslim American community is no different. Similar to the general American population, the American Muslim populace is also divided by race.[29] This is seen in American mosques which are often either "predominately black American, or non-black American".[30] These factors are not limited to the American context; mosque divisions and racist sentiments can also be seen in Britain. Racism in America (and Britain) can also be seen through first-hand accounts detailed in informal sources such as blogs. Many discuss the names and derogatory terms they are referred to as by the general Muslim population. Words such as *abeed*, "slaves" in Arabic, are often used by Arabs as a synonym for "black".[31] This is apparent in Muslim communities in the West, and the MENA.

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[27] Richard Reddie, *Black Muslims in Britain: Why are a Growing Number of Young Black Men Converting to Islam* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2009), 122.

[28] Edward E. Curtis IV, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam 1960-1975* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina, 2006), 186.

[29] *Ibid*

[30] *Ibid*

[31] Dawud Walid, "Confronting Ethnic Slurs and Racism Among American Muslims," *Alt Muslimah (Blog),* January 19, 2014, accessed July 1, 2017,
http://www.altmuslimah.com/2014/01/confronting_ethnic_slurs_and_racism_among_american_muslims/

Black Muslims in the MENA and South Asia

The circumstances in which different ethnic groups of Muslims arrived in America and Britain are important to acknowledge. Each Islamic region has a different relationship with Black Muslims and these must be recognised to fully understand the context of the racism faced. This dissertation will not go so far as to examine the theological aspects of racism. Whilst it is important to understand Islam's admonishment of racism and its anti-racist stance, the historical details are irrelevant for this work.[32]

There is a linguistic relationship between Arabic and anti-blackness. Habeeb Akande demonstrates how the lexical use of certain words in Arabic have their roots in anti-blackness. He discusses the term *abeed* and also comments on some Quranic verses which use metaphors of black and white to discuss emotions.[33] Akande explains that these are not referring to race, and dismisses the argument that there is an Islamic justification for it, however some still use these verses as an explanation of racist behaviour.[34]

Anti-blackness in the MENA gained notoriety with the development of the Gulf States. They use low-paid, unskilled workers from Africa or South Asia to work on their infrastructure and these labourers are often subject to racist abuse.[35] Within the context of the MENA, the anti-black ideas stem from the Arab slave trade which existed in the pre-Islamic era and saw slaves from predominantly East Africa be captured and sold across the caliphate. Conversely,

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[32] Habib Akande, *Illuminating the Darkness: Blacks and North Africans in Islam* (London: Ta-Ha, 2012), 9.

[33] Akande, *Illuminating the Darkness,* 6.

[34] *Ibid*

[35] Clar Ni Chonghaile, "Alem Dechasa's Choice: An Impossible Decision and a Lonely Death," *The Guardian,* April 9, 2012, accessed June 10, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/09/alem-dechasa-ethiopia-lebanon.

racism perpetrated against black Muslims by South Asian Muslims is drawn more from colourism and leftover sentiments of the caste system, as well as India's colonised past.

Whilst black Muslims exist in South Asia, they are a tiny minority and little is written on them.[36] They were brought to the Indian subcontinent as slaves "by Arabs and Portuguese traders".[37] Although slavery existed, the anti-blackness in the region is mainly a form of colourism. In the South Asian context, colourism is a remnant of the caste system, whereby lighter skin was prized as it presumed one was wealthy. Conversely, darker skin was associated with poverty as it assumed one had to earn by manual labour outside. These views were exacerbated during the British colonisation of India where light skin was prized in the Eurocentric environment. From this, lighter skin in the subcontinent is now connected with beauty. This can be seen through the sale and popularity of skin lightening treatments which "mainly originate from India and Pakistan."[38] The *findings* explore this theme within British Muslim communities.

Interracial Marriage

One of the concentrations in this work was to use interracial marriage amongst Muslims in Britain as a lens to examine anti-blackness. In one piece, Ilyas Mohammed noted the abuse which one black Muslim faced when marrying a South Asian woman and the racial slurs he was subjected to.[39] Unfortunately, the sources on interracial marriage amongst Muslims are

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[36] Dr Ilyas Mohammed, "Inter-Muslim Racism: We Really Need to Talk About This," *5 Pillars,* November 11, 2013, accessed May 31, 2017, http://5pillarsuk.com/2013/11/11/inter-muslim-racism-we-really-need-to-talk-about-this

[37] *Ibid*

[38] Irene Njoroge-Kristian, "Your Skin: Bleaching or Fairness Cream," *Nation KE,* April 1, 2017, accessed June 12, 2017, http://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/lifestyle/-Bleaching-or-fairness-cream/1214-3873414-9ad1nq/

[39] Mohammed, "Inter-Muslim Racism."

limited and informal. Other literature on interracial marriage is restricted to marriage between a Muslim and a non-Muslim or simply between Muslims of different races. This literature is further analysed in the *"Similar Studies"* section.

Muslims in Britain

Muslims have been in Britain since the sixteenth century. What began as trade with Middle Eastern traders has grown into Muslims from a vast range of different ethnic backgrounds in Britain.[40] In contrast to the USA, the majority of Muslims in Britain are of South Asian origin and this is partly why the anti-blackness experienced by black Muslims in Britain may be different. Most South Asian Muslims came to Britain as a result of colonialism in the Indian subcontinent; it was a chance to seek a better life and earn money.

According to a report on the 2011 census, the population of black Muslims represent 10.1% of the British Muslim population, not including mixed race black Muslims.[41] Whilst this number seems low, black Muslims are disproportionately represented in factors such as prison inmates (31%).[42] Black Muslims in Britain face racism within the Muslim community for similar reasons as their American counterparts. Whilst Britain's history with African slavery is different to that of the Americas', one cannot ignore the underlying racism that has stemmed from it.

The NoI had a role in the development of black British Muslim communities. Whilst its British membership numbers are small compared with their American counterparts, Edward

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[40] "British Muslims in Numbers," Dr Sundas Ali: Muslim Council of Britain, accessed June 3, 2017, https://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCBCensusReport_2015.pdf 24.
[41] *Ibid*
[42] "British Muslims in Numbers," 42.

Curtis argues that their influence is still substantial.[43] During the 1990s they sent an agent to Britain to engage with black Muslims, particularly in prisons. Here, the NoI preyed on the disenfranchisement of an already ostracised black Muslim community. Whilst joining the NoI is not a justification for racism, it is a factor which adds to divisions in the Muslim community. Some black Muslims join groups such as the NoI as a result of becoming disaffected from the larger Muslim community who have made them feel they do not belong.[44]

Richard Reddie's 2009 publication discussing the conversion to Islam of young black people offers some background detail into the anti-blackness they face. Whilst discussing convert communities and mosques, Reddie's research gives us two brief discussions of anti-blackness within Muslims in Britain; in Norwich and in London. The Norwich mosque is a unique case. Founded in the 1970s by a group of largely white converts, in later years black Muslims from London were encouraged to move there. The diverseness of this Norwich community could be attributed to its large number of convert Muslims and it is this, rather than race, that binds the community together.

The Norwich mosque is seen as an exception and is an interesting point for further study. In this subject of "colour-blindness", Reddie discusses the difference of opinion through Hajj of Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan.[45] X famously disassociated from the NoI after seeing the brotherhood of Islam whilst on pilgrimage. However, Farrakhan did not experience this; stating that he witnessed racism perpetrated by Arab Muslims against black Muslims.[46] Reddie discusses anti-blackness through interracial marriage, focussing on London. He notes that

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[43] Curtis, *The Call of Bilal,* 74.
[44] Hassan, *"The Denial of Racism."*

[45] Reddie, *Black Muslims In Britain,* 187.
[46] *Ibid*

many black Muslim men find it difficult to find spouses, and, because there are more black Muslim men than black Muslim women, it is often not an option to marry within one's race.[47] One interviewee stated that "any black who tries to marry an Asian woman is going to experience discrimination"; with another saying he knew a black Muslim man who has not been able to find a spouse after ten years of looking.[48] Reddie discusses the separation of mosques, and stated that this is not always a result of "ethnic tensions", but because of comfortability with one's own culture.[49] This point, as well as the other aspects of anti-blackness within the British Muslim community, is discussed in depth in the *findings* section of this work.

Somali and Sudanese people in Britain

The cases of 'black' Muslims of Somali and Sudanese descent in Britain are worth noting. 'Black' here is in quotations because many do not identify as so, despite ascribing to the black physical characteristics. In Edward Curtis' study of black Muslims in diaspora, he noted that Somali Muslims do not view themselves as having the same "culture or origins of other African-descended Britons".[50] A study by Amina Nayel on Sudanese women in Britain stated that the intersection of race, ethnicity and religion in the politics (especially the splitting of Sudan), has added to the debate.[51] Nayel discusses that some of the women "assert their Arabism, [but did not] categorically deny [their] Africanism".[52] She noted that they would more so define themselves as Arab or sub-Saharan rather than black African; an important

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[47] Reddie, *Black Muslims In Britain,* 188.
[48] *Ibid*

[49] Reddie, *Black Muslims In Britain,* 191.

[50] Curtis, *The Call of Bilal,* 79.

[51] Amina Alrasheed Nayel, *Alternative Performativity of Muslimness: The Intersection of Race, Gender, Religion and Migration* (Leeds: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 80.
[52] Nayel, *Alternative Performativity,* 82.

distinction when defining terms of blackness.[53] It is not just important how Sudanese people view themselves, but also how others view them. Nayel notes that "Muslim Sudanese women are frequently absent" from discussions of racism.[54] This is because focuses are usually put on standardly "black" women.[55] It would be interesting to discover in further research if these sentiments still ring true in light of racially-driven political movements.

This section evaluated the literature surrounding anti-blackness within British Muslim communities. It offered a comparison between black Muslims in Britain and in the USA and noted their experiences. It analysed the differences of black Muslims and anti-blackness in the Arab world and South Asia. It ended with an evaluation of black Muslims in Britain; brief, as there is little academic work on the subject.

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[53] *Ibid*
[54] Nayel, *Alternative Performativity,* 86.
[55] *Ibid*

Methodology

       This section analyses the theories and methods behind this study. It covers the aims of the study and considers studies which have used similar empirical methods and theories, as well as background studies in the field of racism, focusing on anti-blackness. It then discusses the theoretical framework chosen, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and its application to the field of British Muslim studies. It provides in-depth analysis of the methods by which the research was carried out. It ends by reviewing the research questions posed by this work. Due to this work's premier nature, it has a long and substantial methodology. This is to ensure practices and approaches were justified accurately because of this study's unique position as ground-breaking work in its field. Additionally, because this is the first use of CRT in the British Muslim context, it was of great importance that this study be explicit and explanatory in its methods.

Aims and Key Considerations

       The aim of this study was to analyse the extent to which anti-blackness is a problem within the British Muslim community. This study relied on empirical research through interviews focusing on the experiences of young British Muslims. There is a lack of previous studies to compare this with in addition to no similar background studies on the subject. The key considerations of this study was to consider ways in which anti-blackness manifests itself, and its effects on black Muslims in Britain. Racism perpetrated by BME people towards other BME people differs to that perpetrated by non-BME people towards BME people.[56] This is because members of the BME group experience their own struggles with racism, in a way that

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[56] *BME = Black and Minority Ethnic groups.*

non-BME individuals, or *white people,* do not. Anti-blackness has been used to specify the way racism has been used in this dissertation; specifically, against black people. This is something to be mindful of when comparing this study to other studies of racism and anti-blackness involving the British Muslim community, and their theories.

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory was developed in the 1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss.[57] It proposes that data can be most effective analysed when "systematically obtained from social research".[58] It asks for data collection and analysis to be done simultaneously and to recognise themes and patterns.[59] In terms of my research, this was a good choice because so little was known about the subject that it meant constant analysis and review of research questions as well as being able to formulate themes of research within a field which is deficient of scholarship. Another advantage of using grounded theory is that because themes are based on data, the resultant analysis can be seen as more valid and reliable.[60] This fits with one of the purposes of CRT which is to push for social transformation, and using a method which shows proof of theme through data, can enhance the ability to change.

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[57] Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction, 1967), Preface.

[58] Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory,* 2.

[59] Daniel Solorzano, "Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students," *Journal of Negro Education* 69 (2000): 65, accessed June 21, 2017, http://advance.uci.edu/ADVANCE%20PDFs/Climate/CRT_RacialMicros_Campus.pdf.

[60] Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory,* 4.

<u>Similar Studies</u>

Many studies on miscegenation concentrate on a Muslim - non-Muslim or a white - ethnic minority marriage and usually focus on the USA. Additionally, there has been a focus in recent years of mixed race individuals and the children of interracial marriages.[61] Many studies on interracial relationships were conducted before the da twenty-first century and are now outdated in their message. One example is the study on inter-cultural marriage conducted by Dugan Romano in 1988. Romano portrays those entering into interracial marriages in a negative way, stating they fit under one of the following categories: "outcasts, rebels, mavericks, compensators, adventurers, escapists, and un-stables".[62] If we view these through the lens of CRT, then this completely disregards any emotional reasons for marriage and is a study which could be damaging to current efforts with race relations. A reason for the lack of data on interracial marriage in Britain, especially during the 20th century is that all ethnic minorities came under the category of *black*. Therefore, a marriage between an Asian and Arab or African, for example, may not have been regarded as interracial; it may have been viewed as marrying within one's own race. This brings into question ideas of political blackness which this study is aware of but does not cover.

A study on interracial marriages in Britain was conducted by the Office of National Statistics following the 2011 census.[63] It introduced nuances surrounding interracial relationships and which races were more or less likely to be in them, as well as disparities that

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[61] A.B. Wilkinson, ""Did Somebody Say 'Mulatto'?" Speaking Critically on Mixed Heritage," *Huffington Post,* November 21, 2014, accessed July 9, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/a-b-wilkinson/did-somebody-say-mulatto-_b_6183830.html.

[62] Dugan Romano, *Intercultural Marriage: Promises and Pitfalls* (Yarmouth: Intercultural Press Inc., 1988), 5.
[63] "What Does the 2011 Census Tell Us About Inter-Ethnic Relationships?," Office for National Statistics, accessed August 2, 2017, http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160107132103/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_369571.pdf .

exist. Interestingly, after white British, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian ethnicities were the least likely groups to be in an interracial relationship. This is in part because of cultural apprehensions.[64] Individuals of a mixed-race heritage were themselves the most likely to be in an interracial relationship and those of black heritage were also likely to be in an interracial relationship.[65] This study briefly discusses the gender disparities between people in an interracial relationship. Interestingly, there was almost 20% difference with men and women of Arab heritage; the former of which was more likely to be in an "inter-ethnic relationship".[66]

It is difficult to find an academic study concentrating on interracial marriage within minority or religious communities whether in the USA or in Britain. Cases of interracial marriage within the Muslim community specifically have been documented on blogs and social media. Within studies of interracial marriages, there are thoughts on marriage amongst Muslims of different races, such as those seen in Reddie's study. Samory Rashid examines interracial marriage in the American Muslim context; writing that even though the Quran encourages the mixing of different peoples, interracial marriage within US Muslim communities is still not endorsed.[67] Rashid discusses the distinction between indigenous and immigrant American Muslim communities. Saying that first generation immigrant Muslims harbour more prejudice and are less likely to be accepting of interracial marriage than the indigenous Muslim population.[68] Zarinah Naeem gives a short summary of interracial marriage in the USA. She argues that remnants of colonialism plays into why black Muslims may be less accepted for marriage than other ethnic groups within the Islamic community.[69] However,

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[64] "What Does the 2011 Census Tell Us About Inter-Ethnic Relationships?," 1.
[65] *Ibid*
[66] "What Does the 2011 Census Tell Us About Inter-Ethnic Relationships?," 6.

[67] Rashid, *Black Muslims in the US,* 81.

[68] Rashid, *Black Muslims in the US,* 83.

[69] Zarinah El-Amin Naeem, *Jihad of the Soul: Singlehood and the Search for Love in Muslim America* (Michigan: Niyah Press, 2009), 43.

she ignores the roles of the South Asian caste system and the Arab Slave Trade. To disregard these factors prevents a true and well-rounded approach to the study of interracial marriage within British Muslim communities. One study cited that generally within minority communities, interracial marriage is more accepted.[70] Attitudes towards interracial marriage in the British Muslim community is analysed in the *findings* section.

These studies concentrate on various aspects of racism within a Western context but do not consider it within minority groups. Thus, this work fills a gap in a much-needed area of study. John Solomos provides a coherent study of racism in contemporary Britain. Solomos discusses the role of politics with race relations in Britain, focusing on the debate during the 1950s and 1960s over the definition of racial groups.[71] The debate was formed over questions of the race of immigrant workers from the Caribbean and Asia, and whether they were considered as workers or a racial group.[72] The result of this debate affected policy and racial issues for years to come. Due to this debate, studies, such as those by John Rex, began to emerge based on race relations.[73] Another aspect which led to the increased study of race relations was the concept of colour-consciousness. Individuals became aware of the differences and meanings behind skin colours and it was increasingly researched with African-Americans in the USA. The example of colour consciousness is a theme within CRT on which this dissertation is based. CRT views this theme as important when questioning norms of integration and colour equality.[74] As these debates began, the issue of race started to transcend subject barriers and they emerged at the forefront of social sciences and political studies.

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[70] George Alan Yancey and Richard Lewis Jr., *Interracial Families: Current Concepts and Controversies* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 68.

[71] John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (Hampshire: Macmillan Education Inc., 1989), 8.
[72] *Ibid*
[73] *Ibid*
[74] Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller and Kendall Thomas, "Introduction," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement,* ed. Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller and Kendall Thomas, (New York: The New Press, 1995), xiv.

Robert Miles indicates the need for intersectionality within the study of race relations, to acknowledge multiple factors of discrimination and privilege during the analysis of racism.[75] For example, when reviewing the experiences of a black man and the experiences of a black woman, one must take into account the intersectionality of their characteristics; any prejudices they may face because of their gender. Variables such as these, interact and influence one another. This is something which this study considered when analysing data, as well as the different experiences of racism and anti-blackness. As Bob Carter points out, it adds to the need for a realist approach to empirical racial research, because, in incorporating factors such as intersectionality, the studied social reality is defined as a "structured mess".[76]

A study of race in Europe during the 1980s conducted by Teun van Dijk added to discourse in the field. His research analysed the role of the press in race relations. To narrow the study, van Dijk's research did not include racism in non-Western societies; taking the common approach to racism of "European[s] dominating peoples of other origins".[77] In this context, racism is defined as "a system of group dominance".[78] In the British Muslim context, this too can be true. Muslims of South Asian and Arab ethnicities dominate higher positions within mosques and other Islamic institutions in Britain. Van Dijk highlights the need to analyse the racism in terms of its structural and ideological means.[79] In this study, structural racism against black Muslims within the British Muslim community can be demonstrated through the analysis of the numbers of black Muslims in positions of power in Islamic institutions such as mosques. In comparison to racism in the wider contexts where people of

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[75] Robert Miles, *Racism After Race Relations* (London: Routledge, 1993), 48.

[76] Bob Carter, *Realism and Racism: Concepts of Race in Sociological Research* (London: Routledge, 2000), 77.

[77] Teun A. van Dijk, *Racism and the Press* (Oxford: Routledge, 1991), 24.

[78] van Dijk, *Racism and the Press,* 27.

[79] *Ibid*

white ethnicities dominate institutions such as governments.[80] Ideological racism stemming from Arab or South Asian countries is reproduced within the British Muslim setting.[81] These historical sentiments of racism still prevail as evidenced by the analysis and findings of this thesis. Van Dijk points out that the methods by which racism is studied is changing because other forms of racism are becoming evident.[82]

Carter indicates which theoretical approaches would be insufficient when discussing race relations.[83] In this instance, he assesses the option of "grounding a theory of race in social scientific analysis", stating that it would potentially be impossible.[84] Conversely, Malagon et. al who used grounded theory to "inform a critical race theory methodology" disagree.[85] They note that grounded theory could be a useful tool in CRT data analysis because it allows for interpretation of perspectives of participants.[86] They state that grounded theory was not founded as a method to build theory from the "experiences of people of colour".[87] Whilst they attempt to fit grounded theory into a racial context because of its dealings with real life experiences, it is implicit in dealing with racial theory in itself. Carter notes that race in itself is difficult to theorise as its "conceptual parameters" are undefined and differ from each study.[88] From this argument, and as Carter notes that the issue of race is an under-theorised subject which causes confusion, I decided to use a theoretical framework which is explicit in its

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[80] van Dijk, *Racism and the Press,* 32.

[81] van Dijk, *Racism and the Press,* 28.

[82] *Ibid*

[83] Carter, *Realism and Racism,* 78.

[84] *Ibid*

[85] Maria C. Malagon, Lindsay Perez Huber, and Veronica N. Velez, "Our Experiences, Our Methods: Using Grounded Theory to Inform a Critical Race Theory Methodology," *Seattle Journal for Social Justice* 8:1 (2009): 253, accessed July 5, 2017,
http://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1056&context=sjsj.

[86] Malagon, Huber and Velez, "Our Experiences, Our Methods," 259.

[87] *Ibid*

[88] Carter, *Realism and Racism,* 77.

dealings with race: CRT.[89] To aid in effectively analysing my data, grounded theory was used. With the strong CRT background of this study, I am able to successfully combine the two theories for the purposes of data analysis.

An Application of CRT in the Black British Muslim Context

CRT can be broadly defined as a movement whose goal was to "study and transform the relationship among race, racism and power".[90] CRT aims to combat the "white universality" of experiences which often form the "authoritative standard".[91] When using CRT in the context of racism within the British Muslim context, white universality is changed to South Asian and Arab universality. Within this setting, these two ethnic groups are the ones who hold the power and who are used as the authoritative standard for the British Muslim community. This can be seen through power structures in mosques as well as who speaks on behalf of the Muslim community. Very rarely does either case allow for black Muslims except for in settings defined by race. Using CRT allows for a nuanced understanding of racial disparities within minority communities.

CRT takes into account aspects of race from many fields, including those projected by the civil rights movements, in addition to factoring feelings and opinions.[92] CRT takes inspiration from activists such as Martin Luther King Jr and Hugo Chavez, and it began in the 1970s as a result of legal activists wanting to continue the work of the activists' movements

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[89] Carter, *Realism and Racism,* 78.

[90] Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction – Second Edition* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 3.

[91] John O. Calmore, "Critical Race Theory, Archie Shepp, and Fire Music: Securing an Authentic Intellectual Life in a Multicultural World, in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement,* ed. Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller and Kendall Thomas, (New York: The New Press, 1995), 318.

[92] *Ibid*

that came before it.[93] Due to this, CRT is a theory which allows researchers to truly understand and express the experiences of people of colour.[94] The use of CRT allows for authenticity in study and research; something which is important when studying negative experiences i.e. racism.[95] The theory is fitting in this context because it looks for a change in what is going on the world, and, it gives the tools to be able to make the change. This is because one of the goals of using CRT is to "quest more for social transformation [i.e. change] than for social acceptance".[96] This is because of the theory's beginnings in activism.[97] The use of CRT, in general and within the British Muslim context, enables us to include the historical and social underpinnings of racism towards certain groups.[98] This allows us to unpack why theories such as equality theory cannot be applied, as unlike CRT, they ignore the very factors which allowed for inequality in the first place.[99]

Racism and anti-blackness within the Muslim community is a contentious issue, which some deny the existence of. Therefore, a goal of this work is to highlight the issues to enable change, and encourage questioning the status quo, in the Muslim community.[100] Whilst a work on an over-studied subject, such as Islamophobia, would be widely hailed and accepted within the Muslim community, it may not lead to change as it's an over-saturated field.[101]

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[93] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory,* 4.
[94] Calmore, "Critical Race Theory," 321.
[95] *Ibid*
[96] *Ibid*
[97] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory,* 4.
[98] Timothy Charoenying, "Adventures in Racialization: Immigration and Critical Race Theory" (paper presented by Angela Harris and Leti Volpp at the Centre for Race and Gender, Berkeley, California, September 18, 2008). http://crg.berkeley.edu/content/adventures-racialization-immigration-critical-race-theory.
[99] *Ibid*
[100] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory,* 3.
[101] Islam UK Centre, Twitter Post, July 12, 2017, 6:12pm, https://twitter.com/IslamUKCentre/status/885185071581454336

According to Delgado and Stefancic, CRT has three central themes.[102] The first feature is "ordinariness", meaning racism is hard to tackle because of its lack of acknowledgement; its seen as an ordinary fact of life.[103] Racism and anti-blackness within the Muslim community is something which is not widely recognised or accepted. The second feature is what Delgado and Stefancic have termed "interest convergence or material determinism".[104] They explain this feature as one which explains why there is little reason in some communities to eliminate racism because the status quo of a racist society allows the majority [in the wider context; the white society], to advance and have power.[105] Within the Muslim context, the majority South Asian and Arab populations have little reason to want to change the status quo, other than because it is the right thing to do, because they are the groups with power and influence. The third theme is the "social construction thesis".[106] This theorises that races are "products of social thought and relations", and are not a fixed term, rather, races are typologies conceived and manipulated by society.[107] Whilst this feature discusses race as it originated in its wider context, it may be broadly applied into the British Muslim context. If we take this as true, this could be applied within the British Muslim context. Through the literature review, I analysed the origins of anti-blackness within this context, and this was kept in mind during the analysis of the findings.

Daniel Solorzano adds to these themes, purporting that CRT is based on five key features. Firstly, the "intersectionality of race and racism".[108] Broadly speaking, this is defined

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[102] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory,* 8.
[103] *Ibid*
[104] *Ibid*
[105] *Ibid*
[106] *Ibid*
[107] *Ibid*
[108] Daniel G. Solorzano, "Critical Race Theory, Race and Gender Microaggressions, and the Experience of Chicana and Chicano Scholars," *Qualitative Studies in Education* 2:1 (1998): 122, accessed June 27, 2017, http://advance.uci.edu/ADVANCE%20PDFs/Climate/CRT_RacialMicros_Chicana.pdf.

as acknowledging that there are other factors such as gender and class which can lead to the subordination of others. Within the context of this dissertation, I was aware during data analysis of further factors which can add to the racism of black British Muslims. For example, the ideas of colourism, gender disparities or whether someone is a convert, could affect their experiences. Next, Solorzano says the second theme is "the challenge to dominant ideology".[109] The use of CRT to challenge the status quo has been discussed by Crenshaw, Delgado and Stefancic. Solorzano's next theme "the commitment to social justice" was mirrored by the others.[110] For example, Crenshaw's statement of caring more about social change than social acceptance; committing to social justice no matter what. The next theme is the "centrality of experiential knowledge".[111] He states CRT's importance of legitimising the experiences of people of colour. This adds further importance to the work of this dissertation in legitimising the grievances held by black Muslims in Britain. Lastly, the "interdisciplinary perspective", that Solorzano states, is important for ensuring that race is dealt with in terms of other factors such as education, power, and politics.[112] These themes are important when analysing the data from interviews by black British Muslims, as they give reason for the importance of the scholarship of this work.

These themes are mirrored by Crenshaw et al.'s statements that works on CRT may differ in their aims, but, they are "unified by two common interests".[113] These interests are firstly, to understand how the racial attitudes have been created and sustained. This is linked to Delgado and Stefancic's second and third themes which discuss the origins and maintenance of racism. The second of Crenshaw et al.'s interests are that they purport that CRT rejects the

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[109] *Ibid*
[110] *Ibid*
[111] *Ibid*
[112] Solorzano, "Critical Race Theory: Race and Gender Microaggressions," 123.
[113] Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller and Thomas, "Critical Race Theory," xiii.

idea that "scholarship should be neutral or objective".[114] Meaning, that race is a subject which can never be written about with complete objectivity. As someone who is not a member of the black British Muslim community, I can have a degree of detachment from the subject. I acknowledge that as a member of the British Muslim community, I can never be completely objective. Nevertheless, I have analysed these biases and because I am aware of them; their negative effects on this dissertation are minimal.

CRT has not, before this work, been applied within the British Muslim context to analyse racism and anti-blackness in the community itself. CRT has been used to view anti-Muslim hatred and racism within the Western context. Dilshad Sarwar and Razaq Raj's study of Islamophobia, Racism, and CRT, provides an in-depth interpretation of how this theory can be used with the study of Islam and Muslims. They purport that theorists of the CRT movement believe that "race should occupy the focal positioning within policy".[115] Islam and Muslims are not a race within themselves, but for the purposes of this theory, should we class them as one, we can attempt to unpack notions of Islamophobia and multiculturalism and their failings in the West. They argue that much of the prejudice that Muslims face in the West can be similar to what many theorists from the CRT movement have discussed regarding race since the theory's emergence.[116] I do not agree with this, as the reasons for Islamophobia are often merged from race or religion, and by using CRT, may undermine the struggles which are resultant purely from race. The link between CRT and Islam needs further study, and to believe that the two are more than inherently similar does not do justice to either movement.

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[114] *Ibid*

[115] Dilshad Sarwar and Dr Razaq Raj, "Islamophobia, Racism and Critical Race Theory," *International Journal of Safety and Security in Tourism/Hospitality* 15:2 (2016): [page unknown], accessed July 17, 2017, http://www.palermo.edu/Archivos_content/2016/Economicas/journal-tourism/edicion15/02_RacismWithinMulti-culturalSociety.pdf.

[116] *Ibid*

Method

This section discusses the method by which data for this dissertation was obtained, reviewed, and analysed. A qualitative approach was used to generate data in this instance. CRT in itself uses a qualitative approach in its findings as it is concerned with experiences and feelings of peoples. In keeping with the methods of the predominant theory used, I chose to approach this research in a qualitative way. Additionally, it is a method in which I have been trained. While mixed methods were considered and this dissertation does include a mixture of interviews, literature, and social media analysis, I do not believe that this can be called a true mixed methods approach. This is due to the similarities of the way these forms can be analysed, and the omission of quantitative data, such as raw statistics.

Blog posts and information from social media were used as literature for this dissertation. The former was used due to a lack of academic writing on the issue. They were included within the literature review because, although informal, they provided coherent first-person evidence to add to substantiated claims. The bias nature of blogs and social media was kept in mind during this study. Social media was included to a lesser degree because they usually contain less ample pieces of writing and are subject to increased bias. They were an interesting starting point to gain opinions following the theories and themes generated from the interviews.

A method of qualitative research is the use of interviews. Interviews were conducted with six participants, four black Muslim men, one black Muslim woman, and one south Asian Muslim woman. The latter was included to add another dimension to the research. She chose

to be interviewed to comment on the anti-blackness she has viewed because she wanted to marry a black Muslim man but was prohibited from doing so by her family because of his race. At the beginning of this study, I had aimed to interview ten participants. However, this was unrealistic due to time constraints. Although there are only six participants, there are a mix of genders, ethnicities and other variables. As this is a premier academic study on the subject, the diversity and standard of participants garnered is a suitable and valid choice for this piece of work. It allows for developments on this subject by giving the field a solid starting piece to allow further research to take place. As this is a Masters dissertation the number and type of participants were dependent on the limited time frame. Despite this, the choice of participants was an informed and sensible decision.

Participants were chosen through convenience and purposive sampling. In simple terms, the former is a group of people who are "readily available to participate in a study", and the latter are the group chosen who fit the requirements of a study.[117] Whilst purposive sampling can be criticised because it often is not representative of the population at large, I have garnered a large amount of diversity within the participants, something which may have been difficult as there is the need for participants to all be from the same ethnic background.[118] Jennifer Mason, a sociologist specialising in qualitative analysis, describes this type of sampling to be beneficial because it allows for just those who have experienced the research subject to be interviewed.[119] Had there been more time, the sample size could have been increased to include subjects of the British Muslim community who had not directly experienced anti-blackness, to see the general sentiments which exist.

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[117] Gary T. Henry, *Practical Sampling* (California: SAGE, 1990), 18.

[118] Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching: Second Edition* (London: SAGE, 2002), 137.

[119] Mason, *Qualitative Researching,* 124.

Snowball sampling, an approach which works on referrals, was used to generate interest of other participants; through the social media forms Twitter and Facebook. Both of these methods have limits. Due to the use of convenience sampling, the majority of those who were interviewed were people who were known to the researcher through various relationships. This could affect the questions that the participants felt comfortable with answering. This relationship could increase the interactivity of the data gained from interviews.[120] Participants felt a sense of trust and were more comfortable with disclosing certain information due to the reassurance of the anonymity of data. Because of the close relationship with some participants, they were able to disclose information without fear of being judged, because it often could be information that I would have already known outside of the interview context. Another benefit of convenience sampling, and interviewing participants who are known to myself, is that they tend to be more reliable when it comes to organising a time or place for holding an interview. As I knew some participants, they were generally more accommodating. This type of sampling allowed me to develop initial insights into the field which again is beneficial for a study of this kind as one of the first in its field.[121]

The use of snowball sampling is not immune to the biases which can occur in convenience sampling. As the referral would be based on whether a participant has experienced anti-blackness, the kinds of experiences garnered may have been similar.[122] This added validity to the study in some respects, as there is trust in numbers; however, some experiences may have been underrepresented. Additionally, snowball sampling allows for an ease in gaining individuals; as it is a premier study, more formal routes of contact, such as contacting mosques

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[120] Mason, *Qualitative Researching,* 138.

[121] Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research: Fourth Edition* (London: SAGE, 2009), 433.

[122] Katherine Roberts, Convenience Sampling through Facebook, 2014, accessed July 1, 2017, doi:10.4135/9781446273050145263, 4.

or community groups may not have been accepted and would have been more time consuming. Consequently, this was the best option for a dissertation of this size.

Through the mixture of sampling methods, I reduced the bias which would have occurred from the use of only convenience sampling.[123] Whilst it is impossible to exonerate bias in a study of this proportion, I ensured that the widest range of people could be interviewed whilst still being mindful of time and research constraints. This mixture of sampling allows others when developing on this study to critique and analyse the results dependent on which sampling method they were gained from.

The research in this dissertation was undertaken in compliance with the ethical considerations of both the university department and the field. Using CRT allowed for ethical considerations. This is because it is a theory which takes into account feelings and emotions behind certain sentiments.[124] It puts emotions as one of the forefronts of its study, thus, it fits incredibly well with the subject theme of this thesis.

A key element of this study's ethics is anonymity. I was careful to ensure there was no audit trail, with recordings of participants deleted after the data analysis was completed. During this work, audio recordings were password protected to ensure that I was the only one with access. Each individual was given a pseudonym, and I am the only one who knows their identities. Owing to the sensitive nature of some of the subjects discussed, I gave each participant the option to exit the study at any time without consequence or question. Full consent was garnered from each individual before the interview began.

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[123] Robert K. Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York: The Guildford Press, 2011), 88.

[124] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory,* 3.

This study is reliable as results can be easily replicated by other researchers. Moreover, as I have justified my use of certain approaches, this increases the study's reliability. The project was not only applicable to understanding anti-blackness within Muslim communities, but was able to attempt to look at the potential to highlight the complex reality of racial biases experienced within Muslim communities. This study has the potential to be continued and used as a base for other researchers.

This study has a high level of generalisability, as it covers a broad spectrum of black Muslims in Britain. Based on this, the project had the potential to identify certain variables that influence acts of anti-blackness, such as age, gender, socioeconomic background, and ethnicity among others. Therefore, further studies could be completed based upon my own.

Interviews

The interviews followed a semi-structured pattern. Some questions were formulated prior to the interview taking place, but it left room for questions to be asked in response to what was said by the interviewee. This style of interviewing asks open-ended questions which prompt the interviewee to divulge more information and to go into greater detail about a subject. It was chosen as it enables the interviewer to discuss subjects such as the emotions behind statements, which adheres to the values of CRT. In contrast to a narrative style of questioning, which would have been interesting to use here, this prevented possibilities for tangents. Narrative style could be used in a similar research project which has more allotted time. Another strength of the semi-structured interview is that it can help to increase the validity

of a study as subjects can be discussed in depth. A further advantage of this interview style is that the researcher can ask questions to clarify points, to prevent distortion of experiences.

Because there are so few pre-set questions, the interviewer is not deciding early what is and is not important information. This is helpful in terms of this study because there are no explicit background studies to base it on, and I had no pre-conceived idea of which information would be beneficial to include. There are a few disadvantages with using a semi-structured style. For example, interpretation of questions is a big part of any interview process, and this could mean that each participant would garner a different meaning and intention from each question. To combat this, I made the questions as broad as possible and made the in-depth questions specific to the individual's experiences.

Another disadvantage was that the participants may have lied or exaggerate their experiences, or simply not recall them with complete accuracy. Whilst this is a potential with any interview where anyone is recalling anything that happened, there are not many ways around this. It is important to acknowledge that experiences may have become embellished, or be conveyed differently over time. This was kept in mind during the interviewing process. With the use of continued questioning about an experience, it is less likely that the participant would be able to able to sustain a lie. It would be in their benefit to detail honest experiences which could spawn a change in behaviour within the British Muslim community.

Within interviews, it is imperative to note the tone of the interviewee. Often, the *way* one says something is as important as *what* one says. Comparatively, comments can be drawn from what one does not say; whether they have intentionally left something out. A change of tone in speech may indicate qualities such as sarcasm, irony, and humour. To not acknowledge

tone could mean that a statement is misinterpreted.[125] Thus, the meanings of a study could be compromised. Tone was able to be sensed in this study due to the interview style allowing each participant to speak without being interrupted.

There are three main research themes which I have pointed my inquiry towards. They were reviewed after the first two interviews were completed. This is because I wanted to have a direction of inquiry for my interview. Since the field is understudied, I had to go into the first few interviews with a degree of openness. Firstly,

- In which ways does anti-blackness manifest itself within the Muslim community?

I wanted to ascertain whether participants felt the anti-blackness was structural and overt; was it taking place in locations such as mosques, or, was it more passive. To link it to institutions of power was an idea which stemmed from the use of CRT which was poignant in its discussion of how structural racism affected African Americans in the USA for example. Additionally, to assess the role of microaggressions. Secondly,

- Is anti-blackness shown through marriage a common problem within Muslim communities in Britain?

The literature review considered studies around interracial marriage and the anti-blackness that manifests because of it. It is an important way in which anti-blackness is expressed. Lastly,

- What are the effects of this anti-blackness?

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[125] Nigel King and Christine Horrocks, *Interviews in Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE, 2010), 146.

This question was used to discover the consequences of anti-blackness. For example, does the anti-blackness lead to isolation, or an even more dis-unified and racially separate British Muslim community. Although it would not be a question which every participant had experience of, the results from those who had added another dimension to this dissertation and could add to the field of study of interracial relationships.

Reflexivity

This section focuses on the reflexivity and limitations on this study as a whole. Reflecting on the methodology work as a whole, this study's strengths lie both in its choice and use of CRT but in its qualitative data research. Through the use of interviews, I was able to gain an insight into experiences of anti-blackness within the Muslim community in Britain. This work sets an academic precedent for this kind of research within the British Muslim context. Despite this, the work gives a broad explanation of anti-blackness within the Muslim community in Britain. Further time could have allowed for a more detailed exploration into the arguments of intersectionality within racism and anti-blackness in the British Muslim context.

Within all fields of study, it is important for researchers to be transparent on aspects of their identity. This is to allow for adequate critiques to be made on a researcher's positioning as a result of their background. One's positioning in terms of their research is of great significance as it determines whether they are perceived as an 'insider' or an 'outsider' in relation to their work and the subjects they work with.[126] This is important for myself as a

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[126] Louise Ryan, Eleonore Kofman and Pauline Aaron, "Insiders and Outsiders: Working with Peer Researchers in Researching Muslim Communities," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 41:1 (2011): 52, accessed August 29, 2017, 10.1080/13645579.2010.481835.

researcher to consider in relation to my participants. In some ways, such as religion, I have insider perspective and positioning. However, in other aspects, such as my ethnicity, I have an outsider perspective. Within the academic field, one area where it is of importance is the increasing work by, especially white, Muslim converts. Often, if a white convert has a Western sounding name, one cannot tell whether they are a Muslim. This affects their positioning as a researcher. One's religion, especially if it is the same religion as they are researching, affects the way they write about the subject. If one cannot tell their faith then they cannot fully understand their positioning as a researcher. Self-definition is important as it confirms one's identity and positioning as an investigator. Additionally, they are bequeathed with a certain amount of white privilege, especially within the convert community; this juxtaposition is discussed in the *findings*.[127] In the field of British Muslim Studies, works by white convert Muslims are often well-publicised and used as precedent as academic and sociological research. It is important that these factors are taken into consideration in addition to noting the theme of white privilege in their experiences. In wider contexts, whiteness is preferred, and that is the same in the Muslim community. White converts are often promoted to figures of authority within the British Muslim community, and as a result, into academia.[128] Consequently, it is imperative that researchers are aware of their own positioning and how this affects aspects of their identities, including their works.

As a result of this lacking literature in the field, I feel it necessary to be open about myself as a researcher. As a mixed race (Arab and British), Muslim, brought up in an Atheist household and with a background in Arabic and Middle East Studies, I have a unique position

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[127] "When 'White Devils' Join the Deen: White American Converts to Islam and the Experience of Non-Normative Whiteness," Juliette Galonnier, accessed August 20, 2017, https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01422847.

[128] Leon Moosavi, "White Privilege in the Lives of Muslim Converts in Britain," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38:11, (2014): 1921, accessed August 17, 2017, doi/full/10.1080/01419870.2014.95275

as a researcher. My religion has allowed me access to members of the Muslim community which I may not have had otherwise; this is an advantage I possess as a researcher in this field.[129] As long as I am open with these details; appropriate conclusions on my research positioning can be made. Being open about one's positioning can prevent critique of a community that you are part of being assumed as being a result of *othering*. Othering is a term coined by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*.[130] He defined it as a way of the West establishing supremacy over the East, making the latter inferior. The East would be seen as the *other,* and as well as being seen inferior, it is seen as inherently different. This can often translate into studies the Muslim faith, even in the West. In light of this, it is important for the positioning of the researcher to be known. This is because the factor of *othering* can then be factored into analysis and critique of works within British Muslim Studies. It is vital to position yourself as a researcher, as well as to position the work in the wider context of scholarship.[131] To do both allows for a comprehensive understanding of positioning, which enables discourse on the subject to be sufficiently constructed according to conceptions.

One of the main limitations of this study lies in the lack of specific background research on the subject. Whilst this is of benefit in some ways; this work is a creative and much needed study, it means there is no study to directly compare it to. Due to the restricted background literature on the subject of anti-blackness with Muslim communities in Britain, this study, as one of the premier academic studies on the subject, had to be aware of its limitations and its research parameters. As stated in the literature review, this work has endeavoured to scope and analysis literature on the various studies that are in anyway related so as to combat this limit.

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[129] Iram Khawaja and Line Lerche Morck, "Researcher Positioning: Muslim "Otherness" and Beyond," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 6:1-2 (2009): 29, accessed August 29, 2017, 10.1080/13645579.2010.481835.

[130] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[131] Wael B. Hallaq, *Sharia: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), viii.

The intended parameters of this research are as follows. It aims to give an overview of the anti-blackness which black British Muslims face, with a main concentration on microaggressions and marriage. Studies on interracial marriage of Muslim faith could not be found, apart from white Muslims to a minority ethnicity. This is a limitation of the study as it could not find any previous ones of its kind to compare it to. The studies of white Muslims married to ethnic minority Muslims are interesting and valuable in some ways, such as those based on the 1967 Loving v Virginia interracial marriage case in the USA.[132] They can be valuable because bans on interracial marriage often had a religious justification as well as a racial superiority one. To fully understand the racial complexities detailed in this work, the studies would have had to have been conducted with individuals from two different ethnic minorities.

This study unfortunately does not have the opportunity to delve deeper into intersectionalities. It is aware of the differences which contribute to experiences of anti-blackness such as gender, class, and whether an individual is a convert. These are briefly discussed within the analysis but due to the premier nature of the study, and lack of previous studies it is unable to explore these factors further. This is where further research can be continued from this study. Another limit of this study is that it did not have the resources or time allowance to interview a British Muslim of Arab heritage. This would have allowed for another interesting dynamic to hear from another subsection of the British Muslim community to link to the literature. Whilst for this, I could have interviewed myself and that would have been an easy solution, it may have exhibited a high level of researcher bias and compromised the study's integrity. The main focus of this study was to gain the experiences of black British Muslims. The inclusion of the experience of a South Asian individual was featured to add

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[132] Fay Botham, *Almighty God Created the Races: Christianity, Interracial Marriage, and American Law* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 53.

another dimension to the study since South Asians are the highest section of the Muslim population in Britain.

This section has given a detailed explanation of the methods and theories chosen. It gave a summary of CRT, and justified why it was the most appropriate choice for the research project. It analysed the methods of how the data was collected; through convenience and purposive sampling and why, despite their limitations, they were the best choice for a dissertation of this length. It discussed the parameters of this study; knowing its strengths and justifying its weaknesses, allowing for further researchers to base other projects on this work. It concluded with a consideration of research questions, based upon the approaches given.

Findings, Discussion and Data Analysis

This section examines the data collected through interviews through CRT as well as the grounded theory approach. Through this data I aim to support my argument that anti-blackness against black Muslims within the British Muslim community exists to a large extent. CRT was used as a background to aid in analysis of data as well as to underpin this study in its entirety. Grounded theory was used in combination with this as a method of data analysis. This was partially used because the field is so understudied, and proved to be the best method to use grounded theory at least for the first couple of interviews. Two interviews were completed under a broader spectrum and then grounded theory was used to detect themes and ideas from this, so that further interviews could be conducted more effectively. Themes in general were generated after the majority of data analysis was conducted; this is the grounded theory approach. There is debate surrounding the use of grounded theory in CRT, and within this data analysis, I have used grounded theory where most efficient but also as not to deflect from CRT.

Data and Discussions

This section analyses the data collected thematically, making considerations through CRT. In particular, focusing on the emotions of participants, the power dynamic of races within the Muslim community; combatting the status quo, and, to highlight the issues that need to be changed. Generally, all participants felt that anti-blackness against black Muslims exists, and is a problem within the Muslim community in Britain.

The participants were:

Kamal - aged 25, Nigerian, from London (Convert)

Fatima – aged 22, Bengali, from South West England

Dennis – aged 30, mixed Jamaican/White, from London (Convert)

Mahmoud – aged early thirties, West African, from London

Aaliyah – aged 21, Gambian, from London

Abdullah – aged 25, African, from London

Within the participants, a mixture of education levels were included. Four out of the six participants were educated to Undergraduate level with one of those being educated to PhD level. The other two participants had completed education up to the age of eighteen. This is important to note as one's education level is often linked to their social standing. Therefore, a lower education level cannot be the reason for experiencing anti-blackness.

Theme One: In which ways does anti-blackness manifest?

One of the ways by which anti-blackness manifests is through subtle or less overt means, microaggressions being one example. This was mentioned by Van Dijk as one of the ways in which studies of race relations were changing; because different, more subtle forms of racism were increasing.[133] Kamal, one of the participants, dictated that often when he goes into mosques which are predominately South Asian, he would not get a reply when *"saying salaam"*. This was mirrored by Dennis, who stated that generally, "*there is a certain look that you get, certain stares, comments,"* particularly in mosques that are mainly populated by Asian or Arab groups. He did state that this may be because they suspect that he is not part of their particular denomination, giving the example that it is usually only South Asians who would be

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[133] van Dijk, *Racism and the Press,* 28.

Deobandi and go to a Deobandi mosque.[134] However, the microaggressions argument is further substantiated by what Mahmoud had to say. He discussed how in many mosques he had been looked at suspiciously and felt he was being watched or followed. Additionally, one memorable occasion stood out for him, when he was going to pray in a large, mainly South Asian mosque, where they had just finished *dhuhr* prayer.[135] He was going into the carpark and was told the mosque was closed when he could plainly see that it was not. He saw others going in and as a local he knew that not only was there not an event being held, but also that the mosque did not usually shut then. Mahmoud's response to this was that he

> *"wondered if he thought I was non-Muslim, if he thought black Muslims didn't exist or if I he knew I was Muslim, just had prejudices against us. They don't expect black people to be Muslims, they question if you're a Muslim or a revert. The idea of a black Muslim, to some people, is overwhelming".*

These comments related to mosque separation advances the knowledge on the topic as pertained to the literature review. Reddie argued that these separations were because of cultures wanting to stick together rather than because of apprehensions of other ethnicities. These findings however do not suggest the same. The unwelcome sentiments felt in mosques by my participants go far beyond simple unfamiliarity and have moved toward blatant intolerance. Therefore, this work diverges from the current contextual arguments. Mahmoud noted that experiences like this were not his first, and he does not think they will be his last. I asked him what his response is to people who may argue that these instances could be down to something other than race, such as his age. He said,

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[134] *An Islamic movement which began in the town of Deoband, India; usually associated with Hanafi Muslims.*
[135] *Dhuhr is the midday prayer.*

"I think people who are black experience it at a frequency that is not just chance or random, it's again and again and again, it's a life experience and [comments like that] are incredibly dismissive."

The first step to solving the problem of racism and anti-blackness is to acknowledge it is an issue. This research reiterates what Delgado and Stefancic argued in regard to CRT, as mentioned in the literature review. They stated that racism is difficult to resist due to the common lack of acknowledgement. Therefore, this research aids this argument and specifies it to the British Muslim context. Through dismissive comments such as those discussed above; racist acts will not be addressed and will continue, in the mosque and in wider instances. Aaliyah also noted that she had faced anti-blackness whilst in the mosque. Although the mosque which she attended was not majority one race or another, she still felt uneasy and unwelcome as a black woman. Saying,

"unfortunately, the typical unwelcoming signs of racism occurred: the elderly aunties looking   at me with the 'why are you here' face."

The inclusion of the word "elderly" suggests that this is possibly a larger problem with the older generation as oppose to the younger generation. Additionally, Fatima described that when South Asian friends would ask her to help them find someone to marry, they would always ask for the same ethnicities as themselves. When she asked them why, they would say that whilst they were open to marrying black Muslims, they say that *"their parents wouldn't let them"*. Thus, these views could be seen as being a more of a problem with the older generation than the younger. Fatima's position as President of her University's Islamic Society allowed her to

witness a large number of marital situations within the Muslim community; specifically, the younger Muslim community. Therefore, her comments on the matter are especially valid when discussing the anti-blackness surrounding interracial marriage. Since the younger generation seem unwilling to change these perceptions, they seem entrenched within communities. This is something which could be discussed in further studies. She described that most of the racist sentiments she had faced were through microaggressions:

"I noticed that some people would shift away from me, and all those entering [would] stray from my side of the room".

This relates to what is already known on microaggressions as discussed in the Literature Review; that most anti-blackness is experienced in this way. Microaggressions are often disregarded as not wholly important and my findings support this. Situations such as these, whilst they may seem trivial to the outside eye, are poignant to those who experience them. Aaliyah dictated that she felt out of place in the mosque and as though, as a black woman, even though she adheres to the Muslim faith, she was not welcome. Broadly, Aaliyah said that she feels that mosques in Britain are *"cultural not religious centres"*, and often separate and exclude along ethnic lines. She gets the impression that these actions create an *"us and them"* mentality, in a community or "*ummah that is supposed to be built on oneness".*[136] Participants generally felt that mosques were often extremely racial divisive places, the effects of which will be discussed in theme three. These findings in relation to the consideration microaggressions in the literature review advance the discussion on the subject because they give specific examples of experiences. Furthermore, they detail these experiences to locations; which could make these occurrences easier to understand and combat.

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[136] *Ummah is an Islamic concept which is used to refer to the worldwide Muslim community as a whole.*

These sentiments of hatred and neglect transcend the intersections of gender and age, and are felt by black Muslims simply because of their blackness. In contrast, Abdullah stated that he had only faced anti-blackness in these regards whilst in an Arab country, with the guard Muslims of al-Aqsa mosque in Palestine refusing to let him in unless he *"recited surah al-fatiha".*[137] Abdullah did note however, that he had noticed the separation of mosques by race, particularly in his hometown of Luton. Another interesting point he brought up was that mosques rarely have appeals and donations for black Muslim countries, with the concentration being on Syria or Palestine. Abdullah then stated

> *"people forget there's more Muslims in Nigeria than in the whole Middle East, but the Middle East is seen as the crème de la crème of Islam."*

This further adds to the view that the central concentration of Islam is focused on the MENA and South Asia, and that as Mahmoud noted, people often do not assume that one can be a black Muslim. Fatima summed up what she had witnessed, saying that in Muslim communities, specifically South Asian communities,

> *"the darker you get, the less okay you are"*.

Both Dennis and Mahmoud noted that anti-blackness was also apparent not only with strangers but by people they knew; however, it was expressed differently. Mahmoud illustrated that anti-blackness from friends or acquaintances was much subtler, whereas with strangers *"it's a lot easier to tell what's happening"*. With people he knew, he discussed that anti-blackness would

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[137] *The first chapter of the Quran.*

often take the form of a *"black joke"* or, that they found the use of the N-word acceptable. These points are reiterated with evidence from Dennis who said that jokes, paired with a *"comfortability in joking about people being dark skinned"* were common. Aaliyah pointed out that she can see that use of the N-word of black jokes in general from friends may be *"coming from a non-malicious place",* but

> *"when survival, life and our humanity is at risk, as you can see with the current issue of police brutality, we cannot afford black jokes".* [Regardless of if it comes from a stranger or a friend].

Aaliyah said that with strangers, their ignorance surrounding black issues is more apparent, and they just want to win a debate or *"prove their point"*. She says she finds it difficult to engage with people who communicate in this way and that she refuses to *"dedicate [her] whole time to forcing [someone] to see [her] humanity beyond [her] skin tone"*.

Fatima discussed the ease by which her South Asian family and friends discuss black people and the racist attitudes towards them. She noted the importance of race and said that if she told her parents she had made a new friend, before they asked their name, they would ask what *"kind"* they were, meaning what race are they. Fatima described that she knows of a South Asian woman who married a black man and the way in which they are talked about by others is *"harsh",* and *"like people are trying to make something dirty out of it"*. These attitudes towards marriage will be explored in the next theme. Additionally, Mahmoud noted that anti-blackness from strangers mainly happened in Islamic environments such as a mosque, or mainly Muslim places such as Muslim shops or halal restaurants as oppose to that from friends which could happen anywhere. The language that is used by South Asian or Arab Muslims

towards black Muslims was also brought up as an issue. Mahmoud discussed how people would

> *"deliberately use other languages as forms of exclusion in negative contexts such as 'abd [slave] in Arabic, and kala which is Urdu for black".*

He noted how the way in which these words were used made them comparable but not equal to, the n-word. Similarly, Dennis argued that comments would be made in other languages such as Urdu or Arabic, and that whilst he may not understand either language fully, he picks up on negative words towards him. This is similar to Aaliyah's experience where she said she had been a victim of anti-black name calling in an Arab country. She said that whilst in Tunisia she was told that

> *"Tunisians have a name of us, that's basically another abbreviation of calling black people monkeys."*

On the other hand, she said she did not experience explicit racist name calling or verbal abuse whilst in Britain. The literature focused on the different reasoning behind anti-blackness perpetrated by both South Asian and Arab Muslims. From these testimonies, one can infer that there is indeed a difference between the two. Although we have no direct experiences of British Arab Muslims, from what individuals described from their time in the MENA, the anti-blackness they experienced was name calling which had links to the Arab world's slave past. Conversely, from the stories dictated by our South Asian participant, backed up by the literature, it is generally based on the colour of one's skin. The research conducted adds to the wealth of literature on the role of language within anti-blackness in Muslim communities.

Akende discussed this at length in his book *Illuminating the Darkness,* with particular concentration on the term *abeed*. This is the plural of *'abd,* which participants had heard being used towards black people. Reddie's findings also agreed with the experiences of anti-blackness in the Arab world. He discussed the anti-blackness that Louis Farrakhan faced in the Arab World and this mirrors other works as well as my own research which has advanced the topic.

There was some debate over where these racist sentiments come from, whether it comes from negative stereotypes of black culture or from the skin colour in general. Fatima made two contrasting points on the subject. Firstly, she said

> "*I don't think many Asians know anything about black culture it's literally just about skin colour.*"

This can be tied into South Asia's long history of colourism as described in the literature review. However, she went on to say that there are negative perceptions of Africa in general as somewhere tribal and un-Islamic. She said she frequently has to educate South Asians on their own history of Hinduism and Buddhism and says while Africa was Muslim, "*our ancestors weren't*". These feelings are different from the sentiments of the black Muslim participants, who generally felt that racist attitudes stem from negative opinions and stereotypes of black people. Kamal said that people assume that because he is a black Muslim that he must be a convert and must have converted in prison. Thus, continuing the stereotype that black people are criminals. Similarly, Dennis discussed that Muslims often have a:

"perverse intrigue with [particularly convert] black Muslims, and [negative] stereotypes in terms of hip-hop and violence, i.e. to do with girls and drugs, even if it's as lewd as comments about black men in the bedroom."

This alludes that there is also an ease in discussing these stereotypes openly and therefore that they will be discussed by strangers and friends alike. For example, Mahmoud said how on a few occasions he has been at an Islamic event and, as the only black person there, it was assumed he was an expert on drugs. Aaliyah did not mention stereotypes as she felt that the hatred experienced by black people in general was because of *"colonialism, capitalism and white supremacy".* Though her general argument was based simply on skin colour, I feel that given the evidence of Kamal, Dennis, and Mahmoud, negative stereotypes of black Muslims, particularly black Muslim men, play a large role in anti-blackness within Muslim communities in Britain. This research on stereotypes advances what is already known on the subject. The literature review discussed sentiments in the American context of negative connotations of black people stemming from slavery and especially in the Muslim context, the NoI. In contrast, this research in the British case shows that negative stereotypes similarly come from colonialism in part but also because of negative stereotypes such as criminality.

Generally, from this theme, we can learn that racist sentiments towards black Muslims in mosques and in daily life are usually microaggressions. These, coupled with covert displays of racism may be subtle, but the effects of which are still felt by black Muslims. On the other hand, there were less experiences of explicit forms of anti-blackness in day to day and perhaps impersonal occurrences. However, this is something which often changes when looking at marriage. When it is an instance such as marriage, which is close to home, and will involve an

interracial marriage in your family and the possibility of mixed race children, things can often change.

Theme Two: Marriage

Marriage is an important way in which all respondents felt that the black Muslim community faced anti-blackness. All participants noted that marriage was a way in which they had either experienced the anti-blackness, or, seen it first-hand. Dennis summed up the problem by saying that *"marriage is where, if it [racism] has been kept hidden, it is unrooted"*. Therefore, marriage is the way through which racism within Muslim communities is felt, especially to a possible higher degree than other demonstrations. Abdullah also gave a summary by saying that marriage in general is difficult for black Muslims who are wanting to marry outside of the race because, *"culture* [i.e. the culture of only marrying from within your race], *runs deeper than religion"*. Similarly, Kamal said that when talking to women about marriage, he would ask *"what's the worst, in your parents' eyes [to marry]"* and that they would usually reply "*black"*. Aaliyah agrees with these sentiments by saying that

> *"many Asian parents would rather their daughter marry an Asian drug dealer before an honest black Muslim man"*.

Again, Mahmoud agrees with these thoughts by remarking that

> "*people will marry outside their race to anyone except a black person, that's the worst thing that could happen to their daughter, black people are seen as inferior and bring shame on the family"*.

Here, we have two statements worth discussing. The first, is that black people are the least accepted in marriage, especially when it applies to marrying a daughter. This could be because Mahmoud is a male; so, it is something he experiences more; or, because of sexist viewpoints it would, genuinely be more acceptable if it was a son. The second statement is that black people are inferior, and other races are seen as superior. Negative stereotypes, as discussed above, could be one of the main reasons as to why black Muslims often have a problem when trying to marry a different race. Kamal noted that many marriage rejections are based on *"assumptions"* of the black community, and this can mean that interracial marriage is more difficult. Naeem, as mentioned in the literature review, relayed the prejudice against marrying black Muslims as a remnant of colonialism. However, this research does not necessarily support this. Naeem fails to include ideas of the Arab slave trade, the caste system and negative stereotypes of black people in her analysis. Therefore, this work advances the research on this particular subject area. Dennis pointed out that as a convert, he did not think that rejection of marriage was based on his newer following of the faith. He stated that it's

"*a lot easier for white converts, both male and female [to get married]"*.

Thus, the problem is down to race rather than anything else. The issue of white converts juxtaposed to black converts is something that is discussed in more depth in the third theme. It was also discussed in the literature review in regard to the Norwich mosque and the successes and problems stemming from its establishment. Likewise, Fatima emphasised that she thinks that often it is not because the person is not of the same race, but because they are black. She said that with her own experience of wanting to marry outside her race, that the person was

"good on paper, but it came down to the fact that he is black. If he was white then fine,

it wasn't about him not being Bengali".

This adds to the evidence of anti-blackness in Muslim communities in Britain, and that it is not just simply a case of wanting to stay within your race during marriage. Kamal interestingly discussed this through experiences he's had with the Somali community. Although most would say Somalis are black, when discussing marriage with them, he says that Somali women tend to say,

"Somalis don't want you marrying a non-Somali because "oh my God he's black"".

Adding that Somalis do not necessarily see themselves as black is extremely interesting because it adds to conversations of not only what can be defined as black, but also colourism among black people, as Somalis tend to be lighter skinned. This subject was briefly covered in the literature review. Edward Curtis described that his research uncovered that Somalis in diaspora do not have the view that they share the same culture as other African diasporic Muslims. This research adds to the discourse on the unique case of Somali Muslims in Britain. It is a point for further research particularly to garner experiences of Somali Muslims especially in regard to the subject of *blackness*; in addition to whether they experience the same level of racism as other black Muslims.

Mahmoud experienced a similar phenomenon when attempting to get married. He gave his "*marriage CV*" into the mosque matchmaking service and waited for responses.[138] He was

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[138] *Marriage CVs are something that are becoming increasingly common within the Muslim community in Britain, and are usually basic information about the person such as ethnicity, job description and personal interests.*

shocked at how many responses he received, and then he realised it was because he had forgotten to detail his ethnicity on the CV. After fixing the error and telling his matches that he was black, he did not receive any further responses. Mahmoud said that is what he expects from these kinds of services now, and that getting rejected based on his race has become so frequent that "*it's the norm*". Despite Mahmoud's societal position as a high-earning professional, he has not been able to find a spouse. Therefore, he feels that other factors are not to blame for his lack of success in marriage; it is just down to his race. He said that marriage rejections are a way in which people can be explicit in their racial prejudices. As,

"*people have overtly said they're not interested in black people themselves, or, they're interested, but their families are not, i.e. they won't allow them to marry a black person.*"

Comparably, Fatima, as a South Asian woman, discussed her experience of wanting to marry a black Muslim man. She wanted to marry someone of Tanzanian origin, and when bringing the subject up to her parents they hoped that he was *"one of those South Asian migrants to East Africa"*. However, when finding out he was black, *"they just completely lost it",* and she was prohibited from marrying him. This backs up what Ilyas Mohammad commented in the literature review. He detailed the abuse and racial slurs a black Muslim he knew married to a South Asian woman experienced. This supports what Fatima and others have said in the interviews; particularly when discussing the ways in which black Muslims are referred to by other Muslims.

Interracial marriage is not just a problem for black Muslim men, but for women too, with Abdullah saying that

> *"if it's a problem for black men, then times that by seven or ten and that's the scale of the problem for black women".*

This differs from what was mentioned in the literature review by Reddie. He noted that black Muslim men find it more difficult than black Muslim women to find spouses. Yet, Reddie was specifically discussing converts. As a result of high conversion levels of black men to Islam, there are larger numbers of black Muslim men compared with black Muslim women; making it harder for men to marry within their own culture or race. Therefore, their option for marriage is to marry interracially which, as this research has found out, provides its own problems. This is something which could be explored further. Mahmoud said that he believes it is more of an issue for black men marrying other races' daughters. Therefore, it could be a point of additional research detailing the comparison between the interracial marriage experiences between black Muslim men and women. Another point of further research could compare the experiences of black and white converts specifically when marrying Arabs and South Asians. This is because there is both the convert and colour dimension, and, with what will be discussed in theme three, it seems that it will be easier for white converts. Aaliyah said that interracial marriage was a *"recent issue"* for her, and that she had only noticed it since attending university. However, whilst she welcomes the idea of an interracial marriage as she has witnessed *"the harmony and humanity that comes from a mix of cultures",* she recognises is that interracial marriages for black Muslims are not always easy. She said that there is an *"undeniable stigma against marriages with black people",* and that this is discouraging. She told a personal story of how she is speaking with someone of South Asian heritage for the purposes of marriage, but is questioning whether he will be permitted to marry outside of his race, specifically to a black woman. She has heard from friends that they have found it difficult to marry interracially, and

she does not want to experience the same struggles. Unfortunately, despite her feelings, she understands that some people may believe that interracial marriages are an *"impossible notion"*.

Dennis noted that he often sees *"black brothers [fellow male Muslims] not being allowed to marry Asian sisters"*. Despite this, he believes there is often a difference of realities between different Muslim ideologies. Whilst Islam overall in theory prohibits anti-blackness and encourages interracial marriage, in reality, many groups discourage it. Dennis reasons that there is less anti-blackness, especially to do with interracial marriage, within the Salafi movement. This, he says, is for two reasons. Firstly, because this group is *"young"*; it is very popular with younger generation Muslims. Secondly, because of the movement's commitment to fundamental Islamic values, it *"discourages culture"* and cultural practices such as prohibiting mixed-race marriages.

Interracial marriages are often not encouraged within many Muslim communities in Britain; more specifically and to a more severe degree with black Muslims wanting to be in a mixed-race marriage. Similarly, Rashid, as mentioned in the literature review, described how Muslim communities in the USA do not encourage interracial marriage. Data from the ONS showed that after white British, the ethnic groups least likely to be in interracial relationships are South Asians. This research has advanced the findings on the experiences of interracial marriage within the British Muslim community. Blackness appears to be the defining, and most important factor as to why, black Muslims, specifically black Muslim men, are rejected from interracial marriage. Additionally, marriage is a key way through which anti-blackness within the Muslim community not only manifests itself, but becomes overt.

Theme Three: Effects

The final theme looks at the effects of this anti-blackness on individuals as well as Muslim communities in general. This theme is generated both from what the participants directly said but also from what the participants implied through what they said, and drawing on obvious conclusions from statements made.

Mahmoud and Aaliyah both discussed feelings of isolation as a result of the racism they experienced. Mahmoud said how, after constantly experiencing anti-blackness within particularly a mosque context, it discourages him from attending. He would rather go home, or to another mosque as he does not "*want the agro*"[139]. Aaliyah stated that because of her bad experiences from the mosque, she has not been able to "*continue [her] tradition of Friday prayers*", and that this makes her feel "*sorrowful*". The anti-blackness and unfriendliness she has faced in the mosque has triggered her anxiety and depression, which she has recently found to be "*the loneliest [time]*". Loneliness and isolation is not only detrimental to the individual, but also to the community. This is because it can create further community divisions if people are wanting to stick to their individual ethnic groups only. This is something that Abdullah agrees with, noting that this anti-blackness will cause the "*further divisions of mosques*"; to divide out of conflict, rather than out of ease.

Another effect of the anti-blackness is the increased stigma and stereotypes on black Muslims, especially black men. As Kamal stated, there is a "*bad reputation for black males*" that exists within the British Muslim community. This effect has consequences such as the

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[139] *Slang for 'angry', usually without reason.*

difficulty to marry (as discussed above, and briefly mentioned in the literature review under Richard Reddie). Additionally, though, it can have effects on black Muslims themselves. For example, it can be linked to low self-esteem and could start a cycle of feelings of inadequacy. This effect is increasingly important in a time where, as Aaliyah described

"our [black people's] humanity is at risk".

She was specifically referring to campaigns such as Black Lives Matter are increasingly vital in a world which paints black people as criminals. Anything that adds to the negative reputation of, black people, particularly males, is a hindrance which could add to more problems such as higher levels of police brutality. This, coupled with black individuals being of the Muslim faith, could increase their risk as targets of victimisation.

One of the effects of this anti-blackness relates to beauty and self-worth. The hatred stemming from anti-blackness based on colour reinforces the message that the lighter the skin, the more beautiful the person. This has negative consequences on individuals within the black community as well as the South Asian community. Fatima noted an experience of one of her friends who

"*used to use those dish scourer pads, the metal ones on her arms and her face [to get herself lighter].*

This shows the extent to which lighter skin is revered, and is a serious negative consequence of both racism and colourism. This advances what was mentioned in the literature review about skin lightening creams, another extent to which people will go to, in an attempt for fairer

complexions. Fatima cited one of the most popular skin lightening creams called *Fair and Lovely* as one which was extremely popular within South Asian communities. She described how as she was growing up she saw *"everyone using it"*. This advances the discussion on colourism within the South Asian community as it describes the frequency through which an individual witnessed the use of lightening creams. Fatima recounted seeing *"stacks of the cream"* in her sisters' room and said they were *"obsessed"* with it. This advances what was detailed in the literature; skin lightening creams containing steroids and bleach are used commonly within South Asian and African communities in order to attempt to achieve "beauty". This can be linked to theme two as a shallow reason for individuals not wanting interracial marriage to occur is that the children that could result from the marriage would have a darker complexion. In a world where lighter skin is prized, this is a negative consequence to many.

Another effect that was mentioned by Dennis is that this anti-blackness is often demonstrated through people's or a community's favouritism of white converts over black converts. He stated that as a young black convert, this is something he has witnessed from his own generation. Broadly, one would expect that anti-blackness would have a lesser occurrence with the younger generation. However, Mahmoud attests that anti-blackness still exists with the younger generation, it is just manifested in different ways. With the older generation, or in general Muslims who are recent immigrants, he says that anti-blackness is more explicit and overt. Whereas, with younger heritage Muslims, Mahmoud states that anti-blackness still exists but more through stereotypes of black people, and general racism that occurs more throughout conversations. For example, the kind of microaggressions that have been discussed in theme one. This favouritism is linked to a common occurrence in Muslim communities which is the

fetishization, mainly based on appearance, of white converts. As the above effect stated, beauty standards are a reason to why white skin is favoured over black.

There is debate in literature on whether this fetishization is as a result of skin colour or in newness of belief.[140] Additionally, as stated above, Dennis believes that it is much easier for white converts to get married. It cannot be disputed that white converts are held in higher esteem than black converts particularly when it comes to projecting the faith, i.e. as scholars. The Hamza Yusufs, Suhaib Webbs, Myriam Francois-Cerrahs and Yvonne Ridleys of the world are more prominent and well-known than their black counterparts. Whilst I am not disputing their talents, one must ask the question whether, if they were not white, would they have achieved the same level of popularity. Is their whiteness the main cause of their success? Is even religion still not exempt from the idea that whiteness is the pinnacle of humanity? The position of white converts in British Muslim Studies' academia was briefly discussed in the *reflexivity* section. To reinforce the idea of authenticity, scholars such as those mentioned need to ensure they are transparent in their positioning as white converts. Then, one can make appropriate judgements on their positioning based on both their faith and their experience of white privilege. Whilst this study is not able to answer these ideas in depth, it is important to acknowledge the questions that this research has unearthed. By rooting out the reasons behind situations, this may help future studies and solutions to the issues.

The popularity of black convert Muslims such as Mutah Beale, Mike Tyson, and Busta Rhymes seems to stem from an obsession with their past lives involved with alcohol and women. This fetishization of black Muslims by the Muslim community is different to that

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[140] Mahdi Tourage, "Performing Belief and Reviving Islam: Prominent (White Male) Converts in Muslim Revival Conventions," *Performing Islam* 1:2 (2013): 208, accessed July 2, 2017, oi:10.1386/PI.1.2.207_1.

experienced by white Muslims. This is backed up by what Dennis had to say regarding a "*perverse intrigue*" about black Muslims' (particularly reverts') lives to do with "*girls and drugs*". Therefore, black Muslims and white Muslims (both convert), are not viewed in the same way. The former are fetishized for abandoning their past lives, while the latter are celebrated and fetishized and held in high esteem and standard, their past lives often forgotten and attention focused on their appearances. It would be an interesting further study to discuss the differences between black and white converts in more detail. This would be a new study for the field and would be of more use than another study simply on converts in general.

Black Muslims are less likely to be in positions of structural power within the British Muslim community. For example, anti-blackness and racist views may prevent black Muslims rising to leadership positions in mosques, or in groups such as the Muslim Council of Britain. Overall, these effects have negative consequences both on individual black Muslims and on the British Muslim community in general; disseminating into further generations. Furthermore, if black Muslims are stopped from participating in Islamic events at the initial level, how then can we expect them to gain similar levels of acclaim to their white counterparts.

General Discussion

The interviews conducted had three main areas of questioning. These were, firstly, a general discussion with the participant about their age, ethnicity, and religion. This was partly to assess them to ensure a broad range of people were being interviewed within the parameters, but also as a means of comparison during data analysis. The second question was asking about their experiences with racism within the Muslim community. This allowed interviewees to be able to cover any aspect of racism and discrimination they felt was

important; whether it was at school or university, in the mosque, or in another situation. The last question was designed to inquire about experiences of black Muslims when wanting to marry a non-black Muslim; and asked interviewees whether they had experienced or witnessed this problem.

This literature fills a significant gap which exists in British Muslim Studies. It has remarkably advanced the research on black Muslims in Britain and the anti-blackness they are subjected to. These findings have raised a number of important questions in the field of British Muslim Studies and for British Muslim communities in general. It provides a coherent and critical primary look into the issues of anti-blackness within the British Muslim community. Previous works merely touched upon the issues of anti-blackness; a paragraph within a book perhaps. Or, they were anecdotal blog or social media posts. This study combined literature with qualitative data to produce a much-needed and vital work in the field of British Muslim Studies. However, due to its preliminary nature, it could not answer all arisen questions. For example, a key issue where others could continue to look into is the identity and blackness of Somali and Sudanese individuals in Britain. This is because they are two groups where their 'African-ness' can be debated, and this was touched upon in this work. Similarly, other intersectionalities could be another point of study following this research. Nuances spanning gender, age, and country of ethnicity could be discussion factors in further works. Additionally, a study surrounding the children of mixed race marriages and their identities as well as in depth studies into the participants of mixed marriages both within the Muslim community would be of value. This study did not have the time, resources, or ability to cover all of these sections, due to the lack of background studies which would have formed a basis for this one.

One must be aware of the different nuances as a result of this study. For example, one's class may be a determining factor in the way one is treated. An assumption that a black Muslim is of lower class could be a reason behind racist attitudes, especially in the South Asian community. This is because, as noted in the literature, colour and class were inherently linked in particularly the Indian subcontinent where lower class people tended to be darker skinned as they had to work manual jobs which meant they were out in the sun more. Overall, class within minority communities is an interesting issue, with studies making comments on behavioural differences to that of a group's perceived norms. Words such as "coconut" or "oreo" have been used to describe minority individuals who take on the values or norms of white middle class society.[141] This too could be an area of further study.

Significance and Implications

The significance of the data obtained in this dissertation is cutting edge. The study reveals opinions and viewpoints on anti-blackness in the British Muslim community that have long been assumed, but many in the Muslim community are quick to deny. This is a premier academic study on anti-blackness within Muslim communities in Britain; combining literature on history, theory and race with qualitative data. This data can be used to inform Muslim groups in Britain; mosques and organisations, to increase inclusion for all ethnicities. The evidence seen through these interviews is difficult to be disproved; therefore, the problem of anti-blackness within Muslim communities in Britain will have to be acknowledged. From this, the issues can begin to be resolved. The significance not only stems from the data itself, but the

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[141] Suki Ali, *Mixed-Race, Post-Race: Gender, New Ethnicities and Cultural Practices* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 8. *These are slang terms for being black/brown on the "outside" but white on the "inside".*

methods and theories used also. The use of CRT when analysing data was justified as the most appropriate and applicable to this field. This is because it allowed me to look at the historical, social and political factors contributing to anti-blackness as well as the experiences of victims themselves. Additionally, this work has an extra basis of significance through its use of grounded theory. The themes claimed have been based upon the evidence generated; theory grounded in clear proof, adding validity to the arguments.

The unawareness and continuation of this anti-blackness could lead to racist attitudes becoming more prevalent both inside and outside of the British Muslim community. Before this work, there were no complete academic studies on the subject, therefore, one could plead ignorance. Now however, there is evidence which can work to improve situations. Additionally, acknowledgements of this anti-blackness could increase unity within the Muslim community and encourage the increase of mixed race mosques.

This work has justified the need for Muslim communities to make an effort to establish initiatives to combat the anti-blackness within. One suggestion is that it can begin by addressing racist behaviours during sermons at Friday prayers *(khutbas)*. For example, addressing the Islamic values around interracial marriage as oppose to the long-held cultural beliefs. Furthermore, the data can be used to inform policies which would directly affect Muslim communities as it offers a nuanced understanding of the complexities of racial issues which form Islam in Britain.

There are however implications to this work. Through the use of CRT, it was acknowledged that a fundamental idea of this theory is that it does not anticipate acceptance,

but focuses on projecting what is correct. The implication is that this work will not be accepted by everyone; however, the use of CRT has prepared me for this. Another implication of this work is that some may find fault where some participants were more open than others. Therefore, it is important to base conclusions on not only what the individual did say, but also what they did not say. The latter could be either because they simply did not want to say something, or because the person themselves are not a particularly open individual. For example, one of the participants, Kamal, I know him not to be an especially open person, who dislikes discussing personal stories. In comparison, Mahmoud is generally more open. This is another benefit of interviewing people who are known to yourself, since you can know how to get the most from them, and know whether they are not saying something because they are uncomfortable or because that is just their personality.

The idea for this work stemmed from situations I witnessed within the Muslim community. I noticed a difference between the anti-racism stance of theoretical Islam that I had read about, in comparison to the anti-blackness that I was witnessing or hearing about. In addition to what I had seen, I wanted to better understand the issues surrounding black Muslims, particularly as their experiences may have been worse than what I had already observed. I assumed that I would find racist experiences were prominent especially through marriage, and this proved true. However, the experiences seen through microaggressions were something that both shocked and horrified me during the research. Not only did I want to explore this topic for moral reasons, but also because I noticed a gap in the literature. Therefore, this dissertation would be relevant not only to the academic field of British Muslim studies, but also to the British Muslim community itself.

This section began with a brief summary of grounded theory and how it applied to the themes which became evident from the interviews. Next it discussed each central theme to the research and provided evidence from interviews, ending with a discussion of the significance and implications of this work.

<u>Conclusion</u>

This work argued that anti-blackness against black British Muslims within the British Muslim community exists to a large extent. It has achieved this through examining literature, theory and qualitative data on the subject. This thesis discussed the themes surrounding the data obtained and from this, it gave an overview of thematic literature. The significance of this research has been detailed and the parameters of the research have also been discussed. This work has been a primary academic study on the experiences of anti-blackness of black British Muslims within the British Muslim community. The themes covered by the literature were fourfold and the section began with a brief discussion of the definition of blackness and how it was used in the study. The themes covered in the literature were: black Muslims in America, black Muslims in the MENA and colourism in South Asia, interracial marriage, and black Muslims in Britain. The first theme gave an analysis of the theories and approaches used in the study of the situation of black American Muslims. Next, studying black Muslims in the MENA and colourism in South Asia allowed for the examination of the different reasons behind the racism and anti-blackness from each group. The theme of literature on interracial marriage was included because this was one of the key ways in which racist experiences of black British Muslims was measured. The last theme was detailed the small amount of literature already written on black British Muslims. Similar studies were included where appropriate, to provide a comparison to this one and enhanced the theories and approaches behind this work. The findings were organised by patterns that were found through the data collection. These were: the general experiences of anti-blackness, mainly found through microaggressions, anti-blackness seen through marriage, and the overall effects of anti-blackness.

One prominent merit of this thesis lies within its significances to the academic field and to black British Muslims in general. Owing to its preliminary nature, this study sets the basis for further works on the subject. In spite of this, the limitations were discussed and the justifications for why or why not certain items were included.

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