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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Jessica Lee Winslow entitled "East Meets West: Middle Eastern Muslims in the Southeastern United States." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Anthropology.

Tricia Redeker Hepner, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Gregory Button, Rosalind Hackett

Accepted for the Council:
Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Tricia Redeker Hepner

Gregory Button

Rosalind Hackett

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges
Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

East Meets West: Middle Eastern Muslims in the Southeastern United States

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jessica Lee Winslow
August 2010

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ABSTRACT

Muslims of Middle Eastern and Turkish origin, whether longtime immigrants, recent refugees, or students living in America temporarily, are an important part of the changing ethnic and religious landscape in the Southeast U.S. In the aftermath of 9/11, much attention has been shifted upon Islam and the Middle East. Discrimination and a lack of mutual understanding and tolerance between the selected populations and native-born, non-Muslim Americans are persistent problems. The Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center and the Istanbul Center of Atlanta recognize and reflect the contemporary need for intercultural and interfaith awareness, education, and dialogue to promote tolerance.

I argue that while these organizations serve to integrate incoming populations and encourage inter-group, inter-cultural, and inter-religious interaction, they also act as a pressure valve and site of intra-group identity formation. This case study reveals the many ways in which Muslims are contributing to American culture and society while simultaneously redefining, reconfirming and even solidifying their own cultural markers, social boundaries, beliefs, and identities through their community relations and through their involvement with KTCC and IC.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

In the contemporary era, peoples of every religion, culture, and nation in the world are increasingly coming into contact. With the advent of modern communications and transportation technology borders are more permeable than ever and "nationalism is no longer contained by the territorial boundaries of the nation-state" (Kurien 200:264). Transnational and international exchanges of goods, information, and people are now common. The southeastern United States is no exception, and there is a growing sense of cultural diversity and religious pluralism to be found in this context in specific cities such as Knoxville, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia (Johnson 2005:225-226). Despite the availability and ease of communication and information, many people in the Southeast remain largely unaware and uneducated in regards to paramount current issues such as the reality of different cultures and religious traditions (Akam 2002:167), as exemplified through the literature and ethnographic findings analyzed in this thesis case study.

For example, after the tragic events of 9/11 Americans have demonstrated general ignorance and misinformation, if not hostility, when it comes to the religion of Islam, casting all Muslims as terrorists and painting a simplistic, erroneous portrayal of the religion of Islam itself (Curiel 2008:xii), examples of which will be discussed at greater length later. Unbeknownst to many people in America, Middle Easterners and Muslims been in North America and a part of North American history since before the United States was even a British colony, as evidence such as Christopher Columbus's writings indicate Fell (1980:182). In late 2009, the Pew Research Center estimated that the U.S. Muslim population has topped 2.5 million persons or 0.8% of the total U.S. population

(Pew 2009:24), indicating that a considerable number of Muslim Turks, and Middle Eastern Muslim persons reside in the contemporary Southeast U.S. However, this is only a small 0.2 % of the world Muslim population or *ummah*, a growing population that makes up 22.9% of the total world population (Pew 2009:25). Since the tragedy of 9/11 and the recent arrivals of Iraqi refugees as a result of the U.S.-led war in Iraq, people in the United States and around the world have been asking questions that directly pertain to these specific populations. What is Islam? What do Muslims believe, exactly? Are there Muslims and Middle Eastern persons in the southeastern United States? Why have they come to America? Is Islam compatible with other religions such as Christianity, the dominant religion in the Southeast? How do these incoming people perceive Americans and America? What issues are these individuals and families facing once reaching America? Is Islam compatible with American culture and democratic political ideals? Are these newcomers reaching out to others once they are in the Southeast?

This thesis seeks to answer the queries posited above and focuses on Muslims in the U.S., specifically Middle Eastern and Turkish populations in the Southeast. This project thus has a narrow scope as it is a case study focused upon a small subsection of youthful Muslim populations of generally middle to upper class socioeconomic status in communities in Knoxville, TN, and Atlanta, GA. The participants and interviewees are regionally particular and not representative of either the larger populations in the Southeast or their nation(s) of origin. The sample population of Muslim people selected for this case study were chosen to investigate the advantages, disadvantages and issues that these people are faced with upon arrival in the U.S., the ways they are being misunderstood and misrepresented by the U.S. media and government, and how they are

reconfiguring their cultural, religious, gender-based, and even socioeconomic identities, upon arrival mainly through community involvement and outreach.

People with whom I interacted, observed, and interviewed during the course of my thesis fieldwork included Iraqi refugees and two Afghan refugees turned American citizens and entrepreneurs in Knoxville, Turkish university students, immigrants, and staff members at the Istanbul Center of Atlanta and the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center. I also spoke with and interviewed University of Tennessee students from Turkey and Arab Gulf nations such as Yemen, United Arab Emirates, and students who attend other universities across the southeastern U.S. (and one who transferred to a school in Los Angeles, CA, from UTK) who originally hail from Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and United Arab Emirates. Altogether, I conducted interviews with fifteen people and interacted with an estimated thirty people. The purpose of these interactions was to examine how people of different national, gender, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds yet shared religious tradition - Islam - adapt to life in the United States. I investigated the modes in which these people reach out, both informally and through established institutions, to their surrounding communities with the stated goal of fostering tolerance and positive relationships with their American neighbors. Although these efforts seek inclusion of Muslim people into the social and political fabric of the U.S., I argue that they are also simultaneously redefining what it means to be Middle Eastern or Turkish in America. This occurs through the expressions of pan-Islamic identity and specific Arab-Muslim and Turkish-Muslim identities which solidify inherently exclusive social boundaries and cultural markers.

I also contend that it is the duty of anthropologists as professionals who study peoples and cultures to make their discipline more public and use it to increase tolerance and education in the contemporary world through critical engagement with both elucidatory and positive public implications. This thesis stands as a testament to the contributions that anthropologists can grant to the greater good and the public through literary synthesis and distinctly anthropological methods such as interviews, ethnographic documentation of social problems and participant-observation which reveal the reality and diversity of Islam and both the experiences and presence of Arab and Turkish Muslims in the Southeast. Public anthropology, ethnographic problem-solving, and the ability of anthropologists to present an accurate, holistic representation of peoples and cultures, including the cultural domain of religion (in this case Islam in the Southeast U.S.) and organizations such as the Turkish cultural centers to a broader audience is paramount to addressing intolerance, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation. Public anthropology "is theoretically oriented in its sensitivity to hegemonies," is "practically-oriented in addressing social problems" and requires a critical approach that balances a holistic "focus….on conversations with broad audiences about broad concerns" with the specialized nature of anthropological case studies (Borofsky 2000:9-10). This specialized thesis case study thus utilizes a "dynamic, systemic, and critical" approach to engaged public anthropology (Farmer 1996:267) or truth-seeking aimed to connect the Muslim populations of the Southeast to broader trends in the U.S. and to peel back the shiny patina of tolerance through outreach and dialogue put forth by the KTCC and IC in order to reveal the highly strategic yet adeptly masked political, cultural, and religious dimensions of the organizations.

Who Comes to the Southeastern U.S.?

The southeastern cities of Knoxville, TN and Atlanta, GA, possess diverse populations and a variety of ethnic, religious, political, and cultural identities (Jones 2008:115). While some experts such as Drever (2009:66-67) note that East Tennessee has always been more diverse and pluralistic culturally, religiously, economically, and politically than other parts of the state, never having experiencing widespread slavery and Knoxville even having voted against secession before and under Union control during the Civil War, the presence of diversity and plurality in East Tennessee is minimal despite the fact that it is continually increasing by leaps and bounds. As of 2006, the city of Knoxville's estimated total population was 182, 337 people and the vast majority, 79.7% of the total population, were identified as Caucasian (MapStats 2007).

During the 2000 US Census, the most recent Census for which Knoxville's demographic data is available, the only other racial categories listed besides white were black (28,171), American Indian (541), Asian (2,525), Other (1,257), and Hispanic (2,751), acting to not only leave out the numbers of Middle Eastern people in Knoxville but to highlight the lack of overall diversity in the city (City of Knoxville 2010). As of 2003, it was estimated that more than 97% of the total number of Knoxvillians were born in Knoxville (Native Knoxvillians) and more than 97.5% were born in the US while only .02% of the total Knoxville population were foreign-born (American Community Survey [ACS] 2003). More than 70% of Knoxville's foreign born populations are new arrivals, in keeping with my research findings, having come to Knoxville after 1990 (ACS 2003). An estimated 2,985 people in Knoxville reported Arab ancestry in 2003, however, these people would have had to racially identify themselves as "white" or "other" on Census

forms (ACS 2003). This lack of diversity is also exemplified through the fact that as of 2000, only .7% of the Knoxville population identified themselves as other than white, black, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Asian and only 1.6% of the total population of Knoxville reported a mixed heritage of "two or more races" (MapStats 2007). Therefore, as of the 2000 US Census, Middle Eastern and Turkish people were a small part, a fraction of .7%, of the total Knoxville population (MapStats 2007).

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK), is an institution that contributes much in the way of diversity to the local community. UTK students who hail from Turkey and Middle Eastern nations such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen represent the contemporary increase in diversity and plurality of the overwhelmingly Caucasian (MapStats 2007) and Christian city. Throughout the course of this project it became apparent that, while not being diverse in regards to class background and socioeconomic status, both undergraduate and graduate Middle Eastern, Muslim, Middle Eastern Muslim, and Turkish Muslim students enrolled at the University of Tennessee represent a diverse set of majors and graduate concentrations. The majority of students from these populations are enrolled in the sciences, with majors and graduate concentrations such as polymer engineering, physics, pharmacy, and pre-medicine being represented, however, others are graduate students in the political science and communication departments.

International students at the University of Tennessee are predominantly graduate students. As of 2008, 777 (82%) of the total 944 international students at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, were graduate students while only 167 were undergraduates (UTK Fact Book 2009). Of the 944 international students enrolled at UTK in 2008 only a

small proportion (38 people, .04%) were from Islamic countries such as Turkey or nations in the Middle East: 5 Egyptians, 1 Palestinian, 6 Jordanians, 4 from Lebanon, 3 Moroccans, 2 Pakistanis, 1 Saudi Arabian, 14 Turks, and one student each from the United Arab Emirates and Yemen (UTK Fact Book 2009).

Iraqi Refugees in Knoxville

The International Rescue Committee's (IRC) report on the situation of Iraqi refugees notes that while only 202 Iraqi refugees came into the United States in 2008, "approximately 17,000 [arrived] in fiscal year 2009" (O'Donnell and Newland 2009:1). More than 100 Iraqis have been settled in Tennessee, reflecting a recent yet growing influx of refugee and immigrant populations, not just Middle Eastern but Turkish and Latin American, to the Southeast U.S. (Drever 2009:65). Refugees are resettled by government agencies and organizations such as Bridge Refugee Resettlement Services, thus, they are not making conscious choices to come specifically to Knoxville (or Atlanta). "Tennessee is changing" more than ever since the 1990s, says Anita Drever, and "even tucked-away corners of the Tennessee landscape have now been transformed" (2009:65). In fact, Tennessee's numbers of foreign-born immigrants increased by 40% between 200-2005 alone, leading the U.S. Census bureau to rank Tennessee as one of the top 20 states receiving foreign-born immigrants and refugees (Drever 2009:66). Iraqi refugees have been arriving in Knoxville since the 1970s, however, the numbers of incoming Iraqis have dramatically increased since the war in Iraq began, especially since 2008 (Marilyn Bresnan, Personal Communication). Lola Alapo of the Knoxville News Sentinel quotes Pat Roney, Bridge Refugee Services' office coordinator as stating that "the East Tennessee area can expect to have Iraqi refugees in the next few

months…many [of whom] are professionals who collaborated with the U.S." who may be suffering from PTSD (2008:2).

Refugees have been arriving from Iraq since the 1970s, however, after the war in Iraq, Iraqi refugees started to come to the United States in appreciable numbers, especially since 2008. Over 100 of these newly arrived Iraqis have come to Knoxville and have been resettled by Bridge Refugee Resettlement Services, a local non-profit organization affiliated with the Church World Service (CWS) and Tennessee's Department of Human Services, one of only two organizations that are currently providing resettlement services to incoming refugee populations in Tennessee (Bridge Website 2002). Among these Iraqis, most of the adults, especially men, were employed as professionals such as doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, etc. prior to and during the war in Iraq (Roberson 2008:1). The Iraqis reflect the narrow scope of this case study and the specific class of people selected to participate. Moreover, all of these incoming Iraqis "were targeted because of their work with the U.S. government or companies following the 2003 invasion" which led them to apply to come to the U.S. as refugees (Roberson 2008:1).

Turkish Immigrants in Knoxville, TN and Atlanta, GA

It is important to note that Muslim, Middle Eastern, or Middle Eastern Muslim populations come to the United States for many different reasons. All of these people are entering new cultures and having to renegotiate their own identities in the process. Some arrive as refugees. Many others simply decide to come to America to attend universities, as is the case with the majority of incoming Turks, or for other reasons altogether such as to work, to start a business or to pursue freedom of religion and religious expression.

There has been a Turkish presence in the southeastern United States since the onset of incoming Middle Eastern immigrants during the early 19th century (DiCarlo 2008:7). Recent genetic evidence has also proven that the ethnically and religiously diverse Melungeon populations in the Southeast U.S. who arrived in the early 19th century, for instance, actually have Turkish mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) strains (Scolnik and Kennedy 2003:102-103). Thus, females of Euro-Asian and Turkish ancestry "were a part of the original mixture that made up Melungeon ancestry" in the Southeast U.S. (Scolnick and Kennedy 2003:103-109).

It has been estimated that more than 1.2 million people emigrated from Ottoman lands for the U.S. between 1820 and 1920 (DiCarlo 2008:7). Approximately 200,000 or 15% of these people were Muslim, "50,000 of whom were ethnic Turks" (DiCarlo 2008:7). Many Turkish people came over during World War I and II, as well, settling in cities such as Knoxville, Atlanta, New York, Boston, Tampa Bay, and Orlando, as is exemplified through the Turkish Cultural Centers that have been founded in these urban contexts. The majority of the recent waves of Turkish immigrants, however, have been people who have come to the U.S. as students "in pursuit of economic stability and a better life in general" (DiCarlo 2008:7).

Many of the Turks, mostly immigrants but also some university students, who have come to Knoxville since 2000 were recruited in Turkey for their tailoring expertise by John H. Daniel Clothiers, "a custom tailor of high-end men's suits in Knoxville" established in 1928, and brought (many with their families) to the U.S. to work (Zimmerer et al. 2008:17). Not only does John H. Daniel continue to recruit these Turkish individuals to work for them but "the company provides low-interest loans to

help families get settled" in addition to "a company attorney [who] handles all of the paperwork necessary to get visas for the tailors" and whichever family members come with them to Knoxville, Tennessee (Zimmerer et al. 2008:17). "Without a sponsor, it would be extremely unlikely for a Turkish tailor to get an immigrant visa to come to America," notes Michael M. Phillips (2005), however, John H. Daniel Chief Executive Richard Bryan notes that "'visas have been harder to get since 9/11.'" Akin to the Turks encountered during my research at the KTCC and IC, all of the Turks employed in Knoxville by John H. Daniel are Muslim, middle class (or higher) socioeconomic status, and many are noted to "hang together" as most of them - more than thirteen Turkish family units - live in Knoxville's West Hills Village apartment complex, one of my fieldwork sites (Phillips 2005).

Turks were my primary population of focus and most of the people with whom I interacted and interviewed were Turkish Muslims who were employed at either the KTCC or IC. Thus, my research focused upon a small, elite subset of the Knoxville and Atlanta populations, all of whom had either received advanced degrees or were actively pursuing graduate degrees in the U.S. and many of whom worked at one of the Turkish cultural centers. The staff and volunteers at both the Istanbul Center (IC) and the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center (KTCC) reflect the general trend of the past twenty years of migration from Turkey to the U.S. because all of them have come to the U.S. for educational, economic and financial reasons. Moreover, staff at the IC and KTCC are predominantly Turkish and Turkish-American students, all of whom (in addition to the Turkish cultural centers) reflect general trends and patterns extolled by famous Turk and moderate Muslim, Fethullah Gülen, and exemplified by the Gülen Movement, a powerful

progressive Islamic movement founded in Izmir, Turkey, in the 1970s that will be discussed at greater length later (Balcı 2008: 365).

The Turkish participants in this case study reflect the Gülen movement in that they represent a higher socioeconomic class of Muslim people (elites, even) from Turkey who are university students (or who already have undergraduate or graduate degrees) in scientific subjects (Balcı 2008:375) involved in "cultural and human relations of the local community" in which they live (Balcı 2008:366-67) and "[promote] dialogue between religions and civilizations" (Balcı 2008:377). Yet, despite the fact that all of the Turkish staff members at the IC and KTCC are Muslim the centers themselves claim to be non-partisan and non-religious. Akin to the invisible yet powerful nature of Islam within the IC and KTCC is how "the *fethullahci* [followers of Fetullah Gülen's movement] choose moderation and never express strong…Islamic ideas" (Balcı 2008:377). Moreover, akin to the *fethullahci*, the KTCC and IC function in essentially Turkish-Islamic ways and promote Islamic identity in Turkey while "their activities abroad [such as in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and even the United States] contribute to the implementation of Turkish nationalism, rather than religious values" (Balcı 2008:365). "They insist that their mission…[abroad] consists in bridging the cultural gap between Turkey" and other nations, notes Balcı (2008:377), "nobody is really aware of their basic religious orientation" (Balcı 2008:384). Therefore, the KTCC and IC are associated with the Gülen movement in that their outreach and cultural programs entail the promotion of a dominant Turkish national identity (Yavuz 1999:584,601) that is implicitly influenced by the Gülen movement and Islam yet presented as strictly cultural, secular and compatible with Western values and practices in the southeastern U.S. (Curtis 2005:4).

In addition to the staff at the KTCC, more than twenty of Knoxville's fifty Turkish families are directly involved with the center through volunteer work and attending/organizing events. Despite the fact that Turks were my main population of focus in both Knoxville and Atlanta the numbers of these populations differed greatly between the cities, for the numbers of Turks in Atlanta are estimated to be around 10,000 people (Istanbul Center Website 2010). This makes sense considering the large size of the city of Atlanta, a total population estimate of 486,411 people in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2010), compared to that of Knoxville [around 182,000] (MapStats 2007). Atlanta is therefore far larger and more diverse than Knoxville. In contrast to the 2000 Census demographics for Knoxville in which more than 82% of the city's population were white (MapStats 2007), only 33% of the total Atlanta population was classified as white while 61% are black (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Despite the diversity found in Atlanta only 1.2% of people report mixed heritage of "2 or more races," reflecting the overall lack of diversity and intercultural tolerance and relations in the Southeastern U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

As Turks come to Knoxville or Atlanta, they create relations and networks among "their *hemşehri* (regional compatriots)" and increase diversity within these southeastern cities and communities which lead increasing numbers of Turks to emigrate to the U.S. (DiCarlo 2008:7). For, "once a community of *hemşehri* has been established, it is an open invitation for others to follow" and these "people come with an implicit understanding that they will receive assistance" from their fellow Turks and through organizations such as the IC and KTCC once they arrive in the U.S. (DiCarlo 2007:8). Thus, the IC and KTCC are paramount organizations as they were specifically established to help

incoming Turks integrate into American culture and society and to facilitate inter-cultural interactions therein. Despite the new connections forged and interactions made between Turks and non-Turks upon reaching the U.S. through the cultural centers' events and outreach programs, incoming Turks generally promote Turkish culture as inherently Muslim and maintain close relations with their homelands, families, and communities in Turkey. Incoming Turks also surround themselves with other Turkish people and communities – *hemşehri* - in the U.S. through their involvement with the IC and KTCC.

As previously mentioned, the West Hills Apartments constitutes a *hemşehri* and represents how the Knoxville apartment complex is becoming "an increasingly Turkish enclave" in which Turks live and spend time together, even "[picnicking] together on weekends" with their Turkish neighbors and friends, the majority of whom are involved, either directly or indirectly, with the KTCC (Phillips 2005). The IC and KTCC are therefore prime contexts in which to study the redefinition and consolidation of Turkish, especially Turkish-Muslim, identity and the solidification of cultural markers. For the IC and KTCC do not merely promote adaptive integration and interaction between Turks and non-Turkish Americans but act as sites in which Turkish, especially Turkish-Muslim, identities may be expressed and reconfirmed-even cast as the other from within-amidst the larger non-Islamic, non-Turkish context that is the Southeast. For the act of wearing an Islamic veil is an exterior form of religious expression that stems from an internal recognition of faith or otherness. In the face of *haram* (Islamically prohibited) practices (i.e. eating pork and consuming alcohol which are common in the U.S.) and Islamophobic stereotypes and discrimination in the U.S., Turkish Muslims are able to have their fears of cultural and social loss mitigated and have their identities and beliefs

strengthened through their involvement with their communities and both the IC and KTCC.

Kennedy notes that "there is something truly astonishing [going on] in the history of Turkish-American relations" that is "gathering momentum" in the contemporary U.S. in contrast to the general trend of Turkish and Turkish-American exclusivity, otherization and isolation, "a burgeoning flotilla of relationships" being forged between Turks, Turkish-American and non-Turkish American persons" at the individual level in contemporary U.S. society (2003:7). One manifestation of this increasing interaction between Americans and Turks is the "Melungeon Movement," a grassroots social movement in the Southeast U.S. that seeks to reject racism and celebrate diversity, both historical and contemporary, through educating individual people and creating substantive links between the U.S. and other nations such as Turkey (Kennedy 2003:9).

Realizing the ever-increasing need for education and interaction between persons of Turkish and Middle Eastern descent and native-born Americans, "not [only] at the governmental level, but [especially] at the man-and-woman and street level," Turks have drawn upon the resources and networks they have created throughout the history of their presence in America, and founded "Turkish Cultural Centers" in every major metropolis in the nation (Kennedy 2003:7). The Istanbul Center's website details that there are over 10,000 persons of Turkish descent in the Atlanta metropolitan area, a number which is expected to grow, as is the overall population of Turkish and Turkish-Americans, in the future (Istanbul Center Website 2010). Obviously, given the increasing intercultural and interfaith interactions that are occurring and the relations being forged therein among Turks, Turkish-Americans, and non-Turkish Americans in the U.S., cultural

intermediaries and organizations such as the IC and KTCC, are becoming sites of socio-cultural and religious interaction and identity formation, and therefore sites for critical reflection by anthropologists on these processes.

University Students and Organizations in the Knoxville Community

Numerous organizations have been founded and events hosted therein in response to the increased interest and interactions that are now occurring between Americans and immigrants, non-native students, and refugees. The University of Tennessee and numerous student organizations and academic departments are contributing much time and money to promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue such as raising awareness of Islam and the Muslim population in Knoxville. As of 2008, more than 83% of the University of Tennessee's enrolled students were white (UTK Fact Book 2009), further reflecting the need for intercultural awareness.

The University of Tennessee hosted "Diversity Week" during the spring semester of 2010, a week in which a variety of events pertaining to diversity, multiculturalism, international business, and both intercultural and interfaith awareness. For instance, one night was even designated as "Religious Diversity Night," in which the need for religious education was the focus. A panel made up of students from various faiths including Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Atheism, and Agnosticism were asked questions by and engaged in dialogue with the audience, which was also made up of students of diverse religious traditions, while being moderated by a professor from the Religious Studies department.

The Muslim Student Association (MSA) is an organization that was initially founded in 1963 at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, which currently has

chapters in universities all over the U.S., including the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (Curtis 2009:63). The MSA represents a faith-based, progressive, on-campus group made up of students and created for students to promote education and awareness of Islam and the Muslim student body to a broader audience while simultaneously unifying not only Muslim students but also Muslim and non-Muslims through its efforts. However, the MSA is also a good example of how a cultural or religious organization that seeks to promote tolerance and education in the vein of diversity and inclusion into mainstream society also solidifies its own exclusive cultural and religious boundaries and identities in the process. Moreover, this group represents the predominantly uni-directional promotion of tolerance, especially in the case of Muslim and Middle Eastern organizations which attempt to correct stereotypes and misunderstandings of their own beliefs and traditions while not necessarily trying to enhance their own understanding or tolerance of Western, specifically American, attitudes, beliefs, or cultural norms.

However, the one exception to the MSA's uni-directionality is Dr. Rosalind Gwynne, Associate Professor Emerita of the Religious Studies department, an American Islamic Studies professor who served as the MSA faculty advisor upon request of the group during the entirety of her service at UTK, from 1982-2009. Dr. Gwynne's focus and expertise on Qur'anic interpretations led her to be called upon many times by a variety of organizations and the university itself to address issues such as relations between Muslims and non-Muslim nations and people, factionalization within Islam and her article "Usama bin Ladin, the Qur'an and Jihad" which she told our spring 2009 modern Islam class that she wrote in response to the Islamophobia in the immediate

aftermath of 9/11 received the most online hits of all articles published in the journal *Religion* during 2007.

The International House, or "I-House" as University of Tennessee, Knoxville, students refer to it, is another on-campus organization which disseminates both inter- and intra-cultural awareness and knowledge. In addition to hosting cultural cooking demonstrations, the I-House sponsors cultural nights and weeks on campus. For instance, "Egypt Night" was hosted during the spring semesters of 2009 and 2010 as well as an entire "Middle Eastern Week" that took place once during the fall semester of 2009 and once during the spring semester of 2010. Also, the I-House hosts an annual "International Festival" every spring. The international festival is made up of booths, performances, and items for sale such as food, which represent various nations and cultures from around the world which are represented in the University of Tennessee's student body.

Objectives

The American Southeast, a region historically known as the "Bible Belt" for the characteristic Christian, Caucasian (MapStats 2007), conservative majority found therein, is experiencing a transition (Hill 2005:xiv-xix). Incoming and ever-increasing waves of Muslims from Turkey, nations of the Middle East, and others such as immigrants from Latin American nations, are rendering the Southeast more culturally diverse and religiously pluralistic, ending the dominant form of Evangelical Protestantism and Caucasian, conservative norms that have "owned southern society for 150 years" (Hill 2005: xiii). It is thus very interesting that these diverse populations are voluntarily entering into this context, a context which represents an extremely rich and interesting "field" and raises queries for a cultural anthropologist.

Why are these populations coming into the Southeast U.S., an area that is known for intolerance and a historically predominant Anglicized, evangelical "white-Christian-right is right" attitude? (Mathews 2005:302-310). Are Muslims and Middle Eastern people facing discrimination once in the Southeast U.S.? If coming to the U.S. for an education, what are their majors or graduate programs in which they are enrolled? Do these people intend to stay permanently once they have received their degrees? Are there already people from these populations in the Southeast U.S.? Are these people who have been in the U.S. for extended periods of time, helping the newcomers to better integrate into society therein? Is it difficult for Muslim and Middle Eastern people to integrate into society in the Southeast U.S., and if so, why? How are these incoming people's identities changing, if at all, once they arrive and become ensconced in the Southeast U.S.? How are these incoming Turkish and Middle Eastern people being viewed, racially, ethnically, and socio-culturally both by themselves and by other non-Muslim, non-Turkish, non-Middle Eastern Americans? How are the organizations such as the IC and KTCC "non-partisan" and "non-religious" when the vast majority of staff members from each group are Muslim and affiliated with the Gülen movement? How is the IC "non-governmental" when it has connections to both the U.S. and Turkish governments? Are the IC and KTCC merely creating new integrative Turkish-American identities and communities or is the very diversity and uniqueness which they celebrate actually creating more boundaries and cultural markers within the U.S.?

All identities and societies are based upon relationships, interactions, and perceptions. This project sought to answer the above questions and explore relations between Muslims and non-Muslim, non-Middle Eastern, non-Turkish Americans. This

project was intended to promote an understanding of the history of Muslim, Middle Eastern, and Turkish migration to the southeastern United States since the early 19th century and how these incoming people have historically and contemporaneously reconstituted their identities while integrating into U.S. society and creating more diverse, pluralistic American communities in the process.

The research investigated reasons that various people give for having left their country/countries of origin, modes of coming to America and statuses ascribed and achieved upon reaching the United States. As previously mentioned, these incoming populations give many reasons for coming to America and some of these people choose to stay permanently once they arrive in the U.S. while others intend to stay only temporarily. The majority of persons interviewed and interacted with during fieldwork were Turkish Muslim and Middle Eastern Muslim students, either formerly or presently because, as my research and fieldwork reveal, people coming to the U.S. from Turkey are predominantly students while those from the Middle East tend to be immigrants or refugees and small proportions of students. It was also paramount for this project to bring to light Muslim, Middle Eastern, Turkish Muslim and Middle Eastern Muslim people's contributions throughout history until the contemporary era not only in relation to the West but, more specifically, to the U.S. These incoming people from the populations of focus range from temporary residents in America such as students, to entrepreneurs and refugee and immigrant individuals and family units alike who intend to stay in America permanently. For the majority of incoming people from these populations intend to stay in the U.S. and become citizens.

Discovering the experiences of and main issues facing incoming Muslim, Middle Eastern, or Middle Eastern Muslim individuals and families in the southeastern United States was another main objective of this project. The goal was to discern general and individual trends in the life experiences of persons from these populations through tailored interview questions and connect these individualized, particular narratives and experiences relative to broader trends in the U.S. through participant-observation and literary synthesis. Thus, questions asked pertained to why these people came to the U.S., how easy or difficult it was to get to the U.S., what institutions or organizations helped these people come to the U.S. and provided services to these incoming people once in the U.S.

It was also important to discover how these persons are articulating their specific identities, such as Muslim identity, Middle Eastern ethnicity, and Turkish national identity in the contexts of U.S. socio-cultural realms which are new to these incoming populations. For instance, when interviewing a friend from Turkey who practices Islam and wears a headscarf, much of our interview dealt with issues such as the Turkish headscarf ban which led her to come to the U.S. in search of freedom of religion and religious expression: what it is like being a female Muslim graduate student in the U.S. and how she came to get involved with the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center. Once in America, refugees, students, and immigrants are all presented with a broad spectrum of opportunities, obstacles and predicaments, such as finding a place to live, enrolling themselves (and their children) in schools, securing a vehicle, gaining adequate medical care, and finding a job. In some cases, it is quite difficult for incoming Middle Eastern Muslim university students to adjust to college life in the U.S.

Living with a stranger, especially a stranger from a different culture, in a cramped, shared space such as a college dormitory can be hard, as a friend, Suveyda, associate director of the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center and head of the organization's women's division, informed me one day as we chatted over homemade Turkish tea and desserts in her apartment. The interactive situation is harder when the incoming student from Turkey, a democratic Islamic nation that is neither completely European nor completely Middle Eastern, is a female practitioner of Islam, a religiously conservative yet politically and culturally progressive woman who prefers to wear a modest headscarf and who refuses to take part in aspects of the university lifestyle which she believes to be sinful while her American roommate is not at all respectful of her beliefs. For the American college lifestyle can entail one's involvement in or being witness to parties, consumption of alcohol and drugs, and intimate relations between unmarried people, even those of the same sex, all of which are *haram*, or forbidden, within the religion of Islam. Coming to a new socio-cultural context forces one to resituate, redefine, and even consolidate his or her identity, or identities. This redefinition and need for integration are the catalysts for the establishment of organizations such as the IC and KTCC which not only conduct outreach and education but seek to integrate incoming people, specifically Turks, into southeastern U.S. society and communities. However, given the fact that these Turks only integrate socially and culturally with non-Turks in "safe" ways - such as public dialogue sessions and cooking classes - while at Turkish cultural center functions, it seems their aims at integration are more political than cultural. Through their reconsolidation of cultural identity, Turks are defining Turkish national identity as inherently Muslim and utilizing the political connections of the IC and KTCC to create a

strong political presence in the U.S. At the same time, the Turkish cultural centers provide an outlet for these newcomers to respond to and discuss their new context(s) and status(es) and affirm their own specific beliefs, identities, and practices as Turkish Muslims in order to be recognized and respected as a distinct, different part of the American socio-cultural, political, and religious landscapes.

The most important objective of this project was to discover the ways in which Muslim, Middle Eastern, Turkish Muslim and Middle Eastern Muslim individuals and families are connecting to each other and reaching out to other persons and communities in the Southeast and why. At first, as Suveyda told me, the KTCC was organized to help Turks integrate into the greater southeastern U.S. society because incoming people always need assistance in their new locations and societies to do even the most mundane tasks such as grocery shopping. However, these forms of "integration" do not entail interaction between Turks and non-Turks but, rather, survival strategies. Thus, these incoming Turks fare better when there is already a preexisting network of Turks and Turkish-Americans and organizations therein that they may draw upon for information and services. Considering the actual lack of integration between Turks and non-Turkish Americans and the fact that the executive of the director of the KTCC is not even fluent in English, it has become clear that it is necessary for the KTCC to branch out and educate the larger non-Muslim, non-Turkish Knoxville community about Turkish culture while facilitating interactions between Turks, Turkish-Americans and non-Turkish Americans as the IC does.

These organizations function not only to integrate incoming Turks into the larger context of American culture and to educate Americans about Turkish culture but to

consolidate and redefine Turks' identities as Turkish Muslim people in the contemporary multiethnic, religiously pluralistic Southeast U.S. Cities with universities and considerably sized immigrant and refugee populations in the U.S. are thus prime locations for instances of diversity and interaction. Focusing on relations between incoming people such as Muslim, Middle Eastern, and Turkish immigrants, students, refugees, and between these incoming populations and non-Muslim, non-Middle Eastern, non-Turkish Americans, and the reactive outgrowth and involvement of organizations in southeastern communities in Knoxville, TN, and Atlanta, GA, are primary modes of studying and revealing transnationalism, globalization, and the connections not only made between people at the individual level but relations between levels ranging from the local to the global. For the individuals and organizations researched connect the local echelon to the national, connect the national and transnational levels, connect the transnational echelon to the international level, and ultimately bring together the international and the global.

Transnationalism, a prime example of relations and the interchange between cultures on both local and global levels, is defined by Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc (1992:ix) as "a social process in which migrants establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders." Incoming Turkish and Middle Eastern refugees, students, and immigrants, the majority of whom are Muslim, are the present embodiment of the process of transnationalism because they are utilizing technology, including communications and banking technology via the internet, in order to maintain social relations with friends and family and even conduct business with people who are located not only in their geographically disparate countries of origin but anywhere in the

world. Therefore, immigrants who exemplify transnationalism may be termed "transmigrants," as Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc detail, because they are people who "take actions, make decision, and feel concerns within a field of social relations that links their country of origin and their country of settlement" (1992:ix). Individuals in Turkey, for example, make some of the largest donations to both the Istanbul Center of Atlanta and the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center. However, despite the importance and interest of transnationalism, the focus herein is concentrated on the relationships between Muslims and the surrounding peoples within communities in both Tennessee and Georgia. The scope, then, is focused on relations, interactions, and outreach programs between Muslims, both Turkish and Middle Eastern, and non-Turkish, non-Muslim, non-Middle Eastern Americans in the Southeast U.S.

The main problems in contemporary societies are intolerance, ignorance, and inequality, all of which are interrelated. These elements are reflected not only through polarization in the U.S. in regards to issues such as politics, race, culture, and religion but through the U.S. media's representation of Islam and the Middle East and the U.S. government's (and peoples') perspectives and treatments of Muslim and Middle Eastern people, especially in the Southeast U.S. One palliative is for the American public to be educated about and interactive with these populations, cultures, and their belief systems in their communities. The IC and KTCC thus represent one form of a solution to resolve tensions and misunderstandings in contemporary multiethnic societies through their main goals: dialogue, education, culture, and humanitarian work. However, this project puts forth the argument that for tolerance, diversity, and polyvocality to truly be embraced and expressed in contemporary American society, the integration, education, and interactions

between the selected populations and American citizens need to be multidirectional. Incoming Muslim, Middle Eastern, and Turkish people must conversely be educated in and more tolerant of non-Muslim, non-Middle Eastern, non-Turkish, lifeways, socio-cultural and religious traditions and attitudes in the U.S. This thesis interrogates whether and how this multi-directionality is possible within the existing institutional frameworks, or whether the tendency to mark group boundaries and differences is the primary outcome of their activities.

It is obvious that intergroup/intragroup tolerance, awareness, and education are especially important in the present context of the Southeast United States as it constantly becomes more diverse and complex, international and transnational (Ansley and Shefner 2009:65-67). With people from different nations and religious and cultural backgrounds coming into contact, misunderstandings and preconceived notions may come into play from both sides. For instance, Suveyda expected the U.S. to be Islamophobic, irreligious, sinful even, and had heard that most Americans have casual, premarital sex constantly. She was not only surprised by how her preconceived notions about American sexuality and religion were instantly broken down but was impressed by the friendliness and helpfulness she encountered once she became a graduate student in the U.S. She related that she was especially struck by how kind, outgoing, and generous her new-found American Christian friends were toward her in Kansas.

Organizations like the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center and the Istanbul Center of Atlanta are therefore paramount institutional settings to examine this process of interaction and intercultural/interfaith education because they have recognized the increasing processes of contact and exchange between incoming peoples from Turkey,

for example, and non-Turkish, non-Muslim Americans in the Southeast. While the stated goals of these groups are to actively promote integration of incoming persons from abroad into the social and cultural spheres of the southeastern U.S., promulgate continuity of native traditions, and celebrate diversity of cultures and the importance of education and dialogue in the U.S., the reality and actions of the IC and KTCC appear quite different.

While saying and publishing that integration, diversity, and dialogue are the ultimate goals of the Turkish cultural centers, the IC and KTCC are actually driven by other agendas that are pervasive and not easily recognized. These ultimate goals are like icebergs, you can only see the tips of the entities but the vast majority of them are located right underneath the surface. For these organizations ultimately facilitate intra-Turkish networks, promote a specific Turkish Muslim national identity, and are ultimately aimed to not only spread Islamic-Turkish culture as understood in terms of the Gülen movement but render it more powerful, especially politically, in the Southeast U.S. It is both interesting and important to consider then, how Turkish Muslim individuals in Knoxville are integrating (or not) into the Southeast and breaking down barriers and stereotypes therein while at the same time consolidating and reconfirming their own Turkish-American and Turkish-American Muslim identities and solidifying social boundaries through the activities of the Turkish cultural centers, as will be discussed throughout this work.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter one explores issues of identities associated with race and ethnicity and addresses the process of "otherization." This chapter details how race and ethnicity factor in to the identities of individual people and groups and how these terms, despite being rendered scientifically void as socio-cultural and ideological constructs, continue to be important elements in identity, culture, politics, and law. Focusing on differences and creating an "other" in people viewed to be different than oneself should not be used as a basis to harm or stereotype other people. It is key for contemporary societies and individuals, institutions, and organizations therein, to celebrate diversity while recognizing sameness and difference and to achieve power and respect in socio-cultural and political domains. Chapter one ends with the history of Muslim, Middle Eastern, and Middle Eastern Muslim people coming to the U.S. and the significant contributions that these people made in the process while being labeled as both Caucasian and "other" historically and in the contemporary period. After explicating the prehistoric and historic presence of Arabs, Middle Eastern, and Muslim people in the geographical area that is now the U.S. follows a discussion of historical conflicts between the West and the Middle East before detailing modern Muslim and Middle Eastern immigration to the U.S.

Chapter two presents specific vignettes from the ethnographic data gleaned in interviews and through participant-observation at events, data which is imbued throughout this work. The chapter begins with vignettes and data pertaining to refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan, respectively. All of the incoming Iraqis are well-educated individuals and family units in which the father and mother was a professional and aided the U.S. government or military during the War in Iraq. They reflect general patterns of

incoming Iraqi refugees with the issues that they faced both in their native Iraq and upon arrival in the U.S. as refugees. The two American citizens and former refugees from Afghanistan are unlike the Iraqis and their fellow Afghan refugees in that they came to the U.S. and were able to immediately start multiple businesses with the money that they had. Thus, Zahir and his wife, local Afghan-American entrepreneurs in Knoxville, currently own two businesses and are currently utilizing their national, international, and transnational networks, including groups such as USAID and the U.S. Afghan-American Chamber of Commerce (AACC), to help Afghans through the rug industry.

The perspective of Suveyda, a doctoral student in political science at the University of Tennessee and the associate director of the KTCC, is then detailed. She is a prime example of a progressive (Turkish) Muslim woman in America who is acting upon her democratic and pluralistic political and religious ideals and working to make change in her community of Knoxville, a place that is experiencing increasing religious and cultural diversity and pluralism, through education and interaction all while pursuing a Ph.D. and starting life anew with her new husband in a foreign country. She also reflects the interesting paradox of an Islamic woman intentionally coming to the U.S. - the Southeast U.S., no less - in order to pursue religious freedom (Curtis 2005:593).

These vignettes exemplify the diverse ways in which incoming Muslim, Middle Eastern, and Turkish people experience the challenges of reaching the U.S. and, once they arrive, the manners in which they experience cultural adaptation and otherization. Whether or not they integrate or assimilate into or even reject American society and culture was also an interesting factor. Their lives reflect how these incoming populations simultaneously take part in outreach efforts and intercultural activities through their

businesses, universities and associated organizations such as the IC and KTCC while at the same time reinforcing their own Muslim, Middle Eastern, and Turkish identities which stand apart from the surrounding culture and predominant religious beliefs of the Southeast U.S. For instance, Suveyda veils her hair, head and neck, acting to immediately and visually cast and self-identify herself as other in regards to the dominant cultural and religious traditions of Knoxville, TN, while Zahir dresses in American clothing and even explicitly identifies himself as "American, not Afghan."

Chapter three discusses the discrimination experienced by Muslim and Middle Eastern people in the U.S. after the events of September 11, 2001. Generalizations and simplified, derogatory, and erroneous portrayals of Muslim people, Middle Eastern people and nations, and the religion of Islam *en masse* became commonplace and even violent in the U.S. after 9/11, however, this tragic day also brought about an increased interest in Islam, Islamic culture(s) and the nations and cultures of the Middle East. Unfortunately, misconceptions disseminated by the media and politicians continue to occur in contemporary U.S. society, necessitating accurate, historiographical, anthropological, pluralistic representations and collective action on the part of individuals and groups of people. To speak out, raise awareness and education, and work to create more tolerant and unified communities in an increasingly polarized world is paramount. To this end, contributions of Islamic and Middle Eastern people and civilizations throughout history in regard to the West and the U.S. are delineated followed by a discussion of the status of women in Islam to counter popular stereotypes and misconceptions held within the minds of American citizens and media outlets.

Chapter four discusses the future as represented through the IC and the KTCC, two Turkish/Turkish-American organizations that are working to create a better future for people within their communities in the Southeast U.S. and both U.S. and Turkish societies, at large, through their outreach activities and educational programs which stress interfaith and intercultural awareness, appreciation, and interaction. These organizations are crucial to understanding how individuals and collectivities of people are coming together in southeastern America to solve real world problems such as ignorance, conflict, and otherization within contemporary communities of the multiethnic, multireligious, multicultural U.S. in specific Turkish-Islamic modes.

Methods

The methods of this project were designed as a case study intended to tease out historical and contemporary qualitative, demographic, and sociocultural information about Muslim, Middle Eastern, Middle Eastern Muslim, and Turkish Muslim individuals in the U.S. in order to provide a form of historiographical and contemporaneously relevant anthropology that educates the public and promotes reciprocal interaction, dialogue, appreciation, awareness, and tolerance between people of different cultural and religious backgrounds while simultaneously being germane to anthropologists and the discipline of anthropology, especially the cultural sub-discipline. The project's structure centers on history, vignettes, comparisons, and both demographic and ethnographic data gleaned from the following primary population and secondary populations to be addressed within the bounds of this intended project.

Turkish immigrants and American citizens of Turkish descent constituted the main population of interest and focus. The Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center and the Istanbul Center of Atlanta provided an institutional basis to conduct research within. Thus, most participant-observation was conducted at the headquarters of the Istanbul Center of Atlanta and the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center and at numerous events hosted by these two organizations. Altogether, fifteen participants were interviewed, seven of whom are staff members or volunteers from these two organizations, and an additional thirty or more people were estimated to have been interacted with during fieldwork for this project. For example, the executive director of the IC was interviewed along with the humanitarian program project director, outreach program director, associate director of outreach, director of academic affairs, and director of educational programs. Also, the associate director of the KTCC was interviewed. All staff members from the Turkish organizations were interviewed about how/why/when they came to the U.S., how they became involved with the IC or KTCC, and the programs and events which they directly/indirectly coordinate therein. Secondarily, other persons and groups of Muslim faith, Middle Eastern nationality or heritage were included within the bounds of the project. This secondary set of people included fifteen resettled refugees from Iraq, university students from United Arab Emirates (1), Turkey (2), and Yemen (1), and two local entrepreneurs from Afghanistan.

In addition, the semantic differential technique was used during the course of this research. The semantic differential technique is used to elicit attitudes and feelings from individual people and to ultimately attempt not only to discern the links between linguistic elements such as adjectives and psychology but how these emotions and

opinions of individuals represent greater trends among groups of people. The semantic differential survey is one of the most commonly used scales or tests of attitude measurement and is flexible as it entails the use of bipolar pairs of adjectives such as good-bad, dark-light, happy-sad, which can apply to multiple people and a range of topics (Pelto 1970:109-110). Questions and each bipolar adjective pair were tailored according to the type of participant to elicit feelings and connotational meanings for the study. This mode of testing thus was parallel to questions asked during the interview process and detected the attitudes and opinions that Middle Eastern Muslims, Americans of intercultural and interfaith backgrounds, and non-Muslim/non-Middle Eastern American peoples hold in regards to the arrival/presence of Middle Eastern Muslim individuals such as students, immigrants, and refugees and the founding of previously mentioned organizations that directly or indirectly interact with these populations.

The test was administered to fourteen individuals with whom I personally interacted, some of whom I interviewed either formally or informally. The participants included Turks and Turkish-Americans on staff at the IC and KTCC, Muslim, Middle Eastern, and Turkish University of Tennessee, Knoxville, students, non-Muslim, non-Middle Eastern, non-Turkish University of Tennessee, Knoxville, students, and random non-Muslim, non-Middle Eastern, non-Turkish American citizens above the age of eighteen whom I encountered during the course of my research in both Knoxville, TN, and Atlanta, GA. General associative questions asked of all participants included the following: Is America a land of freedom or, on the other end of the spectrum, oppression? Is America a religious or secular nation? Are Americans generally tolerant or intolerant? Are Americans in the Southeast U.S. tolerant or intolerant? Are racism and religious

intolerance rare or common in the U.S.? Are the U.S. media's portrayals of Muslims, Islam, and the Middle East good or bad? Is it easy or difficult to find a job in the U.S.? Questions tailored specifically to Muslims, Middle Eastern people, and Turks asked questions such as the following: Was it easy or difficult to come to the U.S.? Is it easy of difficult to be a student, immigrant, or refugee of Muslim and Middle Eastern or Turkish background in the U.S.? Are American students or case workers friendly or unfriendly? The individual answers granted by each participant were incredibly rich and interesting as they relate to more broad patterns and attitudes found in the Southeast U.S. pertaining to race, religion, tolerance, and representations and perceptions of Muslims, Islam, and the Middle East, which participants almost unanimously agreed to be negative. Interestingly, answers to many of the questions, especially those related to America, racism, and (religious) tolerance, fell toward the middle of each bipolar spectrum. Results of the SDT will be discussed briefly in chapter three.

The majority of data for this case study was gleaned through ethnographic methods such as interviews and participant-observation in more than ten events like dialogue dinners, dialogue nights, social functions, panels, seminars, and lectures hosted by the IC, KTCC, or the University of Tennessee, Knoxville because "fieldwork *is* the central activity of anthropology" (Howell 1990:4). I conducted fifteen interviews of both formal and informal natures with peoples from the selected populations ranging from Iraqi and Afghani refugees, university students from the Middle East and Turkey, and staff members from Bridge Refugee Services, the Istanbul Center of Atlanta, and the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center. These forms of anthropological and ethnographic

research were conducted between fall of 2009 and spring of 2010 in the southeastern cities of Knoxville, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia.

CHAPTER ONE

IDENTITY, RACE AND ETHNIICTY AMONG MIDDLE EASTERN PEOPLE

"The world as a living being" is "one nature, one soul. Keep that in mind. And how everything feeds into that single experience, moves with a single motion. And how everything helps produce everything else. Spun and woven together." –Marcus Aurelius*, Meditations, Book 4, No. 40*

Race and Ethnicity

Science is proving that not only humans but all creatures on the Earth are closely related to each other and to the planet itself, made up of the same elements, the same chemical compounds, and the same basic building blocks, atoms and cells (Pace 2001: 806). Yet, humans are adept at identifying differences of all kinds and relating these not only to their individual identities but to each person's reality through perceptions of culture, difference, and identity, three elements which constitute one's cosmology or worldview and from which Plato (2008:24-25) argued the human soul is created.

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Nai'im (2009:69) lends credence to the influence of culture and identity on worldview when he explains that "people are more likely to believe normative propositions if they believe them to be sanctioned by their own cultural traditions" because culture lends legitimacy to ideologies and realities and acts as an ideological framework or lens which people use to understand the world around them and to construct their identities. People therefore not only have culturally specific identities but multiple identities within the realms of race and ethnicity and associated elements of personhood and culture. These various identities affect the way that they view the world around them, especially since "the focus on identity was increasingly placed on

membership in a religious community" after the rise of the major monotheistic traditions, traditions which imply specific worldviews and distinctive ideological perspectives (Smedley 2007:338).

People construct identities in a variety of ways, many of which involve religion and all of which involve culture. Thus, there are a multitude of identity types and elements therein that result from these processes, all of which should be investigated and explained by anthropologists (Nagengast 1994:124). Nagengast (1994:124) writes that the challenge for the future of anthropology is to reveal these varied socio-culturally and historically constructed aspects of human identities and the ways in which identities and cultures manifest themselves through material inequalities found therein. For conducting anthropological fieldwork in situations of displacement and transnational movement, in the cases of newly arrived Middle Eastern and Turkish refugees, immigrants, and even students in the southeastern US, "generates new, urgent ways of asking old questions about the relations between history and culture, violence and dehumanization," between religions and politics, individuals and groups, "and finally, even between culture and humanity" (Malkki 1995:2).

There are the self-constructive identities that people assert themselves and there are also assigned identities which are ascribed to people by others (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:35). Identities may pertain to any number of aspects of individuals and groups of people, for example, gender, age, socioeconomic status, ideologies, political and religious beliefs, nationality, and even elements such as appearance, race, and ethnicity. Therefore, identities are complicated in that they can be asserted or assigned, based on interior qualities such as beliefs or even heritable traits such as genes or genotypes, or even those

based on exterior elements such as phenotypes and physical, observable characteristics. Some major dimensions of identity include religion, as previously discussed, ethnicity or nationality, gender, and race. Ethnic identity is developed from both internal and external sources, both by one's self and by "others," and is based on traits such as "putative common descent, claims of shared history, and symbols of peoplehood" (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:35).

Ethnic variation, cultural behavioral markers, and geographic location were the defining features of identity in the ancient world and continue to be principal dimensions of identity construction today (Smedley 2007:337). Ethnic groups and identities therein can thus reflect historical and contemporary relations between individuals and groups, relations between individuals, groups and institutions, and inequalities in power and status within any given society in addition to perceived "differences in worth" (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:35). However, the ancient peoples of the Old World such as the Egyptians, Greeks, Macedonians, and Romans recognized that physical features were not linked to inequalities and ethnic identity was not "set in stone" or to be "confused with biological features" for them but was rather a "fluid and malleable" concept (Smedley 2007: 336-337). In contemporary times, "ethnic groups try to construct themselves as natural, ancient, and unchanging socio-cultural units," part of "an idealized and generally sacralized past" which never actually existed (Kurien 2001:274).

Racial identities which are generally "constructed by others" predominantly reflect power relations and are "based on perceived physical differences" (Cornell and Hartman 1998:35). Haslanger (2008: 66) details that race, a primary factor of group and individual identity, is a social concept that is highly contentious as it carries with it the

baggage of racial injustices through history, such as slavery in America, injustices that resulted from an implicit "*color hierarchy*" based upon visible skin pigmentation of individuals and related to social status and power. Skin pigmentation, or perceived racial identity, is related to geography or "clinal…patterns," as is ethnicity (Smedley 2007:347). Therefore, ethnic and racial identities are disparate and complex yet simultaneously interrelated socio-cultural constructs that entail shared values, places, and social status which are perceived by many people to be permanent and related to biology when they are actually invented and context-specific, nationally, historically, politically, and religiously (Calhoun 1997:xl). Not only are these constructs and related identities created by people but race and ethnicity are constantly being reassessed and re-invented, especially for refugees, immigrants, students and other people who migrate from one place or country to another, all while remaining elusive, intertwined and, in many contexts and circumstances, both used and perceived interchangeably and simultaneously (Malkki 1995:156; Fox 1990:3). "Distinguishing between nationalisms, ethnicity, and racial identity," writes Richard Fox, "has always been difficult because the categories are too loose" or ambiguous despite their common usage and both the baggage and influence that the terms entail (1990:3). However, it is clear that akin to nationalism, both ethnicity and racial identity are "cultural productions of public identity" (Fox 1990:4).

While "ethnic and racial diversity have been sources of pride, unity, and achievement," they have also been sources of "conflict and division," stereotyping and "otherization" (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:3). Religions and religious differentiation have also preceded otherization, misconceptions, stereotypes and even violence. This is reflected in the ways the U.S. media represent Islam and the common misconceptions

held by non-Muslim Americans in regard to Muslim Americans, especially those who appear Middle Eastern or Turkish due to appearance or cultural markers such as the Islamic veil, or *hijab*, as will be discussed further later. As Kemal Korucu, outreach director of the Istanbul Center, stated on October 26, 2009 at the second annual dialogue dinner sponsored by the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center, the first step toward hatred, prejudice, and, at the most extreme form, genocide, is identifying another person or group of people as "other" or "others." The next step is dehumanization catalyzed by focusing upon differences and being discriminatory. After dehumanization, the "other" is perceived of as subhuman and of little or no value, all of which are the very sentiments that lead to horrific events in history such as the numerous genocides witnessed through the course of the twentieth century.

Violence, like identity, is made up of "social and cultural dimensions" while also being simultaneously granted "power and meaning" through sociocultural elements such as cultural traditions, ethnic affiliation, religious beliefs, and even governmental institutions such as the military which are considered important in the majority of contemporary nation-states (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2002:1). In pre-genocidal situations, certain groups are targeted, dehumanized and cast as the "other" in culturally and historically specific modes-even politically and religiously-as *other* than the status quo, *other* than the normative, majority culture, ethnicity, and religion of the state. "Cultures, social structures, ideas and ideologies," elucidate Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, "shape all dimensions of violence, *both* its expressions and it repressions" (2002:3). The most extreme forms of violence based on perceived ethnic and racial differences are ethnic cleansing, mass killings, and genocide (Scheper-Hughes and

Bourgois 2002:14). These modes of violence are inherently "extreme forms of 'us' versus 'them'" (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2002:14). Consequently, "nationalism, regionalism, fundamentalism, systemic attempts at 'ethnic cleansing,'" writes Augé (1999:xv) "all involve less a crisis of identity then…uncontrolled heating up of the processes that generate otherness." Otherness, then, is a quality created by and defined in relation to perceptions of race, identity and culture-peoplehood and belonging (Medina 1997:761). As culture itself is a mental construct produced by humankind, so are the elements of race, identity, and even otherness. Throughout the history of humankind examples of prejudice and killing based on "otherness" abound. Unfortunately the modern world is not exempt from these elements.

As advances in science and technology proved the abstract and socially constructed nature of perceptions of culture, identity, ethnicity, and race, "ethnicity was expected to disappear as a force to be reckoned with in the 20th century," write Cornell and Hartmann (1998: 4), and even professionals and academics shared in this belief. For example, sociologist Robert Park, posited in the 1920s that "certain forces at work" such as rural to urban migration, societal change, and intermarrying "were bound to dismantle the prejudices and boundaries that separated races and peoples" and led to racism and discrimination when, conversely, these very elements led to the opposite, both inciting and solidifying prejudices and divisions therein (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:4-7). Obviously, the early 20th century anticipated disappearance of ethnicity and prejudice based on perceived human differences never happened, despite increasing amounts of contact, intermarrying, and even intermixing of diverse peoples through processes such as migration, rural to urban and even transnational.

The twentieth century, an era celebrated for advances in technology and rights of all kinds, was the context in which the following instances of ethnic cleansing and genocide occurred: the Armenian genocide of 1915 in which more than 1.5 million ethnic Armenians were killed, the Holocaust, Kurdish genocides in both Iraq and Turkey in the 1980s, ethnic cleansing of non-Serbs in the former Yugoslavia in the early to mid-1990s, the killing of more than 200,000 indigenous Mayans in Guatemala committed by Guatemalan soldiers from 1981-1982, the "dirty war" of Argentina in which an estimated 9,000 Argentine civilians were murdered by Argentine soldiers, and the 1994 Rwandan genocide in which over one million people - "one seventh of the country's population" - were killed based upon socially constructed ideas of the status quo, normativity, racialization, and disparate ethnicity (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:1-3; Taylor 2002:138). The numerous instances of genocide, ethnic cleansing, state-sponsored terror and violence - otherization incarnate - that occurred during the 20th century have even led Alexander Laban Hinton (2002: 1) to label it as the "Century of Genocide."

Hinton (2002: 1) details that the advent of the modern nation-state system "and its imperialist and modernizing ambitions" which were entwined with perceived "normative" status quo beliefs, cultures, and both social and racial hierarchies, led to "tens of millions of 'backward' or 'savage' indigenous peoples" to die "from disease, starvation, and outright murder," as was the case with the Armenian Genocide of 1915. More than sixty million people "were also annihilated in the twentieth century," writes Hinton (2002: 1), "often after nation-states embarked upon lethal projects of social engineering intent upon eliminating certain undesirable and 'contaminating' elements of the population". Considering the violence that has occurred from times past until the

current era, it is obvious that anthropologists as students of humanity, history, and culture have moral and ethical responsibilities to do anything in their power to prevent these sundry events from happening in the future and "to promote social justice" through breaking down stereotypes and celebrating diversity as opposed to furthering otherization (Turner et al. 2009:200). It is also clear that organizations such as the KTCC and IC have been established by Muslim Turks in the southeastern US in response to historical and contemporary manifestations-both ideological and material-of otherness and discrimination, the forbears of dehumanization and even violence.

Despite the horrors caused throughout human history by otherization and focusing on differences that are framed within human- and socio-culturally constructed mindsets "at century's end," write Cornell and Hartmann (1998: 4), "ethnic and racial identities have emerged as among the most potent forces in contemporary society." Considering that race has been confirmed within the discipline of anthropology as a social construct with no biological or genetic basis or relevance, it becomes clear that the social and political elements and relevance therein are what further invigorate people's perceptions of race and ethnicity and the ways in which these elements influence identity (Dupré 2008:53). Ethnicity, it should be noted, is another problematic term with divisive connotations, a construct which should be avoided as geography and "geographic distances across landmasses constitute a far better predictor" of human genetic differentiation than ethnicity (Manica, Prugnolle, and Balloux 2005:366). For Lewontin (1972: 396) revealed that eighty-five percent of genetic variation "is contained within populations" while "less than 15% of all human genetic diversity is accounted for by differences between human groups." Despite the fact that the race concept is

biogenetically irrelevant and socially constructed, people in the United States continue to embody and be influenced by a highly racialized worldview in which they are unable "to think logically about race or human biological variation" (Wade 2002:116; Smedley 2007:347).

The historically-rooted racialized American worldview (Smedley 2007:347) is currently having a negative impact upon Middle Eastern people and people of Middle Eastern descent in the U.S. as it catalyzes discrimination and false impressions of an incredibly heterogeneous and diverse group, or groups, of people. It is for this reason that incidents of hate crimes and violence against Muslim Americans and Arab Americans are currently on the rise, as noted by the ADC (Personal Email Communication, May 14 2010). During one session of our modern Islam class in the spring of 2009 Dr. Rosalind Gwynne mentioned that in the aftermath of 9/11 a Muslim woman in Knoxville had her *hijab* publicly torn off by an angry non-Muslim American citizen, however, instances such as these – especially what is now known as "burqa rage" – have not died out but are becoming more common in the U.S. and abroad, with many nations such as France (Hardach 2010) and Belgium (Tran 2010) moving toward the legal banning of burqas (also known as *niqabs,* Islamic veils which partially or completely cover the face) in public altogether. The ADC states that numerous incidents occurring in the first two weeks of May of 2010 which "involve acts of domestic terrorism, vandalism, intimidation, and discriminatory campaign tactics" directed disparagingly toward "Arab and Muslim Americans" are not only on the rise but of "grave concern" which must be addressed legally by authorities and morally by individual Americans as they are "unconscionable" and uncharacteristic of "civil society" (Personal Email

Communication, May 14 2010). However, American perceptions of otherness is also the driving force behind the establishment of Turkish interfaith and intercultural centers, in the case of the KTCC and IC, organizations which seek to educate both Americans and incoming Turks about diversity and difference, integrate newly arrived Turks into the southeastern US, and act as sites of intercultural/interfaith interaction and awareness while simultaneously serving as a context in which Turks may redefine, even strengthen, their own specific political, religious, and cultural identities which have been recast as the other in the presence of a non-Muslim, non-Turkish, American majority.

For when people move to a new context, such as moving from Turkey or from a nation in the Middle East to the United States, both "individuals and groups reflect on" their identities, national, social, racial/ethnic, and their new surroundings, from the community to the nation-state levels, "not only may new boundaries and social bonds be produced" but "old ones become solidified" as "new cultural meanings and deeply felt identities" develop (Fox 1990:7). Immigration, or being "uprooted…and thrust into a radically new and alien environment" is "often a profoundly disruptive experience," one that works more smoothly when there is an existing network of people from one's homeland in the new context in addition to resettlement agencies like Bridge Refugee Resettlement Services and cultural centers such as the KTCC and IC.

The KTCC and IC not only integrates Turks but allows them to maintain intra-Turkish social ties and traditions, especially Islamic traditions in the case of the Turks, amongst "co-ethnics" (Kurien 2001:283) in the Southeast. For "even after living in the Unites States for several decades, generally the immigrant generation has little social interaction with members of the wider American society" (Kurien 2001:278) and

"religion becomes more salient" as "the most acceptable and non-threatening basis for community formation and ethnic expression" (Kurien 2001:279). Through involvement with the IC and KTCC and religious organizations, immigrants (and refugees) "as a minority community" may "present a unified public face" that allows them to more easily accepted into mainstream southeastern U.S. society while aiding them in maintaining their own socio-cultural and religious practices through established networks of "co-ethnics" (Kurien 2001:281, 283). This united public face or identity also allows for greater visibility, respect, and forms of socio-cultural and political participation.

There are obviously positive and negative associations, in addition to both positive and negative events, that occur as a result of ethnic and racial identification. As mentioned, on one end of the spectrum there are episodes of ethnic cleansing and even genocide that have occurred as a result of otherization and identifying differences in ethnicity or race, however, there are pros in addition to cons when addressing issues of racial and ethnic identity. For instance, ethnic or racial identity and religious association can be sources of pride, unity, progressiveness, and even collective, philanthropic action such as humanitarianism. To this end, Jones (2008:10) writes that parallel to there being a "liberal left" within politics there has been a growing and diverse "religious left." This active religious left has developed in part because of "increasing religious pluralism in the U.S. as a whole" and is "a broad inter-religious and inter-denominational coalition" (Jones 2008:10). There is power in numbers and collective action on the parts of progressive, interfaith and intercultural organizations and individuals therein represent the future, a better future for all. Change in thought and deed starts at the individual level, at understanding, and it is up to progressive political and religious people such as

Suveyda and Zahir and groups such as Bridge, the IC and the KTCC to encourage acceptance of American diversity in regards to national, religious, and socio-cultural identities and interfaith/intercultural relations.

In contemporary Southeast communities such as Knoxville and Atlanta it is paramount for people of all faiths and both ethnic and cultural backgrounds to come together and "[create] a promising path forward" (Jones 2008:17). As will be discussed later, certain individuals, groups, and organizations are spreading much-needed awareness and knowledge of their heritage and unique identities while integrating into American culture and celebrating diversity through attempts to build newer, stronger, more tolerant communities. It is through culture, "a [formative] set of understandings and a consciousness under active construction by which individuals interpret the world around them," construct their various identities, and "use to implement or to stage their daily life" (Fox 1990:10,12). Pluralists, especially religious pluralists, "believe in their own traditions," religious and cultural, yet simultaneously avoid otherization through their "[belief] 'in a society where people from different backgrounds have the freedom and the right to live by their own traditions'" in a culturally diverse and pluralistic atmosphere of "equal dignity and mutual loyalty" (Jones 2008:23). "This new path forward," a path forged by "a progressive coalition of left and center" made up of peoples of a variety of identities and religious and political affiliations, represents "maturation [and] a new stage of development with regard to religion in American public life" (Jones 2008:17).

The "Other" and the Process of Otherization

"It is the individual who is not interested in his fellow men who has the greatest difficulties in life and provides the greatest injury to others. It is from among such individuals that all human failures spring." –Alfred Adler

When considering construction of and issues pertaining to identity, it becomes clear that relations are fundamental because "it is only in relation to others that it is possible to define oneself" (Eriksen 2004:159-160). The first step in defining one's own identity and personhood is taken through defining everybody else as "other" in contrast to oneself as "contrasts are…important for all identification" (Eriksen 2004:159). Therefore, each person "is in a way twofold," according to Ryszard Kapuściński (2008:14), in that each person is made up of two disparate "beings," one of whom "is like the rest of us" and the "other" being which is made up of unique and "different" elements. The first "being" that each person contains is defined by human universals, such as emotions, the ability to feel and sense things such as cold, heat, pain, pleasure, the inclination to want certain things and the reality of needing certain things as well, such as food, water, and shelter (Kapuściński 2008:14). The "other being…overlaps with and is interwoven with the first" but is a distinct entity "as [a] bearer of racial features, and as a bearer of culture, beliefs and convictions" (Kapuściński 2008:14).

These two "beings" are inexorably connected to each other, to reality, and to cosmology, or worldview. These elements are linked within the mind and body of each human being because "neither of these beings appears in a pure, isolated state-they coexist, having a reciprocal effect on each other" (Kapuściński 2008:14). Not only is the twofold nature of humankind reciprocal and interconnected but it pertains both to internal and external human characteristics, the bases of human identity construction, with each of

the two "beings" existing in a constant state of flux (Kapuściński 2008:14). Shifts in the contexts culture, beliefs, and group membership thus render identity both relational and situational which makes sense when one considers how cultures and nations are constantly changing, as is the very spatio-temporal contexts in which all humans are living (Eriksen 2004:159-160).

Each human can then be thought of as a microcosm (Eriksen 2004:160), the most basic unit of cultures, nations, and both humankind and the world, the units that organizations such as the KTCC and IC are targeting in order to facilitate coexistence and establish both socio-cultural and political power bases through their distinct brand of cultural marketing and Turkish Muslim identity construction. Despite the universalisms such as culture and nationality shared by people, there is an also an inherent "other" being or characteristics of "otherness" within each human person. It is not surprising, then, that people *en masse* draw lines around social groups, effectively casting individuals or entire groups or nations of people as the other based on perceived differences and even misconceptions and stereotypes. There are consequently a myriad of "others" that may be constructed and identified. Thus, Kapuściński (2008: 13) writes that "the terms 'Other' or 'Others' can be understood in all sorts of ways and used in various meanings and contexts," for example "to distinguish gender…or generation, or nationality, or religion and so on."

As each person bears internal and external characteristics which can lead to assignment of both asserted and ascribed statuses, people may be labeled as "other" based on traits and perceived physical, ethnic, or cultural differences. For example, Muslim women who dress moderately by veiling with an Islamic headscarf or *hijab* are not only

labeled as "other" based on visual analysis but are discriminated against by non-Muslim, non-Middle Eastern American citizens due to this mutual otherization and exclusivity. This type of situation reflects mutual otherization because the act of wearing an Islamic *hijab* represents a voluntary intent to mark oneself as different, as exclusively one religious affiliation-in this case Islam-in relation to all non-Islamic faiths and non-Muslims who have effectively been cast as others.

An example of this situation was discussed at the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center when the center hosted a private event celebrating International Women's Day 2010 on March 7th and twenty women, Turkish, Turkish-American, and American, alike, were in attendance. In addition to the wonderful Turkish tea and foods served at the event, the KTCC also brought in guest speakers, one of whom was a Turkish woman from Atlanta who holds an MA degree. She spoke on the subjects of women, identity, and spirituality, and after her speech, answered questions from the other women in attendance. At one point she mentioned an incident in which she was otherized by a non-Muslim, non-Middle Eastern American classmate because of her conservative Islamic dress and modest headscarf, both of which constitute cultural markers. She said that she had been out sick and had her husband go to her class to get her assignments. When he got there and told the professor whose stead he was serving in, one of her American classmates heard and said "oh, you are getting homework for that Muslim girl." She said that she was deeply hurt when her husband informed her of the comment because, despite her trying to learn her classmates names and be friendly throughout the span of the semester, her entire identity and personhood had been reduced to one anonymous and monolithic, if not derogatory, label based upon a cultural marker: "*that Muslim girl.*"

To be simplified to one label, even if it is a label that one expresses voluntarily in public such as the *hijab*, is obviously upsetting to any person because each person is complex, made up of many different life experiences and multiple identities. If each person is a microcosm made up of multiple identities, each of which is in a state of constant change and revision, it is no wonder that people are constantly trying to discover "who they really are," to reconcile their own contradictory identity elements in order to be in harmony with themselves, or try to assert their own constructed identities to other people and the world, at large, through cultural markers such as the *hijab*, and through organizations such as the Turkish cultural centers in both Knoxville and Atlanta. This dynamism and flux in regards to identity and perceptions of race, ethnicity and "otherness" works to further the fear of the unknown and misconceptions therein.

Fear of the unknown, the unlabeled and unquantified, leads people not only to have internal issues but tensions with individuals and groups whom they have labeled as "other" because "every encounter with the Other is an enigma, an unknown quality," even a "mystery" (Kapuściński 2008:15). Now is the time for the other to be discussed, to be interacted with, to be humanized, because otherization is taking place on both sides of every fence, be it religious, cultural, ethnic, or political. If people from the Middle East and the West, for instance, continue to exclude and dehumanize the cultural, religious and national other, self-perpetuating cycles of hatred, extremism, and violence will be the result. If genocides and extremist events such as suicide bombings and 9/11, even nuclear warfare, are to be prevented in the future, differences must be realized yet celebrated and understood, not cast erroneously, disparagingly, and mysteriously from both sides. The veils of mystery and misunderstanding must be torn away if the truth and, ultimately,

multidirectional reconciliation and substantive interfaith and intercultural relations, are ever to be established between various peoples, nations, and religions.

Middle Eastern People in America: Simultaneously "White" and "Other"

"Don't hate me because I am you." –Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi

Race has been a factor in American politics and identity since the formation of the nation. Moreover, race has also been a historically and contemporarily important concept in anthropology, not surprising considering that anthropology and America are both relatively recent phenomena, historically-speaking, which have been developing since the late 18th century. The early days of anthropological inquiry and research were characterized by studies of race and anthropometrics, or the studying of specific measurements of the human body. Within the field of physical or biological anthropology, for instance, Middle Eastern people have been labeled taxonomically as "Caucasian" or "Caucasoid" since the historical, nascent era of the discipline.

This makes sense when one looks at contemporary global maps of skin pigmentation levels constructed by biologists, geneticists, and anthropologists, alike (Parra, Kittles, and Shriver 2004:S55). Global maps of melanin levels thus reveal that both the geographic landmasses of the United States and the nations of the Middle East have skin pigmentation levels that range predominantly from 12-14 and 15-17, respectively, on a 1-30+ scale (Parra, Kittles, and Shriver 2004:S55). Contrary to the genetic and phenotypic reality of shared skin pigmentation levels between the North American and Middle Eastern locales, Americans of Middle Eastern descent are "not only reified as the other" even though they are labeled "as white under the law" but

denied "the benefits of white privilege" in the United States (Tehranian 2009:3). "Historically," write Marvasti and McKinney, "the U.S. government has vacillated in its definition of Middle Eastern Americans as 'white,' 'non-white' or 'other'" (2004: xii). However, being labeled as "white" has not always positively affected the lives of Middle Eastern Americans. Rather, being labeled taxonomically as racially "white" has caused these populations to represent a simplified and ignored minority while being labeled intermittently as "other" has acted to further mistrust and stereotypes.

Middle Easterners and people of Middle Eastern descent were rendered invisible prior to 9/11 and after by being labeled as racially "white" or "other" because there was no officiated "Middle Eastern" box for them to check in regards to nationality or ethnicity on government forms such as the census (Tehranian 2009:37). The Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC), for example, of the federal government only provides six "deceptively clear and uncomplicated" racial categories as follows: "[white]; [black] or African American; Hispanic or Latino; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander" (Tehranian 2009:37). The federal government's EEOC thus qualifies Turks and Middle Eastern persons such as Arabs, Persians, and Kurds "as 'white'" (Tehranian 2009:37). Moreover, despite the fact that these populations, cultures, and religious traditions therein are incredibly diverse, with many people from these populations not even appearing phenotypically "white," such as African Muslims and many Arab Muslims, they continue to be represented in the U.S. media and perceived by Americans as others and homogenized entities.

Despite Middle Eastern Americans having been officially labeled as "white" by the United States government and the Census Bureau, however, "few Americans, in

every practice, view or treat them this way" and these populations are "for the most part….defined by others as not white" (Marvasti and McKinney 2004:xii). Middle Eastern Americans simultaneously have been made invisible and cast as the other in addition to being "denied the fruits of remedial action" and ignored the fruits of the labors of the modern civil rights movement in the wake of the events of 9/11, as will be addressed in greater detail later (Tehranian 2009:3). There is thus a dualistic nature in regards to the perceptions and portrayals of Middle Eastern Americans, especially Arab-Americans, for when "they conform to social norms or achieve success in American society, they are perceived as nothing more than white," being henceforth rendered invisible, while "when they transgress, they are racialized as Middle Eastern" and even cast as terrorists (Tehranian 2009:6).

Middle Eastern people and people of Middle Eastern descent are not only literally invisible in regards to having no assigned racial category by the U.S. federal government but physically invisible in cases where the person in question appears phenotypically Caucasian (Tehranian 2009:37). For instance, John Tehranian , a man of Middle Eastern descent who happens to appear Caucasian, was not hired for a position because of what was termed a "race issue" by the faculty of the university where he was applying, a university that was looking to hire a "minority candidate" (2009:2). "'They do know I am Middle Eastern?'" Tehranian asked, to which one of the faculty members answered in a confused tone, "'Yes of course…so they consider you white'" (2009:2). "'White huh? That's not what they call me at the airport,'" Tehranian replied, being both insulted and "flabbergasted" at having been simultaneously racialized and made invisible (2009:2).

Issues of race and ethnicity, especially concerns pertaining to "whiteness," have been present not only since the founding of the nation of the United States of America but beyond, back through the beginnings of the colonial era in North America to Europe and even Rome and Greece, acting to cast people as other and incite dehumanization and violence in extreme cases throughout history (Tehranian 2009:14). "Unless otherwise specified," writes George Lipsitz (2005:67), "'Americans' means 'whites.'" The "concept of whiteness" has henceforth characterized much of the history of the United States "while simultaneously enforcing a regime of fear and oppression" based on inclusion or exclusion, whiteness or nonwhiteness: otherness incarnate (Tehranian 2009:14).

Lipsitz goes further and states that "whiteness is everywhere in U.S. culture, but it is very hard to see" (2005:67). Whiteness has then been rendered invisible, not only because the majority of the U.S. population is Caucasian and thus blind to the inherent advantages and meanings carried with it, but because the majority of people in positions of power such as the U.S. government are predominantly white elite males and the majority of movies and TV shows in America portray main characters that are white. Bewitched, Seinfeld, Sex and the City, It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and Saturday Night Live are merely a handful of examples of popular, successful television programs in the U.S. in which all of or the majority of the cast members, especially the main actors/actresses, are Caucasian. The power, prevalence, and invisibility of whiteness serve to advance the lives of Caucasian people while actively deteriorating the lives of people perceived to be non-white, such as Arab-Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, and Turkish-Americans, in the U.S. As previously mentioned, "the concept and boundaries of race remain vital to understanding"

American society, causing "whiteness" as a concept to "[transcend] its chromatic meaning" and "[weave] itself into the fabric of social, political, and economic life" while at the same time "[remaining] an elusive, abstract, and even absurd concept with immense power" (Tehranian 2009:14).

During the colonial era in America, more than eighty-five percent of the colonists inhabiting the area were "English-speaking Calvinist Protestants" (Hutchinson 2003:21). Thus, the American colonies were founded by a rather "homogenous population which had spent two centuries constructing a culture to their own specifications" despite claiming that theirs was a land of religious freedom and expression (Hutchinson 2003:21). This narrow and socially constructed cultural perspective ultimately catalyzed "nativist and other negative responses to the post-1820 diversification" observed in the U.S. (Hutchinson 2003:21). The late 1800s and early 1900s witnessed massive waves of immigrants, many of whom came to the United States from European nations perceived to be "non Anglo-Saxon" such as Italy, Poland, Ireland and Germany (Tehranian 2009:14-15). The post-1880 excess of twenty-three million Europeans who entered the United States were viewed by Americans as "biologically different" and not white, especially within the ranks of the "wealthy, U.S. born Protestant elite" and scientific racist groups such as the infamous eugenics movement of the early 20th century (Brodkin 2005:41-43).

The labeling of persons who were phenotypically Caucasian, such as Jewish, Catholic, Irish and German immigrants, as "not white" in the 19th and 20th centuries in America reflects how race itself is not biologically but socio-culturally, politically, and even religiously constructed. Just as early immigrants were racialized in particular wars

relative to the category of whiteness, so too were Muslims. Muslims and Islam continue to be misunderstood and discriminated against for the same reasons from the 19th century onset of Muslim immigration until the contemporary era in the United States. From the mid-19th century on, writes Curiel (2008:46-47), "Islam was publicly disparaged for two reasons: (1) Americans knew little about Islam" and "(2) most of what Americans knew about Islam was filtered through the lens of war."

The crisis of identity caused by white, U.S. born Americans being faced with Native Americans, African slaves, and incoming waves of European immigrants from the late 1800s on led to reassessments of racial and ethnic identities, some of which were positive and some of which were negative (Wander, Martin, and Nakayama 2005:30-33). One notable early 20th century voice of reason and anti-racist, anti-eugenic sentiment was Franz Boas, cultural anthropologist and founder of the American form of holistic, four-field anthropology (Erickson and Murphy 2008:93-96). Boas propagated many ideals that would not only change the future of anthropology but even influence the American civil rights and native peoples movements, such as the inherent value of human experience and knowledge, the importance of local, indigenous knowledge and history, the uniqueness of each culture history, and the constructed nature of racism (Erickson and Murphy 2008:93-96). Boas's 1910 study, "published in connection with the U.S. census of 1910," of the children of immigrant populations "undercut the racists and nativists by demonstrating the immigrants' ability to adapt to the dominant culture" (Hutchinson 2003:187).

Boas also developed the precursor to the renowned American "melting pot" ethos through his "idea that culture should be thought of as an integrated, whole, an entity that

must be understood in its own terms" which should be celebrated and integrated into the identities of individuals and the ideologies of societies as opposed to assimilated and "[becoming] melted into something radically different" (Hutchinson 2003:187). It is this ideal Boasian model of interfaith/intercultural relations and celebration of diversity that the KTCC and IC uphold and that could help resolve the problems of discrimination and intolerance in pluralistic nations such as the U.S, elements which lead to otherness, radicalization, extremism, and violence. However, even in contemporary post-Boasian, post-civil and women's rights movement American society, people-such as Middle Eastern and Turkish Americans who often appear physically white in addition to having been labeled as "white" or "Caucasian" by the United States government are not only denied the privileges of "whiteness" but are cast as the mysterious and exoticized "other," an other to be feared, ignored, and even hated as a result of broadly disseminated stereotypes and misconceptions. Unfortunately, because Americans continue to be misinformed about Islam, they not only otherize Muslim populations but construct further misconceptions and homogenized perceptions of them.

"Since [9/11], all Middle Eastern Americans" and Muslims and Middle Eastern Muslims abroad "have become the object of greatly enhanced and unwanted attention, particularly from Americans with power and influence" (Marvasti and McKinney 2004: x). Unfortunately, increased interest and attention have led to a multitude of stereotypes and misconceptions pertaining to Muslim, Middle Eastern, and Middle Eastern Muslim people. These instances of stereotyping, which will be discussed in depth later, include "representations of Middle Easterners as barbaric terrorists, loathsome misogynists, and religious lunatics" which arise as a result of broadly disseminated misconceptions, errors

and gross oversimplifications that "are tolerated because of negative public opinion toward the Middle East" which simultaneously "help to ossify and further perpetuate them" (Tehranian 2009: 90). This *Islamophobia*, or anti-Muslim sentiment, is common in the U.S. and polls indicate that "many Americans continue to be uncomfortable with the presence of Muslims in America" (Smith 2010:188).

The ultimate paradox that this thesis exemplifies is the fact that "the Middle Eastern question lies at the heart of the most pressing issues" of the contemporary United States, a multiethnic nation that has yet to resolve issues of difference and identity in regards to gender, religion, race, ethnicity, and culture, yet, John Tehranian (2009:3) writes that with the exception of *Islamophobia*, or fear of/hatred for Islam, "little attention is focused on our domestic Middle Eastern population and its place in American society." It is thus the responsibility of anthropologists, political scientists, historians, and ethnographers to bring to light the historical and modern contributions of Middle Eastern Americans, their current life experiences and issues that they are facing. It is also the duty of these professionals as students of humanity to correct misunderstandings and stereotypes in the United States by raising awareness of the cultural and religious pluralisms that exist not only in regards to the Southeast but in relation to the incredibly rich and varied cultures and religious traditions of Middle Eastern people and persons of Islamic faith.

It is also paramount to reveal that in addition to the U.S. media and government treating Islam and the Middle East as the other, practitioners of Islam and governments and media in nations of the Middle East portray non-Muslims in the West as other, effectively fostering mutual misunderstanding and intolerance. Muslim Americans,

Middle Eastern Americans, and Turkish Americans are literally caught in the crossfire. Not only does the U.S. media and government need to actively ameliorate the representations of Islam and the Middle East that regularly occur but the medias and governments of Middle Eastern nations and Muslim peoples need to realize that discrimination is not uni-directional and that for the East/West, Muslim/non-Muslim tensions to be resolved that misunderstandings and misrepresentations need to stop being publicized and perceived from both sides.

Before 9/11 in the US, A Brief History of Muslims and Middle Easterners in America

"But the history in these pages will require a popular reassessment of America and our relation to Arab and Muslim culture. It's not 'their' culture, but 'ours.' American culture." –Jonathan Curiel (2008: xvii)

Modern Muslim, Turkish, and Middle Eastern Immigration to the U.S.

In addition to the 18th and 19th century imported Muslim West African slaves and waves of European populations who immigrated to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th century, Middle Eastern immigrants also began to constitute a growing presence in modern American society. Immigrants from the Middle East have predominantly been coming to the United States since the 19th century, the largest proportion of which are "Arab immigrants from more than twenty countries," many of whom practice Christian religious traditions (Marvasti and McKinney 2004:x). Most of these Arab immigrants have been settling in Dearborn, MI, a suburb of Detroit (Curtis 2009:54). However, during the course of fieldwork many Middle Eastern Muslim people

in Knoxville said outright that many Arab and Middle Eastern people are, in fact, starting to increasingly come to the southeastern U.S., specifically Knoxville. Some of these incoming Middle Eastern and Arab people are thus coming to Knoxville from Dearborn, MI, as Zahir's wife (who wished to remain unnamed) told me over tea one afternoon.

"It seems to me that not only are the number of Iraqi refugees but those of Arabs, Middle Easterners, and Muslims in general are on the rise in the U.S.," I stated as I sipped my tea while letting my eyes roam and ultimately settle on a beautiful rug with striking floral patterns and black and red borders, "even in Knoxville."

"I must say that I do not attend mosque regularly, there are only two or so in Knoxville," Zahir's wife began to explain, "but I do attend the annual Eid al-Fitr prayers and celebration which are hosted by Anoor Mosque. Isn't that right by where you live?"

"Yes, it is two blocks from my apartment," I answer.

"Yes, well, the space is small, as you know," she continued, "so in recent years they have had to hold the Eid prayers at the Knoxville Convention Center. Many people who do not regularly attend mosque, such as myself, make sure to attend Eid. So the numbers of people in attendance are always larger than expected, however, in recent years I would say that the Arab and Muslim populations are expanding more than ever before."

"Are they coming directly from the Middle East," I prod, "or from Dearborn, MI?"

"Both. The entire Arab, Middle Eastern, and Muslim populations in Knoxville are growing. The Knoxville expo center couldn't even fit all of us for Eid prayers this past

year. I don't think this will last long, though, I doubt the Iraqis, for example, will stay, even with their green cards. Iraq is improving. They are holding democratic elections."

Zahir's wife and other Middle Eastern Muslim people in Knoxville have been noticing the increase in Arabs, Middle Easterners, Turks, and Muslims of late. It is important to reiterate that the incoming refugees from Turkey and the Middle East do not get to choose where they are resettled, rather, the organizations such as Bridge Refugee Resettlement Services would be the ones to make such decisions. Zahir and his wife were not able to offer me reasons as to why Muslims and Middle Eastern people from abroad and from within the U.S. are flooding into Knoxville. Zahir's wife said that she does not believe their numbers, especially the Iraqis, will continue to increase but she did not say why. Based on my research and literary synthesis, I disagree with her. I believe the populations of Arabs, Turks, Middle Easterners, and Muslims (and combinations therein) will continue to rise. The literary synthesis which follows backs up my claims.

The post 1965 era of "new immigration" in the U.S. witnessed "a new wave of Muslim immigrants," writes Curtis (2009:63-64), "and some of them brought critical attitudes towards U.S. foreign policy," especially issues with the post-1948 creation of Israel. It is a paradox that there is a great deal of historical and contemporary anti-American sentiment in the Middle East yet the same actions that caused these feeling and perspectives, mainly U.S. involvement in foreign, Middle Eastern affairs, have also led to increasing numbers of Middle Eastern people to come to the U.S., especially as refugees. There has been a marked increase in the numbers of incoming Middle Eastern immigrants since 1965 in the United States, mostly due to the Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA) of 1965 (Foner1985: 709) which marked the end of the "quota

system" which limited the numbers of incoming immigrants not only from the Middle East but from Latin America, Asia, and Africa, as well (Curtis 2009:xi; Hutchinson 2003:224).

Currently, more than 65% of Muslim immigrants in the U.S. are first generation Americans, with 39% of this total having arrived in the U.S. since 1990 (Jones 2008:115). What is more, the majority of Middle Eastern immigrants who have been entering the US are not only "both richer and better educated than the average American" (Curtis 2009:xii) but these new immigrants stand in stark contrast to the predominantly white, "almost entirely poor and often illiterate immigrants that came from Europe a century or more ago" (Gans 1997:885). This is exemplified through the fact that the majority of Iraqi refugees entering the U.S. since 2008 were professionals with careers in their native country (Alapo 2008; CWS 2008:1), as I was told multiple times by executive director of Bridge Refugee Resettlement Services, Marilyn Bresnan, and through the preponderance of students coming to the U.S. from Turkey and the nations of the Middle East.

While many early Muslim immigrants "chose to give up their religious identities," akin to how early European immigrants anglicized their last names, the post-1965 Muslim immigrants have generally retained their Muslim identities and Islamic faith (Curtis 2009: 50; Hutchinson 2003:215). Not only have newly arrived Muslim immigrants, refugees and students retained their Muslim identities and belief in Islam, but many of them are using the diversity (Bhutto 1998:107) and adaptability (Shahrour 1998:141-142) of Islam to their advantage as a base and impetus for progressive religious action, in the case of Turks' involvement with the IC and KTCC, and even progressive

democratic action, through participation in political campaigns or promotion as liberal Islam calls for "'full participation of its followers in activities that help humanity achieve peace and justice'" (Kurien 2001:276).

This is a common trend in that "religion and religious identity become more important for immigrants" and other diasporic populations, leading them to "[mobilize] along religious lines" and engage in intercultural/interfaith dialogue and politics in their communities (Kurien 2001:265,278). For example, every Muslim student with whom I am acquainted on the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, campus unanimously and publicly supported Barack Obama and his democratic campaign for the U.S. presidency in 2008 and many of them continue to wear Obama t-shirts and campaign stickers or patches on school items such as laptops, computer bags, and book bags. Interestingly, as the Southeast is known as the most religious ("Bible Belt") area of the nation, incoming immigrants, refugees, and students from the Middle East and Turkey who practice progressive, liberal forms of Islam not only feel comfortable mobilizing in religiously sanctioned and appropriate ways but their acceptance is facilitated and accepted by the larger non-Muslim, non-Middle Eastern, non-Turkish native-born American populations and communities because religion is such an influential and entrenched element of southeastern U.S. society (Kurien 2001:279).

By the 1990s the population to grow the most dramatically in the U.S. was that of Muslims, with the most conservative estimates ranging from 2-4 million practicing Muslim Americans, a number that is still on the rise (Hutchinson 2003:224). However, in the immediate wake of 9/11 as a result of discrimination and media misrepresentations, many Middle Eastern Americans initially changed their names to Anglicized forms and

people “of Muslim faith [refrained] from prayer of the donning of head scarves” both in public and private settings and “men [avoided] wearing facial hair” (Tehranian 2009:6). Despite the initial reticence of some Muslims to express their Islamic faith in U.S. public forums, the intense post-9/11 focus in Islam and the Middle East has conversely led to many Americans becoming more educated about and aware of Muslim and Middle Eastern people in the U.S. and not just misled by skewed and generalizing news and media portrayals of these populations.

It was not merely landmark historical events such as the 1948 creation of the state of Israel and the events of September 11, 2001, that had been detrimental to relations between the U.S. and nations and peoples of the Middle East (Said 2001). Historically, there has been a considerable amount of anti-Western and anti-American sentiment in the Middle East in addition to a great deal of anti-Islamic and anti-Middle Eastern in the U.S. and other Western nations such as those in Europe with large Muslim populations, especially Britain and France (Said 2001). These perspectives, in addition to the extant Islamophobic, anti-Muslim, anti-Middle Eastern perspectives and racism found in the U.S., thus have their roots in history (Kurien 2001:282). Events and ideas from history continue to influence relations between and representations of both the East and the West. For instance, tensions between the U.S. and Turkey came to a head when a U.S. congressional panel voted upon a resolution that would define the 1915 Ottoman Empire’s mass killings of deported ethnic Armenians as “genocide,” a resolve which is recognized internationally by more than 20 other nations yet prompted rallies, protests and angered responses from Turkish government officials such as PM Recep Tayyip

Erdogan, who said not only that the claims were false but that the "the resolution would harm Turkish-U.S. relations" (Head 2010).

Animosity between the West and Middle East began in the Middle Ages when the Crusades were raging and the territory of "European Christendom" were "rightly recognized as a rival-a world faith, with a sense of mission much like their own" and the followers of which "also believed that they were the possessor's of God's final revelation" that held an implicit "duty" to proselytize and convert the world (Lewis 1995:273-274). The centuries after the Middle Ages witnessed a pronounced increase in the sophistication and advancements in the West and "a long period of almost unrelieved Muslim retreat before Christian power" and the West which lasted through the 19th century (Lewis 1995:275-277). Lewis (1995:341) details that World War I was "the culmination of the retreat of Islam before the advancing West," another historical instance which added fuel to an already burning anti-Western flame in the Middle East, while the years 1918-1939 witnessed the collapse of the "old order" of the Middle East (Lewis 1995:341-342) and a new world power, the United States, was on the (Lewis 1995:343).

The rising influence and power of the U.S. combined with a marked decline in Turkish and Middle Eastern societies, catalyzed by European colonialism and Euro-American wars from the 19th through the 20th century, and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 thus led to prominent anti-Western sentiment in the Middle East (Esposito 1998:175). For Bass (2010) cites Newsweek's Jon Meacham in that "'history is to a country what memory is to an individual.'" Anti-Western, especially anti-American, sentiments in the Middle East have not disappeared in the recent and contemporary eras,

rather, they have strengthened as a direct result of U.S. intervention in the Middle East. The most obvious example of foreign U.S. intervention in the Middle East, of course, is the recent war on terror which has led to increasing waves of refugees, especially those from Iraq and Afghanistan, and intense anti-American sentiment not only in the Middle East but in Turkey and European nations, as well (Yamour 2007).

U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has also led to a great deal of antipathy, demonstrations, protests, and increased political polarization not only among American citizens but among American politicians who have shed the bonds of propriety and decorum and have been publicly fighting, even threatening each other, in the case of Sarah Palin's Facebook page which featured crosshairs marking 20 of her "political targets" (Rich 2010). Tensions between the West and the Middle East are always revisited, reflected and highlighted by conflict. Tensions are reflected, for example, through the critical reactions that many of my Muslim friends have posted on social networking sites such as Facebook in regards to the U.S.'s response to the Israeli government's killing of at least ten unarmed humanitarian civilians in international waters on May 31st 2010 in which President Obama said that the loss of life was "regretted" yet distastefully made no mention of Israel or the ramifications and legal consequences of the nation's overtly forceful actions (Evans 2010). University students from the Middle East and Turkey appreciate the American tradition of free speech, and they enact this right in their critiques of decisions and responses promoted by the U.S. government and through related posts, frequently reactions to current international and U.S. news (religious, political, humanitarian, etc.), on social networking sites.

It is clear that the nations of the East and the West have had a great deal of conflict and not only religious but cultural and political disagreements. However, in contemporary times the world is more interconnected than ever, economically, financially, politically, and religiously. The younger generations of Muslim Americans, Turkish Americans and Middle Eastern Americans are coming together increasingly, especially in contexts such as universities, social gatherings (both real and virtual, in the case of social networking sites), and interfaith/intercultural and faith-based organizations, befriending each other, and seeking to correct the wrongs of the past. Islam, like Christianity, has reached every country in the world and Muslims now make up around 25% of the world's total population (Ahmed 1982: 523). Continuing to misconstrue and misrepresent each other only acts a detriment to the world, a world in which nuclear weapons exist and have been used in the past.

If the looming possibility of a "clash of civilizations" or a "new Cold War" between nation-state systems of the East and West are to be prevented than the governments and media networks in both the East and West need to attempt to understand each other and accept their differences (Kurzman 1998:3). To start, the Middle East needs to stop perceiving and representing nations of the West such as the U.S. as lascivious and ungodly, as the vast majority of people in the U.S. are affiliated with a religious tradition, and nations such as the U.S. need to not only represent Islam as a monolithic "religion with threatening images of theocracy and terrorism" (Kurzman 1998:3). Currently, both sides are at fault. The only way to correct these perceptions and reveal the misrepresentations and part-for-whole stereotypes occurring frequently on both sides, those which cause hate and extremism, is to begin at the ground-level through

educating individuals. Not only are progressive individuals working actively to raise awareness of the diversity found within Islam and the Middle East and the historical and contemporary presence and contributions of incoming Muslim, Middle Eastern and Turkish people, be they students, immigrants or even refugees, but institutions such as the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and organizations such as the IC and KTCC are working to effect multidirectional change, as well.

CHAPTER TWO

LIFE EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIM PEOPLE IN THE SOUTHEAST U.S.

Ethnographic research for this thesis was conducted with Muslim participants from Turkey and the Middle East over the course of four months in both Knoxville, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia. I attended more than ten events and interviewed fifteen people, either informally or formally (or both), for this project from January to March of 2010. In both southeastern contexts the main population of focus was Turks. Turks with whom I engaged were Muslim and either immigrants or students (or both). Suveyda Karakaya, my main Turkish interviewee, friend, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, doctoral student, and Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center staff member, told me that there are about 50 Turkish families in Knoxville, TN, while an estimate given to me by Tarik Celik, executive director of the Istanbul Center of Atlanta, indicated that the metro Atlanta Turkish population is over 3,000 persons and the IC's website indicates that the number of Turks in Atlanta is around 10,000 (Istanbul Center Website 2010). I conducted a few brief, informal interviews with Suveyda and was either invited by her to or engaged with her at multiple events in Knoxville, such as a KTCC trip to the Smoky Mountain Children's Home in order to donate clothing, an Islamic birthday party hosted by a (Turkish) friend of Suveyda's for her child at the West Hills apartment building community center, the KTCC's Women's Day Event, numerous Turkish cooking classes hosted by the KTCC at the University of Tennessee's International House, and the University of Tennessee's Religious Diversity Dialogue Event. I also interviewed

Suveyda formally once upon invitation at her private residence. The interview lasted for an hour and a half and was recorded digitally with her agreement.

In addition, I interviewed staff and attended events hosted by the Istanbul Center of Atlanta, GA. I conducted both informal and formal interviews with staff at the IC. Formal interviews conducted with the IC staff included prominent figures such as their executive director, Tarik Celik, and their humanitarian program project director, Ali Boztas. I was also given the opportunity to speak with Debi West, a local Atlanta teacher and artist who went on one of the coveted annual trips to Turkey that are funded by the IC. In addition to interviews, I also attended multiple events, both private (invitation-only) and public, hosted by the IC from January-March 2010, such as an informal (monthly) dialogue night, a formal distinguished speaker event featuring former Assistant Secretary to State and former US Ambassador to Turkey, Morton Abramowitz, and a formal, by-invitation KTCC dialogue dinner which was funded by the IC but co-hosted by the IC and the IC's sister-organization, the KTCC, in Knoxville during the fall of 2009.

In Knoxville, TN, the secondary population of focus was that of Middle Eastern refugees, mainly those from Iraq and Afghanistan. There are over 100 Iraqi refugees in Knoxville, the vast majority of which have arrived independently or as part of a family unit since 2008, and they constitute one part of the secondary refugee population. All incoming refugees in Knoxville are resettled by Bridge Refugee Resettlement Services, a local ecumenical organization with whom I worked during the course of my research. I interviewed the director, Marilyn Bresnan, twice and through my contacts at Bridge was able to attend a gathering in which many Iraqi refugees close to my age were present.

The other refugees with whom I interacted are a husband, Zahir, and wife who came to the United States as Afghan refugees from Pakistan in the early 1990s. They represent my other two main Knoxville interviewees. I have known Zahir and his wife for years and they are not only interview participants but personal friends of mine. I have regularly stopped by their businesses over the years to peruse their interesting international items and to sit and enjoy tea and Mediterranean food from his restaurant while we discuss everything from our own personal lives to religion, politics, human rights and current issues. I interviewed Zahir and his wife informally more than five times from January-March 2010 and conducted one formal interview in March. During informal interviews I jotted down notes while having relaxed, relatively undirected discussions. The formal interview I conducted lasted four hours and during the course of the structured, directional discourse I took heavy notes.

My body of research not only indicated that Muslim populations come to the US for a variety of reasons but that these peoples are diverse unto themselves-culturally, religiously, and politically-as are the modes in which they integrate and adapt to life in the southeastern US. There are thus many commonalities and differences that abound among Muslim populations from the Middle East and Turkey who find themselves in either Knoxville, TN, or Atlanta, Georgia. I begin by discussing Middle Eastern people who arrived as refuges from Iraq, and in one case, Afghanistan. I reveal how their status as refugees, fleeing conflict and being subjected to both discrimination and infantilization, leads them to both seek integration among surrounding American communities in distinctive ways while also reinscribing their diversity, exclusivity, and uniqueness as Middle Eastern Muslims.

One obvious commonality is that they are all Muslim, not only because Muslims are my research population of focus but because all but one participant with whom I interacted (a Christian Iraqi refugee) practiced Islam, and another is that they are all involved directly or indirectly with universities, refugee services providers and cultural institutions that simultaneously work to integrate them into the larger context of the Southeast while serving as sites of identity formation and solidification, in this case being Middle Eastern Muslim or Turkish Muslim identity. Bridge Refugee Resettlement handles all incoming refugees in Tennessee, for example, while more than half of Knoxville's immigrant Turkish population directly works with the KTCC as volunteers or event attendees.

Muslims in the southeastern US are actively engaged in processes of outreach and efforts at integration both at the individual and group levels through cultural institutions such as refugee resettlement agencies and organizations such as the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center and the Istanbul Center of Atlanta. Interestingly, they also engage in various activities and practices which reaffirm their identities as Muslims with distinctive cultural beliefs and practices. One major commonality among the participants is their status, for almost all of them are well-educated elites and the majority (especially those enrolled at universities) are young and in their early to mid-twenties. Despite the shared patterns and commonalities among participants, all of them also differ greatly. For instance, the refugees generally come to flee persecution and danger while immigrants come for financial and education reasons, and to improve their quality of living, as do incoming students who hail from the Middle East and Turkey. Both the commonalities and differences are echoed throughout this thesis but are targeted specifically in this

chapter. I begin by discussing refugees, starting with the Iraqis then the Afghans in Knoxville, TN. I then address Suveyda Karakaya, a doctoral student from the democratic Islamic nation of Turkey, an interesting figure as she exemplifies her homeland being neither entirely Arab or Muslim yet not completely European or Western, either.

The Iraqis, the Shah family, and Suveyda Karakaya are key figures in my research as they are good examples of the diversity, difference, and commonalities which abound within and among Muslim populations in the southeastern U.S. and within the religion of Islam. The Shahs and Suveyda, people from the Middle East and Turkey who came to the U.S. with privileges of money and, in Suveyda's case, advanced degrees, also reflect the narrow scope and class of participants of this case study in addition to the variability and the current contributions and advancements that Muslim people are making in the Southeast, with the Shahs owning two successful businesses, being involved with the American-Afghan Chamber of Commerce (AACC), utilizing their transnational and international networks to make a difference in Pakistan and their homeland of Afghanistan, and their intent to found a humanitarian organization of their own. Similarly, Suveyda is working to write a dissertation in political science that highlights the history and contemporary situation that are Turkish-American relations.

Refugees

"The term 'refugee' shall apply to any person who[,]…owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his[sic] nationality and is unable or, owing to such a fear, is unwilling to avail himself[sic] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his[sic] former

habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such a fear, is unwilling to return to it." -1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (111: 26-28).

The intense focus on Islam and the Middle East in the post 9/11 era has not only reshaped relations between the East and West but the very demography of nation-states therein. "Since ancient times people have been forced to flee their homes," details Fullerton (2004:136), "and seek refuge in other lands." For example, in 2003 President Bush launched Operation Iraqi Freedom, which ultimately led to Iraqi displacement and massive refugee flows into the U.S. As of January 2009, the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR 2009:2) notes that there are over 1.9 million refugees originating from Iraq who are displaced around the world. In fact, the 2008 *UNHCR Global Trends* document states that almost half (45%) of all refugees under the UNHCR's responsibility come from Afghanistan and Iraq (2009: 2). O'Donnell and Newland's January 2008 report on the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) website reveals that 202 Iraqi refugees came into America during the fiscal year of 2006.

Since 2007, the numbers of Iraqis that have entered America have totaled in the tens of thousands because of the conflict in the country, violence that has not only led to the deaths of Iraqi people but to the deterioration of Iraqi cultural traditions such as the Iraqi wedding ring game, al-Mih'haibis, which I describe below. Amnesty International's *Rhetoric and Reality: the Iraqi Refugee Crisis* report states that the U.S. received 753 Iraqi refugees between 2003 and 2006 and 1,608 during the 2007 fiscal year (2008:56). In the Church World Service's (CWS) September 2008 immigration and refugee program report entitled *Iraqi Refugees: Finding Their Way in Their New Country*, the CWS

organization writes that over 11,000 Iraqis had come into the United States for resettlement in the eleven months prior [to September of 2008] alone (Roberson 2008: 3). Only a small proportion of these Iraqis have come to Knoxville.

Tennessee is ranked 18th out of the top 20 states receiving incoming immigrant and refugee populations, however, other southeastern states are ranked even higher such as North Carolina, Florida, and 4th-ranked Georgia, whose growth in regards to these populations was an astounding 218 percent from 2000-2005 (Drever 2009:66). Iraqi refugees in the U.S., specifically Knoxville, TN, were selected for this study as they represent the generation and solidarity of both individual and group identities in a new socio-cultural, religious, and political context in which they must adapt, not only resituating their physical bodies but their identities, their Islamic practices and boundaries, and the ways in which they express their own culture in the Southeast. The nascent resettled Iraqi refugee population in Knoxville now numbers in the 100s and their presence, as mentioned previously, is not only growing but has been attracting notice from other Muslim populations and native-born, non-Muslim Americans in the Knoxville community (Mrs. Shah, Personal Communication: February 2010).

Iraqi Refugees in the U.S.

I got out of my car and walked through the dark, cold February night toward my fellow American UTK student and friend Fanny's apartment. Like me, she has utilized her connections at the university to get involved with Bridge Refugee Resettlement Services. That night she was hosting a party for newly arrived refugees from Iraq. I entered her apartment and was greeted not only by the scents of a wonderful and varied spread of foods but by the presence of fifteen or so Iraqi refugees. I immediately

approached the Iraqis and we exchanged greetings. All but two of them were fluent in English and in their early to late twenties. Some of them even had advanced degrees, degrees which are not recognized by the United States government (Roberson 2008:1-2), as Fanny intimates to me under my breath. Later the Iraqis themselves told me the same. Many of them not only had degrees but many were at university-as either undergraduates or graduate students-prior to leaving Iraq. All but two were relatively fluent in English, having been well educated in Iraq.

The two that could not speak English were a man and a woman, a couple in their late 40s and who appeared more rough than the rest. They looked as if they had endured many troubles and were dressed far more moderately, if not shabbily, from the rest. All of the Iraqis have been in America for a short time, between 2-8 months. Despite the incredible hardships and terrors that these refugees have been through, having family members and friends (even sometimes themselves) tortured, killed, or disappeared and having lost their old ways of life (networks, careers, degrees) completely, not to mention the difficult experience of making it to the U.S. as a refugee from a conflicted Middle Eastern nation (Yamour 2007), they managed to be very friendly and appreciative of the party, the company, and the interest we American students present express toward their stories and conversation as we shared food, drink, and lively conversation.

After we had eaten talked for a while it became clear that we needed some kind of activity to invigorate the party. An Iraqi who had been in the U.S. the longest, a period of 8 months, who spoke perfect English in addition to appearing American through his designer clothes, close-cropped, styled hair, and the name that he introduced himself as, John, announced that we should all play an Iraqi game. “So your name is John?” I asked

him quietly as he went to put his stylish black pea coat in Fanny's bedroom. "No, my name is Hasan," he explained openly with a laugh as I repeated it, "but people usually can't say it or spell it as you did so I go by 'John.'"

"Well I am an anthropologist who researches Muslim, Middle Eastern and Turkish populations," I replied, "so thank you."

"I am not Muslim," he whispered to me before we are called back in to the living room, "I am Christian."

The other Iraqis instantly know which game John had in mind, and one of the other men looked at me and eagerly says "we will play the Iraqi wedding ring game," prompting me to ask how to play. "The room will be divided into two teams of any number of people," he said happily, "and one ring is used for the game." One of his fellows proceeded to take one of his rings off and handed it to the other. He then explained to the room that the point of this game, known in Iraq as al-Mih'haibis, is to hide the ring from the other team in one of the hands of a team member. Each team seeks to regain the ring. The team which does not possess the ring picks a representative and this person, with or without the help of his or her team, has to psychologically analyze the other team's members' faces and outstretched hands and try to weed out all of the non-ring holding team members. When the representative believes that he or she has the other team's ring holder, he or she points to both or one of the hands and says "show me the ring" in English or "bat" in Arabic. All the while, traditional Iraqi songs such as al-Murab'aa are chanted in Arabic, laudatory songs which praise the victorious team.

The room was divided in half and each team was made up in equal parts of both Iraqis and Americans. The directions were still unclear to many of us Americans in the

room but the Iraq refugees assured us that we would get the hang of it after playing for ourselves. My team was the first to hold the ring, so John, as our team leader, announced that he needed a jacket or blanket to the confusion of the Americans present. “We will use the snuggie,” John announced as he picks up the odd blanket-type object that we had shown to the Iraqis moments before and the entire room broke into vociferous riffs of laughter. The snuggie was then used to cover the hands of the ring-holding team’s members as the leader passed over each of their hands, dropping the ring into one hand of a team member along the way. Once the ring was hidden covertly in a teammate’s hand, John announced to the other team that we are ready. One of Iraqi women decided to be the first to choose from the other team and she stood up, turning a discerning eye upon each of us from the other team. The game depends on the shrewdness of the ring seeker, exemplified as she narrowed down the outstretched hands, finally settling upon one pair and exclaimed “show me the ring!” Everybody in the room, Iraqi and American alike, screamed and shouted excitedly as the hand is unfolded and the ring met our eyes.

After a few rounds of al-Mih’haibis, another one of the Iraqis told me in hushed tones about the cultural significance of this Iraqi game. He said that when the fasting of the holy month of Ramadan is broken by the celebratory Eid-al-Fitr meal, that families begin to play al-Mih’haibis, a community-based folklore game. “Iraqi families will break the fast around 7 in the evening,” he told me, “then we play the wedding ring game from around 10pm until 3 or even 4 in the morning. These games can get huge, with alleys and even whole neighborhoods, towns, and cities dividing into large teams and playing all night.” There are even people who have gained renown in their communities, towns, and cities due to their ring-seeking abilities.

However, despite the importance of this game-which the Iraqis told us has been played for more than 80 years-the cultural tradition of playing of al-Mih'haibis after the breaking of the Ramadan fast has almost died out completely in recent years due to the war and conflicts in Iraq. After hearing this and considering what each of the Iraqis in front of me has been through, I was astounded by and appreciative of the friendliness and openness that they had shown us. I was also deeply touched to take part in the Iraqi wedding ring game, a game of paramount cultural importance and history which has all but died out in Iraq, which had been shared so readily by our new-found Iraqi friends. We ended up playing al-Mih'haibis for many hours, well into the night, in fact. Finally, the party had to end and we all hugged and exchanged vows of friendship before taking a multitude of pictures.

These younger Iraqis seemed to be adjusting to their new lives in Knoxville well and made friends quite easily. Being from urbanities and having higher socioeconomic statuses and having achieved degrees in Iraq allowed them to relate to the group of American students present at the party easily, however, there was not enough time during the party to discuss the difficulties encountered by their Iraqis during their resettlement to the U.S. Despite having helped the United States during the war, incoming Iraqi refugees have encountered considerable difficulties upon entering America since 2008. First off, they are coming to America during a time in which the economy has been unstable (Gibson 2009:1). "With the deepening recession," posts Ruggeri (2010:1), "the hurdles are even higher" for incoming refugees who "in great numbers are headed for the states that have been hardest hit by the recession." Second, these Iraqis who had careers in their

country of origin are having major problems trying to get reaccredited within their fields in the United States (Roberson 2008:1).

"The newly arrived Iraqis hope to find employment in their field," and come to America with extremely high expectations, not only because of how wealthy America is reputed to be but because of how much they all contributed to the war effort (Robinson 2008:1). "But often their professional credentials don't translate," reads the September 2008 Church World Service newsletter, "those who undertake to be relicensed need to make a living in the meantime, but doing what?" because "'many are reluctant to accept a job like hotel housekeeping'" (Robinson 2008:1).Therefore, as fieldwork and interviews with staff members at Bridge Refugee Services revealed, many of the adults, mostly males, who had professions in their native Iraq, are experiencing severe cases of downward social mobility. However, many of the Iraqi females, women who had very few career opportunities as compared to their male counterparts in Iraq, are experiencing nascent upward social mobility in America.

Given the difficulties encountered coming from the Middle East and those faced once these Iraqi individuals and families are in the U.S., it is fitting that many of the Iraqis are not only keeping to themselves but organizing themselves along cultural and religious lines (Kurien 2001:265), aspects of their identity from which they may derive pride and a sense of belonging. In the southeastern "Bible Belt," religions are already major players and accepted modes of expression and relation, and Iraqis and other incoming populations are not only acting upon their Islamic faiths but even converting to Christianity (Marilyn Bresnan Personal Communication: January 2010). This reflects how, akin to ethnicity, religion is a "resource that can bring material benefits to groups"

such as immigrants and refugees, "in host societies" (Kurien 2001:265). The process of migration and the resultant reconfirmation and resituation of multiple identities that ensue are thus traumatic and complex, leading every incoming refugee (and immigrant) to have to reconsider the very foundations of his or her "peoplehood," changing some aspects of identity while reconfirming others (Medina 1997:761).

Before these Iraqis make it to Knoxville, the local refugee resettlement organization, Bridge Refugee Services, makes many arrangements to help ease the newly arrived person or family unit into their new lives in the U.S. During several interviews, the executive director of Bridge stated that her organization finds the incoming person or people an apartment, furnishes the apartment with donations, and purchases one week's worth of groceries. Bridge staff members and volunteers pick up incoming refugees from the airport and, in the case of incoming Middle Eastern and Iraqi refugees, bring them to their new home where a traditional meal from their country is waiting to be consumed, courtesy of the local Ali-Baba's Deli in Knoxville. Bridge staff is also responsible for bringing newly arrived refugees for initial medical appointments and to the department of motor vehicles to secure driver's licenses. They also hold regular "cultural orientation" sessions for newly arrived refugees which last one week with daily workshops being held to help the refugees find employment, learn how to budget, learn how to find and rent an apartment or home and what their rights as tenants are, learn about local/native produce and nutrition, how to use the local KAT bus system, how to enroll oneself or children in schools, and they also hold sessions which counsel the refugees on mental health and issues of domestic violence.

The organization also helps the refugees to find jobs and procure vehicles and trains English as a Second Language (ESL) volunteers to tutor them. The inherent paradox herein is that while refugee service providers such as Bridge aid the refugees in order to start them on new life paths and encourage "independence" and self-sustaining practices, it is the very assistance and services that Bridge provides initially that leads incoming refugees to not only feel dependent and infantilized but continuously expect more help and even become disillusioned and angry once the services wane, as related to me by executive director of Bridge, Marilyn Bresnan. Marilyn also told me that Bridge, in efforts to put the refugees upon paths of independence, are contracted to find (entry-level) jobs for the refugees that the refugees are signatory to take and that, if the refugees refuse the job(s) - in the case of Iraqis who were professionals in their homeland and refuse to work at McDonalds or construct pallets in the U.S. - then they are "sanctioned" or cut off completely from Bridge's services and contacts, a deplorable situation which exemplifies the misunderstandings occurring within the refugee assistance system. This is a situation that has led to anger and even threats from refugees against Bridge staff which have led to attempted violence and even restraining orders (Marilyn Bresnan, Personal Communication: 2010).

Fanny used to regularly volunteer her time on a weekly basis with a specific Iraqi family. As mentioned previously, Fanny is an undergraduate at UTK in social work who, like me, volunteers her time with Bridge. She is the student who organized the party in which I met the Iraqis. The family with whom she volunteered is a unit of five individuals, a mother, father who worked as an engineer in their native Iraq, and three children ranging from one year old to nine years old. Fanny started tutoring the mother

when the family arrived in America in the spring of 2008. She tutored the mother in English for a few months before it became clear that her services were no longer wanted or necessary by the mother. “She started to cancel our sessions more frequently,” Fanny informed me one day as we chatted and sipped coffee at the Golden Roast coffeehouse in Knoxville, “it was a bit discouraging. It was also odd that the husband was fluent in English but refused to help his wife with the language and did not speak to her ever in English when I was there.”

The Iraqi family with whom Fanny tutored for about a year exemplifies the broader situation and general trends of Iraqi refugees in the U.S., mainly the shift in socioeconomic status from being professionals with careers in Iraq to coming to the U.S. as refugees for fear of persecution from helping the U.S. during the war. For the father helped the U.S. during the war, leading his family to be targeted and youngest child to be abducted by opposition forces and tortured. This severe familial emotional trauma prompted them to flee Iraq as refugees in 2008, a trauma for which none of the family members have received psychological treatment. The father cannot get reaccredited in his field without going back to college or attending relicensing courses, both of which constitute expensive and unrealistic endeavors given the family’s current situation: unemployed, unaccredited, and poor. Thus, Fanny began tutoring the two older children, Leila and Zaid, in their school work on a weekly, sometimes bi-weekly, basis. However, as of the onset of 2010, Fanny had not been in touch with the Iraqi family very much.

“The parents don’t care if the children learn English or study much anymore because they want to leave the U.S. and settle in a Middle Eastern, specifically Arab, nation,” Fanny desultorily told me during our final interview. Disruptions associated with

violence, war, migration, and downward social mobility have led many of the Iraqi families, as Marilyn and Fanny told me, to turn to their own religious and cultural traditions as coping mechanisms. Going from a life of privilege and higher socioeconomic status to the life of an unemployed, unaccredited refugee is changing perceptions of identity, gender roles and family hierarchies among the Iraqis, and for many of them, such as the case of the family with whom Fanny volunteered, these changes amount to the straw that breaks the camel's back which is why the family intended to leave the U.S. for a country where they can "at least speak Arabic" (Fanny Personal Communication: February 2010).

It is the responsibility of the U.S. not only to let more Iraqis in, given what they have sacrificed to help the war effort, but to help them more actively and efficiently once they reach the U.S. as refugees, for instance, implementing systems that allow for former professionals to get reaccredited more rapidly and cheaply (Amnesty International 2008:56). U.S. cases of Iraqi refugee resettlement and applications therein "are suffering serious delays due to the rigorous security checks to which Iraqis are being subjected to" in various countries during their travel to the U.S. due in large part to the fact that they are Middle Eastern (Amnesty International 2008:60). Moreover, "the selection process" of refugee applications "should work to include rather than exclude people because of their individual characteristics" such as medical history and appearance and should be more flexible, in general (Amnesty International 2008: 62). These hindrances are preventing "the ability of resettlement to provide a fast and effective response to the dire situation" that the Iraqis, "the most vulnerable refugees" are being subjected to (Amnesty International 2008:60).

The ways in which Iraqi refugees are being handled by the U.S. government and associated refugee resettlement services are creating a situation which breeds anger, disillusionment and resentment. The dire situation of Iraqi refugees in Knoxville is a powder keg. If the immigration and refugee services systems are not adapted to the reality of the situation soon, considering, for example, the sacrifices the Iraqis have made not only to help the U.S. in Iraq but those made to flee Iraq and the resultant hardships they face once in the U.S. as Middle Eastern refugees, then the threats which at least two of the newly arrived Iraqis have made against staff members at Bridge might come to fruition and people will get hurt. The situation of the Iraqi refugees in the U.S. highlights the need for education and more multidirectional communication among individuals and groups. Akin to the situation between the Middle East and the U.S., if the refugee service providers such as Bridge and refugees such as the Iraqis continue to miscommunicate and represent each other falsely and threaten each other then everybody loses and ultimately violence will occur.

Afghan Refugees in the U.S.: Zahir Shah

In addition to my interaction with Iraqi refugees and the refugee service provider staff that work with them at Bridge, I also conducted fieldwork among Afghan refugees in Knoxville, TN. As mentioned previously, Zahir Shah and his family own two prominent businesses, an international rug/trinkets shop and a restaurant, on prime real estate on the periphery of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville campus. I have visited the Shahs regularly - usually one or twice a month - since meeting them a couple of years ago and becoming close personal friends. The Shahs reflect the fact that the majority not

only of Middle Eastern refugees but refugees en masse in the U.S. and the world are predominantly Iraqi and Afghan (UNHCR 2008:2). They also reflect the case study's specific sample population of elite, young professionals who come to the U.S. as either refugees or immigrants from Turkey or the Middle East, in this case Afghanistan. Afghans are the largest diasporic refugee group in the world with "one out of four refugees" coming "from Afghanistan (2.8 million)," followed next by Iraqis, the second largest refugee group (1.9 million) in the world (UNHCR 2008:2). However, the Shahs are distinctive in that they were able to make it out of the refugee camp in Pakistan, the country that "is host to the largest number of refugees worldwide (1.8 million)," and come to America with enough wealth to immediately purchase and establish businesses, a rare and interesting situation for refugees, indeed (UNHCR 2008:2).

Zahir Shah was born in Afghanistan in 1969. His family was a traditional Muslim family of Turkmen ethnicity made up himself, his two brothers, and his parents. His family was part of a larger group of people of nomadic descent who originally came to Afghanistan many years before his birth from Turkmenistan. Zahir said that Afghanistan was in a state of conflict for as long as he can remember. Since his family was reasonably well off and owned lands and businesses, their wealth in the city of Kabul represented a target for both Soviet forces in the area, as this was during the time of Soviet occupation, and extremists.

"Growing up," Zahir calmly stated over tea one day in the back of his rug shop, "I remember hearing bomb blasts all of the time in Kabul. I remember asking my parents many times: who is a terrorist? Are they everywhere?" The city of Kabul remained dangerous during Zahir's youth, for once American soldiers arrived to counter the Soviet

presence because the Afghani civilians were constantly caught in the crossfire. By the time he was in eighth grade his family was warned by a neighbor to leave in the middle of the night because there were rumors circulating around the city that the Shah family was in danger.

As Zahir and I chatted, I looked around his shop. Complex and polychromatic rugs of all sorts of designs and motifs, all of which have specific tribal and familial associations and are weaved in Pakistan, met my eye. "My parents woke my brothers and me up around two in the morning. I was young so I didn't think much about it. It was 1982 and I was thirteen. I actually thought it was a kind of an adventure," Zahir explained as I take in the beauty of the rugs, the tea his wife has served us, and his story. His wife is continually running in and out fetching tea and food while intermittently sitting and taking a small part in the conversation. This is interesting to me, as is the way Zahir reacts to her inputs in the conversation, as he professes to be progressive, humanistic, and listens raptly to my ideas (and those of both the male and female friends whom I have brought in throughout our friendship) while, on the other hand, it seemed as if he did not want his wife to speak at all, reflecting his original socio-cultural context of Afghanistan in which "women are, often, second-class citizens" (Kristof 2010).

"We packed some things, gathered my brothers' and I's three dogs and some other family members in the truck and drove to a different village outside Kabul. The very next day a former neighbor contacted my father to tell him that our home had been destroyed and that there was nothing left." After escaping danger and having their home destroyed, the Shah family was internally displaced within Afghanistan for two years, moving constantly from village to village to avoid violence. "We didn't all make it. My

dog, a sensitive creature, was the first to die from the stress and uprootedness of living in exile within our own country," Zahir uttered in tone of sad yet fond remembrance, "he was a massive grey-black German shepherd."

I immediately was confused, considering that literature I had read and conversations I had with my Arab friends from Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates had always conveyed that Arabs and Middle Easterners did not care for dogs, even were disgusted by them. I once asked a friend from Ras al-Kaimah, UAE, if his family had dogs to which he responded with sarcastic laughter. "We Arabs do not have dogs. There is only one dog that Middle Eastern people and Arabs will have and that is the Saluki." Thus, when Zahir said that he had a dog that he loved very much I was incredibly interested in his explanation.

"That is interesting that you and your brothers each had your own dog," I commented, "because what I have read of Afghanistan, it seems like many Afghan children usually have dogs as pets. However, when one usually hears about people from Middle Eastern nations and cultures having abhorrence for canines." Fanny had even told me once that when she was caring for the Iraqi refugee children that she had brought them to the park one day and asked if they would want her friend to come with her pet, a dog, which caused the children to bawl and scream and call dogs "dirty" and "unclean" before being brought home in hysterics.

"Well, Afghanistan - like the Middle East as a whole and all of the parts or nations therein - is a very diverse place," Zahir clarified. "My family's tribe is originally from Turkmenistan, the east Asian steppes, so we have always had dogs. Our Turkmen ancestors were nomads and their lives were dependent on their livestock and other

animals, animals which they were in close proximity to all of the time. Dogs were always important and they were especially good to have once in Afghanistan considering the danger there. Dogs are good guards and they can signal danger and strangers by barking." Zahir's family's "Turkmen" ethnicity is thus reflective of the fact that throughout history "people of Turkish origin were spread around the European [and Middle Eastern worlds]" and that history and ethnicity play a large part in the diversity of Middle Eastern refugees and the way Islam as a religion is practiced by members of the worldwide Islamic community or *ummah* (Scolnik and Kennedy 2003: 105).

"After two years of being internally displaced we had to flee to Pakistan. We lived in Pakistan as refugees for about a decade." In 2008, the UNHCR reported that Afghans were the largest refugee population in the world, that "one out of four refugees in the world is from Afghanistan (2.8 million)" and that they "are located in 69 different asylum countries" (2008:2). The majority of the Shah family, including Zahir, remained in Pakistan as refugees from 1982 until the early 1990s. The neighboring Islamic Republic of Pakistan has hosted many refugees since its creation by the UN in 1947 and in 2008 it was "host to the largest number of refugees worldwide," most of whom were Afghans (1.8 million)" (UNHCR 2008:2). Many members of his family remain in both Pakistan and Afghanistan in addition to being scattered presently in and among the following countries around the globe: Finland, Germany, France, U.S., and Turkey. Once Zahir became an adult, he decided that he wanted to help his native Afghanistan in any way that he could, especially since the country was in a shambles after the Soviets left, leaving destruction and a perilous power vacuum in their wake. After turning twenty-

three he returned to the country to work with the United Nations rebuilding and constructing in 1992 during the post-Soviet occupation era of Afghanistan.

Despite returning to Afghanistan to do construction work with the UN, Zahir ended up having his mission changed. When factionalization and civil war broke out in neighboring Tajikistan in 1992 following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a massive influx of refugees, especially non-Muslims such as Russian and Jewish people, began to enter Afghanistan to escape poverty, violence, and ethnic cleansing in their native country. Zahir's work was immediately changed from building to food aid. Thus, he began distributing food for the UN to refugees, a cause that he supported as he himself had lived as a refugee with his family in Pakistan from the early 1980s until two months before returning to Afghanistan in 1992.

"I identify myself as an American, I have always been outspoken, and, until I was in America," elucidated Zahir, "this got me into trouble." Therefore, only two months after beginning work with the UN, Zahir and two of his fellow workers, a Swiss man and an American man, were abducted by extremist forces while en route to distribute food to incoming refugees at a nearby airport. Their vehicle was stopped and seized by radical Islamists and the three UN workers were held for three days. "We were afraid for our lives but, luckily, we were not tortured," he openly stated, "and after they realized that we knew nothing and did not pose a threat, we were released. This caused me to leave Afghanistan and I have not returned since. I don't know if it was the fact that I was working with the UN, a notoriously Western organization, and Western (Swiss and American) aid workers or if it was that I was critical of certain suspicious activities I saw,

such as planes and helicopters that shouldn't have been present, that caused me to be a target. Maybe it was all of these reasons combined. Either way, we were released."

After escaping danger and violence in Afghanistan and returning to Pakistan as a refugee for the second time, numerous family members in Afghanistan were threatened, abducted, and harmed. His brother-in-law was even kidnapped and brutally tortured, yet survived thanks to his family paying an enormous bribe in lieu of his release. All of these horrific and traumatic events led Zahir to decide to come to America from Pakistan to start a new life and a new business. He opened a shop in which he sold rugs that are made by members of his tribe. These tribal family members weave the rugs within a cottage industry system in Pakistan, where Zahir's family owns a rug-production factory. "It cost a lot but eventually I came to the U.S. and both settled and started a business in Massachusetts before coming south." After living and working in Massachusetts for several years, he and his family moved yet again, this time to Knoxville, Tennessee, in search of greater economic opportunity and lower property costs and living expenses.

Once he, his wife, and his children from a former marriage, made it to Knoxville, Zahir started two businesses, a shop and a restaurant, which are located side-by-side. Zahir's restaurant serves both Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cuisines and is decorated with objects and photographs of scenes from Turkey and from Middle Eastern nations such as Pakistan and Afghanistan. His shop sells a variety of items from the Middle East, ranging from Iranian ceramics to jewelry from Turkey and Afghanistan, from both Indian- and Pakistani-style saris and clothes to pillows and bedspreads, and, most significantly, rugs.

The effects of religious extremism and instability in Afghanistan continue to permeate Zahir's life. His father tried to return to Afghanistan this past year to resolve some land disputes only to be forced to flee back to Pakistan again. Also, last year his nephew was tortured and killed by Islamic extremists, his body left in the street for his family to find. Despite the hardships and horrors faced by Zahir and his family, he has channeled these negative and profound experiences into something positive, for he appreciates his life and business in America and is actively involved in improving the lives of people in his native Afghanistan through both his business and his ultimate aim, to create his own humanitarian or human rights group. He recently returned from a conference in Germany that was organized to boost the industry and exportation of rugs from Afghanistan, which Zahir informs me make up over 80% of the nation's annual exportation. Zahir was invited to speak at this conference by the sponsor, USAID, exemplifying Zahir's lengthy history of working with NGOs to better the economic and social situation within his home country in addition to the U.S. government's Afghan-American Chamber of Commerce (AACC). He claimed that the goal of his involvement in the Pakistani rug industry and the AACC is to help his fellow Muslims and family members in the Middle East. However, working in tandem in a corrupt system such as the Afghan government (Ritter 2010) or the exploitative Pakistani/Afghan rug industries (Pyne 2005) is fraught with complications and Zahir might soon find himself complicit and trapped between powerful opposing forces yet again, this time in America, through his dealings with the AACC and his business which depend upon utilization of the rug industry in Pakistan, an industry known for the use of child, bonded, and slave labor (Pyne 2005).

"The spatial and social displacement of people" is increasing "around the world," details Malkki (1995:495), "these population movements include enormous numbers of people who are legally classifiable as refugees." Many of these new waves of refugees, "transmigrants," are not only becoming American citizens but maintaining ties with people and institutions from their nations of origin (Glick-Schiller, Bach and Blanc-Szanton 1992:1). Zahir thus exemplifies these general patterns of continued relations, especially transnationalism, because he has many family and friends in a variety of nations of the world and he uses these contacts both to his and their advantages (Glick-Schiller, Bach and Blanc-Szanton 1992:1). However, Zahir is different from many other incoming refugees from Afghanistan in that he was wealthy enough to immediately start his own business upon reaching Massachusetts in 1995.

It is people like Zahir, wealthy former refugees who are running successful businesses abroad while maintaining connections with and strengthening the lives of their native associates, who can make real change from the bottom up starting with individual people, the building blocks of all societies. Zahir's ability to have an international business and networks which links individual ethnic rug weavers in Pakistan to America, and, as of this year, Germany and other European nations, is paramount in the transformation of the way people in the U.S. view refugees and the ways in which the government, and departments such as the AACC, address the economic and political needs of Afghan refugees in the U.S. and those who are internally displaced within Afghanistan. For local, insider knowledge such as that provided by Zahir is crucial to developing ways in which to better the lives of Afghans in both the U.S. and Afghanistan. The Shah family exemplify how coming to the U.S. as a Muslim, either Middle Eastern

or Turkish, refugee, immigrant, or student, results not only in new opportunities, identity transformations, and outreach to/interactions with native-born, non-Muslim Americans but that it also necessitates a reinscribing and reconfirmation, even resituation, of religious and cultural identities. They also show how incoming Middle Eastern refugees are working and living within national, transnational and international networks to contribute economically to the U.S. and their homelands, in the case of the Shahs working with the ACC and seeking to found their own humanitarian group aimed to help Afghans.

Progressive individuals like the Shahs are attempting to change the world in very real ways, using their networks and finances to effect real advancement and growth in local and global circles. Not only is the economy of Knoxville, TN, benefiting from the revenues generated by the Shah's businesses but individuals in both Pakistan and Afghanistan are being helped through the Shah's support of the rug weaving industry, a local cottage industry which Zahir claims to be flexible and realistic for people, especially families, to work in, through their business and associated dealings with the ACC. Middle Eastern Muslim people have always been and are continuing to make contributions to the American culture and economy and it is time that these contributions be recognized, especially considering the derogatory and hateful ways in which Islam and people of the Middle East are represented in the media and by the government in the U.S. (Kurzman 1998:3).

Suveyda Karakaya: a Student in the U.S. From a Democratic Islamic Nation

Fatima Mernissi (1987:13-14) recognizes that women being discriminated, infantilized, and denied rights, educations, and careers in Islamic nations prevent the East

from rivaling the West economically. How can the East compete with the West when women, half of the population of the Middle East, are not being as productive as they could be? (Mernissi 1987:13-14). The answer is that the nations of the East cannot compete on a level playing field with those of the West unless their women are educated and able to work, a realization which not only Middle Eastern feminists but nations such as Qatar are taking to heart (Coker 2010:A10). Qatar, for instance, is countering traditional Eastern (and Western notions of the East) norms and values and enacting an overhaul of its entire education system, especially focusing upon the importance of women's education, in an effort to combat the "economic stagnation and instability" and "religious extremism" in the area, thus reflecting a growing trend in the advancement of women's rights and the increasing numbers of women enrolled in schools and universities in nations across the Middle East, even notoriously strict nations such as Saudi Arabia (Coker 2010:A10).

Suveyda's story reflects the growing numbers of Muslim women enrolled at the university level in graduate programs, not only in Turkey and the Middle East but the U.S., in addition to the debate over and meanings of the *hijab*. She shows how a modest, religiously conservative female Muslim doctoral student from an Islamic democratic nation exemplifies the tensions of her country and the erroneous nature of many Western stereotypes relating to Muslim women while also acting upon her religion progressively in both political and humanitarian modes. She embodies the tensions of the Muslim encounter(s) with the West while simultaneously reflecting tenets and patterns of the aforementioned Gülen movement in addition to personifying progressive democratic ideals such as the importance of religious freedom.

When Westerners ponder Islam and gender relations therein, they commonly have romanticized, erroneous visions of a turbaned, elite male who holds court over a group of women, a *harem* of inferiors, unto whom he has exclusive sexual access (Ahmed 1982:523-524). In reality, the gender relations within Islam and historical and contemporary contexts in the Middle East are far more complex, for instance, pertaining to issues such as women's rights, the harem, and the discourse on the veil. The harem, for instance - a word which comes from the Arabic *haram* (forbidden) - generally means a group of "female relatives of a man" who "share much of their time and living space" as opposed to the idealized, biased Western notions of (and art depicting) the harem as inherently sexual and rife with "laxity and immorality" and "lasciviousness" (Ahmed 1982:524, 529). In addition, the veil or *hijab* is another concept that has been twisted and misconstrued by Westerners as nothing more than a symbol of women's oppression and inferiority when, in fact, the veil is a complex religious and cultural marker that is being used in many different ways by many different Muslim women, women who are on the cusp of a Middle Eastern "demographic revolution in sex roles" (Mernissi 1987:xxiv).

"It is ironic that, whereas early 20th century feminists [in the Islamic world], such as Huda Shaarawi (1879-[19]47), fought to disregard the veil," Golley relates, "we hear today of heated debates between Muslim communities and the governments" in Western countries such as France "on whether Muslim schoolgirls should be allowed to wear the veil" (2004:522). "A term, such as 'the veil', which might sound purely religious, can" also actually "be a powerful political term to denote resistance on behalf of the women who choose to wear it (Golley 2004:522). Many Muslim females, not only the religiously conservative, veil their hair because, to them, they are allowed a greater freedom:

freedom from the male gaze. For, as Malti-Douglas (2001:18) explains, "Muslim males…should avert their gaze" from strange or unrelated females but this does not mean that they always conform to this stipulation. Moreover, "sexual morality is aimed exclusively at women, who" unfortunately tend to be "blamed for any lapse" (Ali 2006: 21). "As feminists point out," details Barlas (2002:130-131), "'patriarchal religions' ascribe 'psycho-social distinctions' between women and men to biological (sexual) differences between them."

Thus, many Muslim women veil simply to avoid being sexually gawked at by their male counterparts while others like Suveyda simply wear the veil as a testament to their faith. Suveyda Karakaya, associate director of the KTCC and the director of the KTCC's women's division, is a Turkish doctoral student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Suveyda practices Islam and wears a veil/headscarf. Thus, whenever she is outside of her home and in public she is always wearing one her many silk headscarves, all of which are brightly colored and patterned, in order to be "modest and pure for her husband." The issue of the veil or headscarf is a paramount one for many Muslim women and one which has affected Suveyda's life in many ways, personal and professional. For instance, the reason she is even in the U.S. as a graduate student is because of her choice to wear her headscarf, the very exemplification of religious freedom, and American right that she values greatly and one which is not possible in Turkey.

Suveyda received her bachelor degree in English from Bogazici University, Turkey, in 2007. After working a couple of different types of internship positions after her second year of college, Suveyda came to the U.S. as an exchange student. Once in the U.S. as an undergraduate she decided that she liked it in America and decided to start

looking into graduate programs at U.S. universities. After receiving her degree, Suveyda immediately began applying to graduate programs in the U.S. because she could not find a job in Turkey. She could not find a suitable job in Turkey because, despite her exceptional test scores and the jobs she was eligible for, of the government's headscarf ban. For any female governmental professional-doctor, teacher, engineer, etc.-is banned from wearing the Islamic headscarf in Turkey, in addition to female students at the university level (Rainsford 2008).

"Universities in Turkey have police at the entrances of buildings," she tells me, "and if you walk in wearing a headscarf you will be asked to show identification and will then be warned. They will only warn you the first or second time, maybe, but after the third or fourth time you will be expelled from school." Thus, in 2007, she left Turkey for the U.S. in pursuit of religious freedom and the right to express herself as distinctly Muslim through the wearing of her headscarves (Curtis 2005:4). She matriculated into the Kansas State University's Master's program in political science, choosing KSU because funding was available and because the professors were not only kind but knowledgeable in regards to Turkey and the Middle East. "I liked political science because it is a social science," she told me, "you learn about the real-world and you can help people change their minds and overcome stereotypes. This is important because discussions always lead to Islam as terror when people need to look at the other side of the discussions and international conflicts." Therefore, Suveyda chose a social science for the same reason as I did and for the same reasons that we both became involved with the KTCC, because she believes that the ways in which Turkey, the Middle East and Islam are commonly being represented in the U.S. are wrong and because we believe that the

only way to enact real, substantive change is to start with education of individuals. Suveyda thus expresses her cultural and religious identity as a progressive Turkish Muslim through the pursuit of her doctoral degree, her involvement with the KTCC and her distinctly American mode of religious expression through her utilization of freedom of religion.

Suveyda received her Master's degree in political science, with a concentration in international relations, from Kansas State University in 2009. After receiving her degree in 2009 she met a Turkish man named Mahmut through friends while traveling in Chicago and after meeting, dating for two months and having their families meet, they became engaged. "First we met with friends, then alone without friends because in Islam, it is okay to meet with the person, talk with the person before marriage, there are just certain lines that you shouldn't cross. You don't meet guys just for fun. It is serious. You think about marriage," she explains. "I only applied to the University of Tennessee Knoxville," Suveyda says with a smile, because "I was engaged and my fiancée was a graduate student in Knoxville. Luckily, I got in." Suveyda and Mahmut married in the summer of 2009 and she is currently a first-year doctoral student in political science with a focus on international, especially Turkish-American, relations.

As a person, "you have motivation from the inside," Suveyda tells me, which is why she likes political science as a way for her to filter information therein in tandem with her progressive yet conservative Islamic ideals and relay it to other people in order to counter stereotypes and misconceptions and make real change in the world. Suveyda is an interesting paradox as she is progressive politically, associating herself as a democrat and supporter of President Barack Obama, yet religiously she is both progressive and

conservative in specific Turkish-Islamic modes. For she believes wholeheartedly in preserving her conservative Islamic modesty and purity for her husband through her headscarf while believing in a liberal form of Islam which calls for her involvement in promoting justice, peace, and humanitarianism, akin to the Gülen movement.

While she never explicitly mentioned the Gülen movement, Suveyda has obviously been influenced by this progressive Turkish-Islamic movement that "seeks to change the hearts of its adherents" through interfaith/intercultural dialogue (Curtis 2005:4) and "discourse about love and tolerance" (Curtis 2005:5), tenets shared by the KTCC and IC, all while spreading a very distinct and particular form of Turkish-Islamic identity and establishing bases of socio-cultural and political power. After meeting Mahmut, one of the founders of the nascent Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center, he told her about the KTCC and the outreach programs and activities that they conduct in the Knoxville community. "When [Mahmut and I] first met he told me about the Turkish Cultural Center because he was working there as a volunteer," she details, "and I was inspired. I was impressed."

Not long after getting involved with the new and small KTCC, Suveyda became the associate director of the organization and also the director of the women's division. She embodies Turkey itself as she is an interesting and complex amalgamation of Turkish, Muslim and Western, especially American and European, democratic ideals. As Curtis (2005) has shown in her study of the female side of the Gülen movement, specifically her research on Turkish Muslim *fethalluci* women in Turkey and the U.S., the behaviors practiced and beliefs held by Suveyda are common for female Gülen adherents. Suveyda is thus an example of how progressive Turkish-Muslim women and followers of

the Gülen movement enrolled at university abroad (Curtis 2005:5), in this case the U.S., as graduate students are not only spending time with their fellow Turks through participation in programs such as teaching Qur'anic classes and Turkish language lessons to young Turks/Turkish-Americans at the KTCC, programs which serve to "preserve the essential core of Turkish culture," but also through "[spending] time outside the Turkish community" and acting "as [a guide] to how to thrive in America" (Curtis 2005:3) through her participation and organization of interfaith/intercultural activities within the greater Knoxville community (Curtis 2005:5).

Suveyda came to the U.S. for religious freedom and education yet also faces discrimination and stereotypes, not only within her political science classes but even from students in the political science classes which she teaches. "You know something that I am really frustrated about?" Suveyda asked me one day, "[How] people generalize a lot about Islam. Even in courses that I am taking at the university in political science, international relations, and Middle Eastern history! I am tired of telling people that there is no terrorism [condoned] within Islam and that it is a small, tiny group of extremists" who are the problem.

Suveyda, like her homeland of Turkey, is constantly caught in the middle, between East and West, between conservative and progressive, and is seeking to resolve many of the same issues that this thesis addresses in her own dissertation project. Suveyda shares a birthplace, the city of Izmir, Turkey, with the Gülen movement while also representing the dynamism and contradiction of both Turkey and the "works and worldview" of Fethullah Gülen through her "[creation of] a marriage between religion and science [or education], and between tradition and modernity" (Yavuz 1999:593). She

puts her Turkish Muslim, traditional yet liberal Islamic identity first, as is exemplified through her headscarf and life choices, however, she is incredibly progressive and involved in her community as an activist at the KTCC and a graduate student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (Abdo 2006:4-5). Suveyda thus represents "how progressive commitments shape religious life and how religious convictions strengthen progressive activism" and the increasing visibility and participation of progressive Muslim individuals or "liberal Islam" in the American public spheres (Jones 2008:23).

Curtis (2005:4) notes that while the Gülen community in Turkey is "closed…this is not the case [of] the Gulen movement in America" and that female Turkish-Muslim individuals like Suveyda and organizations such as the Turkish cultural centers in both Knoxville and Atlanta are utilizing the openness and inclusivity of the Gülen movement in America to "[serve] as spaces of interfaith dialogue" and identity expression (Curtis 2005:4). In fact, as corroborated through my fieldwork and research, Curtis (2005:4) details that American Gülen "circles" or communities are "so loose…that non Gulen adherents may not even be aware that the Turkish women [and men] in attendance are as attached to the movement as they are" because in America, "Gulen's notion of a 'Turkish Islam' is understood as a space open to all," a "heterogeneous" space opened "to non-Turks [that] resonates with American…cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism" that may take the form of organizations such as Turkish cultural centers. Through Suveyda's involvement in the U.S. public square, she is actively working to deconstruct stereotypes, promote diversity and intercultural/interfaith interactions and communities, and reflecting the need for "greater political action" of Muslim Americans (Tehranian 2009:165). People like Suveyda and organizations such as the KTCC are needed if the future of

America is to be a positive, substantive, tolerant one in which people can experience freedom and celebrate their uniqueness and diversity while recognizing universal human values in stronger, pluralistic communities.

CHAPTER THREE

COMBATING STEREOTYPES: MUSLIMS IN THE SOUTHEASTERN U.S. AFTER 9/11

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be" –Thomas Jefferson (Calhoun 1997:313)

Post 9/11 America: Land of the Free?

Historically there has been a great deal of tension and many occurrences of misrepresentation between the East and West. In contemporary times people usually think of the tragic events of 9/11, death on a grand scale caused by religious extremists, and terrorism when thinking about Islam as a religion (Kurzman 1998:3). What is interesting is that the U.S. is supposedly a land in which the diversity of cultures and religions - the "melting pot" - are celebrated yet also a land in which racism and religious intolerance continue to be major problems, exemplified through the results of my semantic differential survey, problems which are current having negative ramifications in the lives of Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans. I distributed my semantic differential test to fourteen people, most of whom were interview subjects while others were friends and random university students encountered during the course of fieldwork. Thus, the perspectives of five Turkish Muslim and Middle Eastern Muslim people (mostly students) whom I interviewed were gleaned in addition to the perspectives of nine non-Muslim, non-Middle Eastern, non-Turkic American university students and civilians. When asked how the U.S. media portrays Muslims, only two respondents replied neutral

while the remaining twelve answered "bad," representing an overwhelming perspective shared by both Muslims and non-Muslims in the U.S. in regards to the negative modes in which Muslims are characterized. Not only are Muslim people in the U.S. subjected to negative stereotypes in the popular media but the positive contributions they and their ancestors have made go largely ignored.

People who were fleeing religious prosecution, British Puritans who wanted to have their own space in which to freely practice their religious traditions, founded the British North American colonies. Therefore, the United States has ideally represented religious freedom and diversity since colonial times, a spatio-temporal historical context which has even been labeled as "a 'mosaic of Christian faiths' and 'a terrific jumble of religious practices'" (Hutchinson 2003:20). William R. Hutchinson details that the North American colonies of the British Empire "gained wide, increasing, and mostly admiring notice for both diversity and pluralism" (2003:11). However, this sense of diversity and tolerance in regards to diverse religious traditions and a plurality of nationalities in the North American colonies were reserved for persons from Europe, persons of European ancestry, and Protestant Christian traditions which were perceived to be European despite the fact that Christianity has its roots in the Middle East (Hutchinson 2003:17). Christian, Caucasian colonists of European descent found it hard to believe that non-European people, especially Africans and Native Americans, "*had* religions of their own" and "non-European religions" were misunderstood and denigrated, if not largely ignored (Hutchison 2003:17). This is ironic considering that these colonists only accepted various Christian denominations which they labeled "European," castigating religions which they

perceived to be "non-European," despite that fact that Christianity originated in the Middle East, as did Judaism and Islam.

Unfortunately, this colonial legacy of mistrust, ignorance, and discrimination of non-Christian traditions has persisted until the contemporary era in the United States, as is reflected in the results of my semantic differential survey. When asked if religious intolerance was rare or common in the U.S., ten of the total fourteen respondents to my semantic differential test replied that it was common, with one participant feeling compelled enough to have written on the survey that religious intolerance is "encouraged" and another writing that religious intolerance is "everywhere" in America. History, culture and religion are intertwined, constituting far-reaching and co-creative forces in regards to politics and ideologies of peoples and nations in the contemporary era. These co-creative forces are manifested in many contexts and situations, such as the United States media's and citizen's perceptions and treatment of Muslim, Middle Eastern, and Middle Eastern people in the post 9/11 era. The events that transpired on September 11th 2001 were ultimately labeled a Muslim problem, an outgrowth of the teachings of Islam and the traditions of Middle Eastern cultures and nations, not only because of misconceptions, and parts-for-whole simplifications but because of the contentious modern and contemporary interactions and historical conflicts between nations of the Middle East and the U.S.

However, despite misrepresentations and misconceptions concerning Islam, it is clear that there are many Muslim Americans and many Muslim people, students, refugees, and immigrants, coming to the U.S. from Turkey and the nations of the Middle East. It is interesting that native- and foreign-born Muslims in America seem

unanimously unhappy with the way their religion is represented in America, echoed in the results of my semantic differential survey, and many, especially Muslim women who veil, have felt discriminated against for practicing Islam. Yet not only do Muslims constitute a large and ever-growing population but people like Suveyda even come here to express their religion in an atmosphere in which freedom of religion is upheld. How paradoxical that a Muslim woman feels more comfortable in a university in the Southeast, despite actively labeling oneself as culturally and religiously distinct via her *hijab*, than she would in a university in her predominantly Islamic homeland of Turkey.

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee's website details that there are over 7 million Muslim Americans and over 3 million Americans with Arab heritage in the U.S. (ADC 2010). "Honest, hardworking Americans with Middle Eastern ancestry are more likely than before September 11 to be viewed with suspicion and racialized hostility," writes Joe Feagin, "and they are more likely to face racial profiling and other types of discrimination" (Marvasti and McKinney: 2004:x). This discrimination and associated stereotypes and misconceptions arise among Americans because most of them "are quite ignorant about Middle Eastern issues, including even about who the September 11 terrorists were" (Marvasti and McKinney 2004:x). For instance, "most Americans do not realize that not one of the September 11 terrorists was from Iraq or Iran" but "that most were from staunch U.S. allies such as Saudi Arabia" (Marvasti and McKinney 2004:x). In addition to stereotyping Arab and Middle Eastern people as terrorists in the United States, most Americans are completely unaware of the fact that three fourths of Arab Americans practice Christian religious traditions (ADC 2010).

Terrorism: Islam and the U.S. Media

In the post-9/11 era, most Americans view terrorism as Islamic, "as an outside phenomenon brought suddenly into the Unites States on September 11 by Middle Easterners," explains Feagin, "rather than as something that U.S. citizens, sometimes with assistance from the U.S. government, have created in the United States and elsewhere" (Marvasti and McKinney 2004:x). Most Americans are not cognizant of the fact that there are many American-born terrorists and both homegrown extremist American terrorist and hate groups in the United States, for most Americans tend to associate hatred and extremism with the most common example, the Ku Klux Klan. However, a multitude of other American hate and terrorist groups exist, such as the Hammerskins, the Westboro Baptist Church, and individuals like "Timothy McVeigh and his white supremacist associates" (Marvasti and McKinney 2004:x).

While these predominantly Caucasian American extremists who commit violence, murder, and terror are labeled as individualized, "sick" psychotic anomalies, terrorists from the Middle East or of Middle Eastern ancestry "who are virtually never Middle Eastern *Americans*" are contrarily "seen as coming out of extremist social, political and religious settings" (Marvasti and McKinney 2004:x-xi). What is more, these Middle Eastern terrorists are not perceived in the United States as what they truly are, a minority of religiously, politically and socially dissident extremists; rather, they are dangerously and erroneously portrayed in the media as "representatives of their countries and cultures" (Marvasti and McKinney 2004:xi). Terrorism, however, has become synonymous with Islam (Kurzman 1998:3) and Muslims have become increasingly

represented as terrorists by the U.S. media, representations that anthropologists have a duty to clear up (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2002:4).

In general, most Muslim Americans are dissatisfied and insulted with the way that the U.S. news media and television shows such as *24* portray their religion and the ways in which it portrays Muslims visually, perpetually casting them as extremist "Islamic terrorists" (Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2007:75,101). As Suveyda relayed to me, "I am tired of telling people that there is no terrorism [condoned] within Islam and that it is a small, tiny group of extremists" who are the problem. Toward the end of 2001, American Muslims reported that the most pressing issues they were facing were "(1) stereotyping, prejudice profiling, and racism" in addition to "ignorance, misunderstanding discrimination" and "American and Muslim relations and images" (Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2007: 115).

Since 9/11, terrorism has generally been portrayed erroneously as a Middle Eastern or Islamic import to America, although the increased focus on Islam and Muslims, not only abroad but domestically, has also lead to Middle Eastern and Arab Americans appearing more frequently and prominently in the news (Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2007:101). Thus, the focus on Islam and the Middle East after 9/11 is a double edged sword, it has unfortunately led to many stereotypes and misconceptions but it has conversely led to these populations speaking out and, in doing so, figuring more prominently into U.S. politics and actively changing the ways in which they are being represented (Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2007:17-18). For instance, after the events of 9/11 many "American Muslims who were perceived to be articulate or" had "some religious knowledge were constantly called upon to 'be present' at interfaith vigils" and other

events that promoted unity and empathy "in order to demonstrate their sympathy and inclusion into the American social fabric" (Hermansen 2004:77). Interestingly, the IC and KTCC are organizations whose post-9/11 establishments reveal other distinct, powerful, and public ways in which Muslims have been actively combating the stereotypes of Muslims as harsh, uncaring, myopic people through education, humanitarian work, culture, and networking through both business and political connections in both the U.S. and Turkey.

Erroneous portrayals of Middle Eastern individuals and small groups who enact terrorism and ideological extremism as representative parts of a simplistic, homogenized, monolithically-characterized Islamic or Middle Eastern whole have not only perpetuated but increased misconceptions and instances of religious and cultural intolerance in the contemporary United States. For instance, the Islamic headscarf has been increasingly and erroneously associated with conservative, if not fundamentalist, religiosity, leading Muslim women who wear them to report being automatically singled out and searched multiple times in airports. These stereotypes and assumptions, however, are also the driving force behind the establishment of organizations such as the IC and KTCC, contexts in which Turkish Muslims are able to mobilize through religious and cultural networks, activities and personal practices which also act to consolidate and reconfirm their cultural Turkish and religious Islamic identities, in order to promote outreach efforts that echo the American values of tolerance, diversity, and freedom.

Islam as Foreign and Monolithic

"There are many Islams, there are many Wests." –Jacques Derrida (Chérif 2008:39)

One misconception that necessitates elucidation is the tendency of the US media to characterize Islam, Muslims, and the nations of the Middle East as one unified religious tradition or cultural context. The term "Middle East" was invented by white, European colonial powers during the 19th century, a "designation born of geopolitical consideration…and semiotic meaning" (Tehranian 2009:65). Thus, "just as race is a function of social construction rather than inherent biology," explicates Tehranian, "the Middle East was invented from political considerations" (2009:65). The Middle East being invented by Westerners "is made plain by the region's ostensible boundaries" which "eschew the typical hallmarks of regional definitions" such as "continental, linguistic, or perceived ethnic boundaries" (Tehranian 2009:55-65).

Simplified, even insulting, and erroneous stereotypes of Islam and Muslims could not be farther from reality. These double-edged stereotypes and the confusion and dissent that they cause are what prompt people to take classes on Islam to better learn about the religion, what drive people to form and get involved with organizations such as the KTCC and IC which not only correct the stereotypes and part-for-whole misrepresentations but act as sites of identity confirmation and bases of socio-cultural and religious pride. Islam, unbeknownst to many Americans, is not only closely related to the Judeo-Christian religious traditions, but also is extremely diverse, being made up of many different sects and Islamic traditions and perspectives, with moderate and liberal Muslims being caught between the conservatives and the extremists (Goddard 1995:27-29). Thus, akin to the polarized and fragmented religious, socio-cultural and political climates of the

United States, various adherents to the religion of Islam profess different, even conflicting, versions of the tradition.

"Islam is not some monolithic entity with a unitary 'essence,'" writes Brian Morris (2006:77), "but rather a cultural tradition that takes diverse forms, according to various social and historical contexts." Thus, "a persistent pluralism of views and customs" within Islam has been "expressed in these many cultures throughout history" (Waines 2003:2). Islam is therefore a very diverse and dynamic religious tradition that shares many characteristics with Judaism and Christianity, from common figures such as Abraham, Jesus and Mary, even the angel Gabriel, to the multiplicity of denominations or sects within the tradition. In fact, as discussed by a female Turkish MA student at the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center's 2010 Women's Day Celebration, Maryam (the Arabic form of the name Mary) is considered "the most righteous woman" in Islam, as is exemplified by the fact that an entire surah, the nineteenth chapter, of the Qur'an is named after her (Pickthall 2006:216-221).

Islam is both "a multidimensional faith and community" (Esposito 2005:x). The worldwide community of Muslims or *ummah* is currently made up of more than 900 million people living in nearly every nation of the world (Waines 2003:1). Thus, Muslims "form a majority of the population in more than forty countries" in addition to "the second largest [religious] community numerically after Christianity" (Waines 2003:1). "The Muslim *ummah* is not a monolith," writes Gabriel, "there is considerable diversity in the Muslim world not only ethnically but also in approaches to other faiths, to religious conversion, to politics, war, and a host of other aspects" (2004:13). Therefore, Muslims in America consequentially "believe that the news media's portrayals of Muslims and

their religions is unfair, negative, stereotypical, and not at all reflective of Islam and its followers" (Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2007:101).

Another common misconception held by Americans is that Islam is a religion of oppression and harsh antiquated ideals. Since the fateful day of 9/11, "Islam's progressiveness" and basis of justice "has been a subject of cantankerous debate in the United States" (Curiel 2008:186). Islam is actually an "ethical religion, deeply concerned with the right things to do…it sees civilization itself as depending on the right way to live," contrary to popular misconceptions held by many Americans in the contemporary United States, and many Muslim people are working in education, philanthropic, and humanitarian organizations in the U.S. such as the IC and the KTCC (Williams 1994:66). Unfortunately, critics of Islam have been known to "[cherry-pick] from the Quran," as harsh critics of Christianity and Judaism have cherry-picked from the Bible and Torah, respectively, and "point to passages" which "they say are a kind of smoking gun-a revelation, as it were-of Islam's true motives" (Curiel 2008:186). Luckily, despite these instances of gross oversimplification, twisting of information, and anti-Islamic backlash that occurred in the aftermath of 9/11, many Americans not only sought out correct information about the religion of Islam, with "hundreds of thousands of other Americans (especially college students)" taking courses in Islam, for Islam courses at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, for instance, always are popular and always have waiting lists, but many Americans have even converted to the religion (Curiel 2008:186-187). Any patriarchal Abrahamic religion is inherently narrow-minded, misogynist, exclusive, and – in the case of the holy books such as the Bible, the Torah, and the Qur'an – harsh, especially to those people who study religious systems yet subscribe to none. Anybody

can take passages from any holy book and make claims that the religion is violent, gendered, exclusive, and inherently otherizing (Kristof 2010).

Anthropology has been anonymously nicknamed "the study of the obvious" for good reason. Another example of the obvious yet overlooked in regards to Islam and the Middle East is the vast yet largely invisible influence that Arab-Islamic culture has had in the United States, which may be observed in the Arabic numerals which Americans use everyday in mathematics, Anglo-American verbiage, and even the names of American cities, towns, and streets, a mounting influence that needs to be unearthed in the eyes and minds of Americans and become public knowledge (Curiel 2008:67-68).

Arabic has been ranked 6th for the past 100 years within the list of 10 languages that have bequeathed the most words to the English language "despite (or because of) wars, geographic upheavals, and shifting patterns of trade and immigration" (Curiel 2008:68). Scholars, especially etymologists, debate over the exact number of Arabic words and derivations therein that may be found within the English language, however, all estimates are in the thousands (Curiel 2008:68-69). It is estimated by various academics in linguistics that between 260-500 words given to English by Arabic which are used in everyday American speech (Curiel 2008:73). Common English words that entered the language from Arabic (and the years in which they did so) include the following: "nadir" (1391), "giraffe (1594), "fanfare" (1625), "cipher" (1399), "hazard" (1300), "lackey" (1529), "sequin" (1613), "bazaar" (1340), "racket" (1500), "tariff" (1591), "jasmine" (1592), and "zero" which entered the English lexicon in 1604 (Curiel 2008:69-70). Also, examples of the Arabic prefix *al* (meaning "the") being subsumed into anglicized Arabic words are alcove, alchemy, and almanac, all of which constitute

"the most obvious [signs] that Arabic is one of English's mother tongues" (Curiel 2008:71).

In addition to words and derivations which entered the English language from the Arabic are names, from the 150-plus stars named in Arabic to the names of people and names of geographical spaces such as roads, highways, towns, and cities in the U.S. (Curiel 2008:76). Arabic names of small, rural American towns represent how American Christians historically considered the Middle East, especially the Arab contexts, to be an important religious location (Curiel 2008:77). Thus, examples of Arab words and derivations that have been transformed into place names in the United States include the following: Arabia, NE; Aladdin, WY; Baghdad, CA; Cairo and Mohamet (the 19th century standard American form of the name of the prophet Muhammad), IL; Medina, OH; Koran, LA; Mecca, IN, Palestine, TX; and Sultan, WA (Curiel 2008:68,77).

Many elements of Western civilization were "actually invented by peoples in the Middle East," notes Joe Feagin, advancements, knowledge, and cultures that moved from the East westward into Europe (Marvasti and McKinney 2004:ix). For instance, in addition to Islam, the Judeo-Christian religious traditions originated in the geographical context of the Middle East before spreading west and north (Marvasti and McKinney 2004:ix). Also, both the Middle East and Europe were the sites of the origins of agriculture, both plant and animal domestication, and complex civilizations that contained "the first great cities, the first large-scale governments and educational institutions," and produced a myriad of literary and scientific advancements throughout history (Marvasti and McKinney 2004:xi). Less importantly, but interesting nevertheless, is the fact that coffee is Middle Eastern-specifically Arab-invention. Coffee's origins are

to be found in Yemen, a country on the Arabian peninsula (Curiel 2008:85). The first coffeehouse of the world originated in Mecca "then [traveled] across the Red Sea to Cairo before crossing the Mediterranean to Constantinople" and "[becoming] fashionable in Paris, London, and Boston in the late 1600s" until present times (Curiel 2008:86).

What is more, from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, Arab societies such as the city of Baghdad in modern Iraq salvaged, stored, and transcribed the only known copies of important Greek and Roman texts, many of which are considered to be the foundations of American democracy, and "made major developments in such areas as mathematics, optics, sea-going navigation, and medicine well before the Europeans" (Marvasti and McKinney 2004:ix). As will be discussed at greater length later in this section, Arab societies had also granted rights to women during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad that would persist until the present day, rights that numerous Muslim women whom I came into contact with during the course of my fieldwork said that women in Europe did not see for more than twelve centuries. Women's rights and roles within Islam thus necessitate elucidation if a more holistic and accurate perception of Islam and Muslims is to occur within the U.S.

Women and Islam

I stepped out of my car upon seeing Suveyda, we greeted each other warmly and began to walk together in the dark, cold March night toward the community center of a small yet nice Knoxville apartment complex made up of neat, white two-level condominiums. I opened the door for her and followed her inside as the sounds of

Turkish music and the delicious scents of homemade Turkish foods rendered my senses awake and aware despite the frigid, numbing cold from which I have just escaped.

To the left of the entry I saw 25-30 women sitting on couches, loveseats, and various chairs in a circle. To the right their children of all ages were running amok and having a wonderful time. All of the children were dressed in Western clothes. For this was one of the male children's birthday celebrations, a celebration being hosted in a communal space of the local West Hills apartment complex in which many of the women present (and their families) live. I saw tables full of wonderful food between the women and children and in one corner there was a stack of presents. Suveyda set her gift down onto the pile and led me over to the women, most of whom were looking at me from the moment I walked in. In this moment I appreciated Suveyda for inviting me and putting herself on the line socially to do so. This was obviously a conservative Islamic birthday party and I, a non-Muslim, non-Turkish stranger, stood out like a sore thumb. This was the one instance of fieldwork, I thought to myself, in which I was observing exclusive Turkish Muslim practices outside of the organizational setting of one of the Turkish cultural centers. It was also the one event which I attended which marked a private (not public or attended at/organized by the KTCC), integrative gathering of Turkish Muslims and non-Turks such as myself.

I was introduced to all of the women, three of whom were dressed in western attire. They were decked out in designer dresses and tall, rich leather boots. One of the women was even in stilettos. One of the women in Western attire was an African-American woman who has a Turkish spouse with whom she had a son. The rest of the women were dressed in modest, in some cases even traditional, clothing. Some of the

elders were wearing Turkish traditional dress, with many layers of dark, earth-toned material and headscarves that had been wrapped so many times around the head that they appeared more like hats. Most of the modestly dressed women were in floor-length skirts of dark colors with embroidery and other small yet detailed embellishments. Some of the women seemed happy to meet me while some did not acknowledge me. This was the first time that I was struck with the realization that these Turkish people not only mobilize Turkish-American outreach efforts and interactions through their networks and the KTCC but work to consolidate their own unique identities and maintain their own socio-cultural and religious traditions therein.

We sat down and two of the women take turns reciting surahs from the Qur'an. One of the women spoke in Arabic with a thick Turkish accent and her voice made the words seem powerful and meaningful, even to an atheistic person such as myself who is not literate or fluent in either language, Arabic or Turkish. The other woman, Leila, recited the surahs in a complex, singsong, lilting Arabic manner. As she continued her recitation and took turns with the other woman, I looked around the room and tried to take everything in. My eye could not help but notice the beautiful scarves that each woman now wore, for once the Quranic recitation began even the Turkish women in western dress had reached for headscarves to cover their hair. Islamic Turkish headscarves are distinct cultural markers and symbols of identity and it struck me that despite the rather rigid dress code that they are working within that each looked very stylish and unique in her own right. Suveyda, in her full-length, tailored black skirt, gorgeous black leather boots, stylish blouse with black cardigan and shawl over it, and

silky, patterned headscarf, was truly a sight to behold. She seemed to radiate warmth, intelligence, and contentedness with her spirituality.

"Does everybody here understand Arabic?" I asked her under my breath.

"No," she quietly replied, "but we feel it is good for our spirituality to hear it."

Interesting, I remember thinking to myself. I was not the only one who does not know what was being said. This instance of women self-segregating themselves and their children (no men were present, only male children) not only reveals how Turkish women maintain and reconfirm their own exclusive Turkish-Muslim identity but shows how Muslim women, contrary to popular Western perceptions, voluntary take advantage of the fact that women's spaces can be delineated as "inviolable" and safe, a space such as this birthday party at their community center, a context in which the women rule and are "freely together, freely exchanging information and ideas…without danger of being overheard by men" (Ahmed 1982:528). It is an inherently biased and Western idea that the segregation of genders is one-sided and completely detrimental to women, Ahmed (1982:529) even contrarily asserts that it was most likely women in the Middle East who initially "developed the model of strict segregation" that would render their female living spaces as "inviolable" and even sacredly forbidden to men.

Many of the misconceptions regarding Islam in the contemporary U.S. and other Western nations center upon the treatment of women within the religion (Ahmed 1982: 523). Many Americans view Muslim women as oppressed, infantilized people with no agency of their own and no capacity to realize, let alone defend, their rights. However, the rise of Islam actually granted women many important rights, rights women in the West would not have until the 1800s (Ahmed 1982:523), and it is the socio-cultural

traditions of various nations in which Islam is found that are the culprits of extreme forms of Islamic misogyny (Kristof 2010). Contemporary Muslim women like Suveyda are becoming more active and visible than ever before in the U.S., and they stand to be major contributors and influences to the future of Islam in America (Ramadan 2004: 224). During the KTCC's Women's Day event, the discussion between Muslim Turkish women and the non-Muslim, American women present turned to the issue of women in Islam. One of the distinguished speakers, a Turkish Muslim woman with a graduate degree, said that her religion respects women. She went on further to state that the difference between what the prophet and Qur'an assert versus the cultural and political elements which have been prevalent in Islam and the nations of the Middle East is significant and that the message, interpretations, and expressions of Islam have been negatively altered, especially since the 10th century.

"The sexual oppression of women in the Middle East and elsewhere in the Muslim world is not the result of an oppressive vision of sexuality based on Islam" explicitly, delineates Ilkkaracan (Shaw and Lee 2007:214), "but a combination of historical, sociopolitical, and economic factors." Yamani (1996:5) echoes that "a woman's freedom is circumscribed by social conventions" and cultural or customary elements within any given society. Thus, the status of women within the religion of Islam and the nations of the Middle East is not only a contentious debate but a paramount one whose dimensions must be elucidated herein. The baseline Islamic perspective on gender, sex and sexual acts has not changed very much since the initial period of the faith in the 6th and 7th centuries C.E. The reason for Islamic perceptions of sexuality and marriage in the Middle East remaining so constant is that Muslims seek to live their lives in

accordance with that of the prophet Muhammad and in regards to the standards set by the Qur'an. From the period of classical Islam up until the contemporary era "adherence to the *sunnah*, in the sense of the prophetic precedent, defined one's full membership of the majority Sunni community" (Waines 2003:49). Therefore, Islam-as both a religious system and mode of conducting life-frowns upon perceived unnecessary *bid'ah* or innovation and this can be observed in Islamic assessments of sex and sexuality (Waines 2003:49).

The lifeways and belief systems of individuals throughout history in any given society shape the cultures and the socio-cultural domains therein, such as kinship relations, gender roles, principles, rituals, legal rights, and policies. "Islam was above all," details Leila Ahmed (1986:677), "a revolution that transformed its society in its every aspect, ethically, religiously, and socially, and that initiated a new society centered on ides of moral and social responsibility and justice." Honarvar records that "there is a great deal of uncertainty concerning the status of women in the pre-Islamic era…some believe that women held a much higher position prior to…Islam" but the majority "believe that Islamic reform has enhanced the status of women" (1998:355).

Khadija, Muhammad's first wife, was "for most of her life a Jahilia (pre-Islamic) woman (Ahmed 1986:665-666). She ran a successful Meccan business and was so independent that she proposed to Muhammad, a man 15 years her junior (Ahmed 1986:666). "Khadija," writes Ahmed, is second only to Maryam (Mary), mother of Jesus, within Islam, and rightfully so, as one of the KTCC's Women's Day event's guest speakers asserted during her presentation on women, spirituality and identity. For "it was her wealth that freed [Muhammad]...and enabled him to lead the life of contemplation

that was the prelude to his prophethood" and because "her support and confidence were crucial in his venturing to preach Islam" after his first revelation (Ahmed 1986:665). Muhammad disseminated revelations throughout his network of followers and wives, developing the body of knowledge reflected in the sunnah, ahadith, and the material that would become the Qur'an. "The prophet's widows," writes Minai (1981:22), "Ayesha and Umm Salama in particular-contributed heavily to the shaping of early Islamic dogma." They "were considered the best firsthand authorities on their husband's life and teachings, they were consulted in compiling the Hadith…which, along with…the Qur'an, formed the basis for the Shariah" (1981:22). This is problematic, however, in that ahadith were not compiled as the Qur'an until after the prophet had passed and they "remained open to additions and thus highly vulnerable to 'correction' by antifeminist scholars and powerful interest groups for centuries" (Minai 1981:22). Therefore, Minai remarks that "it is remarkable that so many of Muhammad's statements upholding women's equality and dignity have survived at all" (1981:22).

Thus, despite common misconceptions surrounding Islam and the position of women, women - mainly the wives, daughters, and followers of the prophet - were highly influential in the writings and origins of the Islamic faith. Muslim women, who constitute half of the almost 1 billion total practicing Muslims in the contemporary world and half of the Muslim population in the Southeast, continually look back to women such as Khadija, Aisha, and Fatima (the prophet Muhammad's most favorite daughter who was born by Khadija) in addition to the prophet when looking for spiritual and, specifically feminist, inspiration in their everyday lives (Waines 2003:1). The prophet advocated the rights of women through the establishment of codified inheritance laws and through his

ban on infanticide, for infanticide was usually enacted against female infants (Pickthall 2006: 202). Therefore, "heirs stipulated in the Qur'an (4.7-11), among them wives, daughters, sisters and grandmothers of the deceased, were thus entitled to a share of the estate before the inheritance devolved to the nearest male relative" (Waines 2003:96). Through Muslim women having entitlements to property, money, and inheritance, they are ideally able to experience more financially secure lives and worry less about how they could afford to live if divorced by their husbands.

Many perspectives exist as to whether Muslim women's lives were actually improved by the advent of Islam as the dominant religion of the Middle East (Mernissi 1998:126). However, it is clear that women, especially the wives of Muhammad, played central roles in the formation of Islam and the compilation of the Qur'an, sunnah, and the ahadith, facts that most Americans are completely unaware of. The issue of women in Islam throughout history since the time of the prophet is then an incredibly complex and multifaceted issue and one which must be brought to light and discussed as the influences of women and treatment of women within Islam continue to be paramount sources of inspiration and spiritual identity for contemporary Muslim women. After the KTCC's first annual Women's Day Event on March 7, 2010, I stayed discussed with Elif, the female Muslim guest speaker, her speech which centered upon prominent female religious figures within Islam: Khadija, Fatima and Mary (Miriam). Not only was Elif surprised in how much I knew and was able to relate about these strong females within Islam. Elif seemed to favor Miriam the most for her strong, loyal faith and submission (although she looks to all three of these women for spiritual inspiration and life models) and I let her know that I had always enjoyed studying Khadija because of how

independent, strong, and successful she was. She was pleased and conveyed to me that she greatly enjoyed the unexpected discussion that proceeded in which we further addressed the lives, contributions and perceptions of these women related to Islam.

It has been stated that "there are no immediate solutions or arguments proposed by Islamic women to some of the obvious areas of inequality in family law, divorce, custody, polygamy or inheritance" (Yamani 1996:11). However, this statement is simplified and largely wrong. Common knowledge in the minds of people in the U.S. must include an awareness of the issues Muslim women have face and continue to face within the historical and extant religious, socio-cultural and political spheres and the advances that Muslim women, especially activists and students such as Suveyda, are making currently in the U.S. Contrary to popular Western thought, Muslim women, historical and modern feminists alike, have always been conscious, aware agents capable of realizing structural and religious inequities of power between the genders in Islamic nations such as the countries of the Middle East. Contrary to the dominant Western views of Muslim and Middle Eastern women as desperate, voiceless individuals, Muslim women are competent and, especially those female Muslim academics and feminists, capable of influencing change in their respective societies.

Suveyda Karakaya, associate director of the KTCC and director of the KTCC's women's division, reflects the trend that is the growing number of educated Muslim women that are siphoning their progressive religious beliefs and motivation to help other people through education and humanitarianism in the U.S. in addition to attaining graduate degrees. In fact, many Muslim women in universities in the Middle East and the U.S. are studying Middle Eastern history, Islamic Shari'a law, the Qur'an, the sunnah and

the āhadith (Mernissi 1998:123-124), even teaching Qur'anic courses to youth as Suveyda does weekly with Turkish-American youth at the KTCC, to find out not only how they have been wrongly marginalized but how to go about fixing said inequities in genuine and culturally legitimate Islamic modes which also happen to coincide with American ideals of justice, freedom, education, and rights.

CHAPTER FOUR

BUILDING TOLERANCE, DEFINING DIFFERENCE: TURKISH INTERFAITH AND INTERCULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE SOUTHEAST U.S.

"O' People! We created you from the same male and female, and made you distinct peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. The noblest among you in the sight of God is the most righteous." –Qur'an 49:13

"Every true civilization is pluralist, and every universal must be accessible to all" (Chérif 2008:37)

It was a chilly February morning in East Tennessee when I pulled up and saw a few cars outside of the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center. Suveyda arrives after me and greets me warmly before we walked inside the KTCC's office space. As many more people arrived she explained to me that the KTCC has outgrown the premises and will be moving to a bigger, better location within the next month, for the KTCC is growing and in need of a bigger headquarters. The KTCC needs a space that can accommodate events and services that the organization host, such as Turkish cooking and language classes, dialogue nights, etc. Inside the KTCC space's main room were several rows of brightly wrapped parcels.

Metallic red, blue, purple, green, and yellow packages met my eye as I read the different names on the tags. They were both new and used items that had been gathered to donate to a local children's home that houses needy and troubled children. Suveyda

and I helped the other women gather the packages and we carried them outside to put them in the car. More than twenty-five Turkish people, people who either work for the KTCC or others connected to the KTCC through volunteering their time with the organization, had gathered to participate in this community humanitarian project. The group was made up of Turkish men, women, teens, and children. After driving for a half of an hour, we arrived at the children's center. We carried the packages in and were greeted by a staff member. She invited us in, speaking to our group very slowly, for she obviously has not noticed that we volunteers were speaking to each other in English, and I noticed her thick southern accent as she looked around at each of the KTCC volunteers while enunciating each drawling syllable. Finally, after she had surveyed the room, her eyes fixating momentarily on a KTCC volunteer's silk headscarf, she asked loudly "Does anybody here speak English?"

My mouth literally dropped open after my brain processed the rude, even xenophobic, statement that had just been uttered in my presence before one of the male staff members of the KTCC pointed a finger at me - the only blonde-haired, blue-eyed and obviously American volunteer - and stated in perfect English "She speaks English." I laughed at the subtle irony but inside I was deeply offended and embarrassed by this bad example of an ignorant American. It is these statements and the misconceptions, stereotypes, and ignorance behind them that have catalyzed this project in the first place. In the contemporary United States, a diverse, religiously and culturally pluralistic, and multi-ethnic nation, the politics and ideologies of the majority of the country's citizens have become extremely polarized, even fragmented. Racism, stereotyping, discrimination, and religious intolerance are still common. Moderation seems to be a

thing of the past while polarization – political, cultural, religious – extremism, and fear of the other, any kind of "other," seems to be the reality of the present (Rich 2010). However, the Istanbul Center of Atlanta (IC) and the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center (KTCC), are two key organizations whose Turkish Muslim staff are working to promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue, awareness, tolerance, and education. It also happens that these sites of diversity, outreach and interaction are also the contexts in which Turkish Americans are networking in cultural, political, and religious modes and effectively maintaining their own unique and exclusive Turkish Muslim identities in the process.

"It is clear that interfaith" and intercultural "work in the United States is no longer the informal efforts of a few open-minded communities but a well-established, organizationally sophisticated, and increasingly mainstream phenomenon" (McCarthy 2007:85). Both the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center and Istanbul Center of Atlanta exemplify the future, a new era of much-needed understanding, expression, and interaction between the East and West. The goal of these organizations, as with "most interfaith" and intercultural endeavors is a drive born from "intellectual passion, politics, or a commitment to community, harmony" in which "people of different religious identities" and cultural backgrounds "find or create the structures that will allow them to explore their difference and find a common purpose" (McCarthy 2007:126). These two organizations draw their inspiration from their homeland of Turkey, a nation centered quite literally between the Eastern and Western worlds, and from the works and cosmology of the previously mentioned Fethullah Gülen.

Turkey is an incredibly important and interesting national context, historically, politically, religiously, culturally, and geographically. The multiple times that I attended events hosted by the IC and conducted interviews at the IC with the organization's staff, the city of Mardin, Turkey, was mentioned both verbally and tangibly through brochures and cd-roms given to me as the exemplification of the country's ancient roots and diverse origins. In brochures distributed by the Turkish Ministry of Tourism to the IC, the Turkish city of Mardin is delineated to have been occupied by various peoples and civilizations since the 4th millennium B.C. (Taşer 2009:16). Thus, the Mardin Museum has artifacts from the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Ages, and the First Iron Age in addition to Persian, Assyrian, Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk, Artukid, and Ottoman artifacts (Taşer 2009:10). The reality that these brochures and other materials from the Turkish Ministry of Tourism were present at the Turkish cultural centers highlight the fact that not only do the IC and KTCC have ties to the businesses in both the U.S. and Turkey but connections to the U.S. government and to the Turkish government as well, and that these organizations are actively engaged in cultural marketing and driven by local, national, transnational, and international agendas.

Akin to the U.S., political affiliations, religious beliefs, and various identities are complex and intertwined in Turkey and in the minds of Turks and Turkish-Americans (DiCarlo 2008:103-104). Turkey, like the U.S., is a diverse and multiethnic, multicultural, and religiously pluralistic nation. Moreover, "political affiliation seems to color all relationships in Turkey" and a discussion of politics always necessitates contemplation of religious issues such as Islamic "conservatism" (DiCarlo 2008:103-104). For, despite the diverse ethnic and regional identities, "the vast majority of Turks

are Muslim," all of whom hold "differing opinions concerning the proper role of religion in the political life of the nation" which lead to disagreements, debate, conflict, and polarization in contemporary Turkey (DiCarlo 2008:104).

The Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center, founded in 2006, is modeled after Atlanta's Istanbul Center, founded in 2002. These two organizations are very much alike in their foundations and goals, albeit located in different sociocultural, geographic, and demographic contexts. Moreover, the KTCC is more recent and in a period of development and growth which warrant further study. Both organizations are based on the four following principal elements: dialogue, education, culture, and humanitarian works. The goal of both the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center and Istanbul Center of Atlanta is to "build bridges between cultures" through interaction and education, each center aiming to make a better world, starting at the individual and community levels, through promotion of the Turkish experience of "the art of living together," defined as "respect, acceptance, dialogue, love, richness of faith and culture over centuries of time " (Istanbul Center Website 2010), a definition shared by the Gülen movement, a movement that will be discussed at greater length throughout this chapter.

The Turkish cultural centers are not only linked to the Gülen movement through their shared goals, ideas, and tenets – listed at the heading of Fethullah Gülen's website (2010) to be "tolerance, dialogue, and peace" - but through the fact that the movement itself entails the establishment of Turkish cultural centers abroad in order to "[bridge]…cultural gap[s]," spread Turkish Islamic culture, and establish a strong network of cultural, religious, and political connections (in both the U.S. and Turkey) through interfaith and intercultural dialogue (Balcı 2008:377). However, despite the

apparently strong connections between Islam, Gülen's movement, and Turkish cultural centers, the pervasiveness of the works of Gülen - like the hidden religiosity and invisibility of Islam within the movement itself (Curtis 2005: 4) - and the influence of Islam within the IC and KTCC go largely unrecognized (Balcı 2008:384). For "nobody is really aware of…the basic religious orientation" of either the Gülen movement or the Turkish cultural centers in the U.S. (Balcı 2008:384).

The Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center (KTCC)

The Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center (KTCC) is a branch of the Society of Universal Dialogue (SUD) which was founded in 2006 in Nashville by a group of Turkish-Americans who wanted to promote improved and closer relations between Tennessee's Turkish and American communities. The KTCC has been modeled after the IC, the flagship of the southeastern Turkish cultural centers. Despite being two different, distinct entities, the nascent KTCC is referred to as a "sister-organization" of the IC by Suveyda, the aforementioned associate director of the organization as well as the director of the women's division. The KTCC, like the IC, promotes the four main tenets of dialogue, culture, education, and humanitarian work. When talking with Suveyda about her initial reaction upon hearing about the KTCC from her fiancée, a Turkish graduate student already on staff at the organization, she told me without hesitation, "I was inspired." The KTCC promulgates these four objectives through the events which they host or co-host, such as an annual dialogue dinner, local humanitarian and volunteer work, Turkish language and cooking classes, a booth at the University of Tennessee's annual spring International Festival, and an annual International Women's Day event.

The KTCC's second yearly dialogue dinner was hosted in Knoxville's on-campus Howard Baker Policy Center on October 26 2009. This event was entitled "Who is My Neighbor?" and sought to bring over one hundred people, local academics, government officials, community leaders, religious leaders, and others, together to promote a night of multicultural, intercultural, and interfaith encounters, awareness and dialogue. "A 'community' is a slippery thing to define," for it can "refer to any group of people with a common interest or identity" and "geographically defined" spaces which "are often anonymous places" (McCarthy 2007:84). The ultimate goal of interfaith and intercultural "relations is the face-to-face encounter" of diverse peoples within communities "to negotiate issues of mutual concern, [and] local interfaith councils" and organizations such as the KTCC exemplify the fact that intercultural and "interfaith organizations have exploded in number in the past" twenty five years (McCarthy 2007:84-85). These organizations based in education from the ground level, individual people within communities, up "certainly look like the real deal" (McCarthy 2007:85). This dramatic growth is a direct result of "the increased prominence of immigrant communities bringing nonwestern traditions into closer contact with" peoples of other cultural and religious affiliations in the U.S. (McCarthy 2007:85).

To this end, the KTCC brought in a number of people to speak as distinguished guests at the October 2009 dialogue dinner event, including Kemal Korucu, the Istanbul Center's outreach director, Rev. John Gill of the Church of the Savior United of Christ, Knoxville, and Carl Pierce, interim director of the Howard Baker Policy Center. Each speech focused on ways to appreciate diversity, foster tolerance, and build stronger, more meaningful and friendly communities in the process. Turkish foods were served in

addition to Turkish tea and desserts. After the guest speakers' presentations and the dinner, a local Turkish immigrant performed a live *ebru*, or (Turkish) water marbling demonstration. What the IC and KTCC are doing through bringing people together to interact, share diverse and similar cultural traditions, ideas, foods, and friendship, is changing the world one person at a time and creating a strong Turkish presence in the Southeast U.S. The IC and KTCC represent sites in which sameness and difference among Turks and non-Turkish southeastern Americans alike are brought to light, shared, and celebrated through a unique brand of cultural marketing established by the Turkish cultural centers and echoed in the movement of Fethullah Gülen.

The KTCC, like the IC, works to integrate incoming Turks, both immigrants and students, into American society while maintaining and promoting their own cultural traditions through intra-Turkish networks. "I participate in the cooking classes at the International House," Suveyda told me over tea one day, "and I also help the Turkish children with their homework. They are struggling in math and English." As the vast majority of Turkish individuals and family units coming into Knoxville practice Islam, Suveyda also teaches courses on Islam and the Qur'an for the children of Turkish and Turkish-American families at the KTCC. Suveyda, through her democratic political ideals and progressive religious beliefs, reflects larger trends in regards to Muslim Americans. For 60% of Muslims in America are "[aligned] with the Democratic party" and many, regardless of political affiliations, are taking more active roles in the U.S. public and political spheres and becoming more visible and influential in the process (Jones 2008:117-118). What is more, many of these active, public roles are being undertaken by Muslim women in the U.S. (Jones 2008:120).

Thus, staff at the KTCC volunteer their time in raising awareness and visibility of Turkish and Turkish-American peoples and culture not only in tutoring Turkish children in school subjects, the Turkish language and culture, and Islam, but through the Turkish cooking demonstrations held biweekly at the University of Tennessee's on-campus International House, or I-House, all of which act to reconfirm yet celebrate their own cultural difference. I attended the first of the spring 2010 semester's cooking classes on March 2, 2010 and watched and interacted with Suveyda and another Turkish woman, a woman who holds an MA degree in polymer engineering, as they showed myself and an audience of four other students and four other Turkish women and their children (all of whom I had met at the birthday party I attended with Suveyda in February) how to make *hasan pasa koftesi* (Turkish meatballs) and *pilav* (Turkish rice). Suveyda and the other Turkish ladies drove together to the I-House and arrived a few minutes late, explaining that lateness is a huge part of Turkish culture as they swept in and hugged me, placing kisses on my cheeks as we embraced.

As Suveyda and the others went to the kitchen to prepare for the demonstration, I sat in the great room with the other audience members and waited eagerly. What I had had of Turkish food up until that point had blown my mind and I was excited to be able to have the chance to eat more authentic Turkish cooking, a tradition that is paramount to Turkish women. I overheard an I-House staff member who was present, a person who should, by definition of her job, be appreciative of and open to other cultures and their cuisines, make a scathing remark which upset me. Contrarily, as I sat waiting, I heard her boyfriend ask "what are *they* making?" in a derogatory tone, to which she replied "probably something *weird.*" I felt as if I had been slapped upon hearing this ignorant

conversation and my eyes watered as Suveyda and the other female Turks as they entered the room excitedly, ready to share the fruits of their own cultural labors with us.

The meatball recipe was quintessentially Turkish: flavorful, rich, and flexible in that the recipe can be changed to incorporate a myriad of spices and preferences of the cook. Everybody in the audience was won over by the recipe and all voiced our intentions to try the recipe on our own. I said my goodbyes to Suveyda and the others, exchanging more hugs and kisses, before going to walk out. As I left the I-House's great room, I stole a glance at the staff member who had made the rude comment prior to the demonstration and was pleased to see her face. For she was not only still in her seat, enjoying her *hasan pasa koftesi* but she had an incredulous yet ecstatic expression as a result of what she had seen and what she was tasting. The first class was obviously a hit and gained some notoriety on campus because the second demonstration held on March 16, 2010 had thirteen people total in attendance. The next class on March 30 is expected to have even more people. These classes are taught exclusively by female Turkish graduate students who are also staff members of the KTCC, serving to reflect how "the contributions Turkish women in America make to the larger Gulen movement are great indeed," through their organization of and participation in cultural events and outreach programs through the Turkish cultural centers which represent "Gulen women's unique approach to *hizmet*, or service to greater humanity" (Curtis 2005:5). While many of these Turkish modes of contribution and outreach entail traditional female roles such as "entertaining guests" and "preparing and serving food, this will undoubtedly change as the movement changes in America," as exemplified through accomplished and involved Turkish Muslim women like Suveyda (Curtis 2005:5).

The KTCC has been growing by leaps and bounds, as it caters to the ever-increasing Turkish-American population in Knoxville. Moreover, it is in a crucial and interesting stage of growth and development, especially in contrast to the Istanbul Center of Atlanta. Therefore, the KTCC has recently procured a bigger, better facility in which to operate and host events. The grand opening of the KTCC's new location was to take place on April 2, 2010 however, the first event to be held in the new center was the March 7, 2010 International Women's Day Celebration event. The theme of the event was women, identity, and spirituality and featured two guest speakers, one of whom was a middle-aged American Christian woman while the other was a Turkish Muslim graduate student from Atlanta, Turkish tea, hors d'oeuvres, a flute performance, and a movie on women's rights entitled *North Country* which addressed issues of sexual discrimination and gender in the American work place. There were approximately twenty women, of even Turkish and American number, in attendance.

The second speaker, a Turkish woman named Elif, discussed how she bases her identity and spirituality as a female Muslim on key female figures within the religion of Islam: Khadija and Maryam (Mary). Elif, the second speaker, informed the all-female audience that Khadija, who was the first convert to Islam, is known as *al-Tahira*, the pure one, and how she represents not only a strong female Muslim role model but an extremely faithful, compassionate, and devoted practitioner of Islam. Thus, as discussed previously the wives (and daughters) of the prophet continue to be highly influential figures in the lives, actions, and beliefs of Muslim women in the contemporary era. "Without Khadija," Elif asserted, "Islam wouldn't have come through." She also discussed the importance of Maryam, stating that Maryam is considered "the most

righteous" woman within Islam because of her "absolute faith" and "submission to God." After her speech, all of us in attendance were treated to Turkish foods and teas while an African-American graduate student from the University of Tennessee's music department played a number of songs on her flute in accompaniment to the meal, effectively reflecting the importance of non-Muslim, non-Turkish Americans playing a role in the KTCC's first event at their new site.

The KTCC is a burgeoning organization within the community of Knoxville which represents a fecund avenue for future social research. At this point, the organization is made up of a handful of staff, few of whom have actual titles, who work together to delegate and distribute responsibilities and to brainstorm events and outreach activities. They depend upon their network of volunteers, individuals and family units from Knoxville's growing Turkish and Turkish-American population in addition to help and funding from the IC. There are fifty Turkish families living in Knoxville, all of whom are Muslim, as related to me by Suveyda, and half of the people from these fifty-plus Turkish families are directly involved with the KTCC. With the help of progressive volunteers and the connections and experience that the IC has to contribute to its "sister-organization," the KTCC will continue to grow and build a stronger, more educated, tolerantly pluralistic Knoxville. Considering the ever-increasing pluralisms of culture and religion that are being represented in the Southeast U.S., the KTCC will hopefully become more relevant, more involved in the community, more transformative in the future, more multidirectional, and addressed in further studies.

The Istanbul Center (IC) of Atlanta

"If the whole world were a single country, then Istanbul would be its capital" –Napoleon

The Istanbul Center (IC) of Atlanta is a 501c3 non-profit, non-religious, non-partisan, non-governmental organization and unit of the Global Spectrum Foundation, Inc., which is a subsidiary of Comcast and the world's fastest growing public assembly facility management firm (IC Website 2010). The Istanbul Center was founded in 2002 by Turkish-Americans "to promote a better understanding and closer relations between individuals and communities in Atlanta and the southeastern United States" (IC Website 2010). The organization is named after the Turkish city of Istanbul as a testament to the city's diversity, "richness of history and culture," and the fact that "above all Istanbul is a city that represents peaceful coexistence and beauty" as it was "the center of the world for two millennia" (IC Website 2010). Istanbul, and the country of Turkey at large, "connects East to West," which is why the Turkish Americans who established the Istanbul Center, a kind of cultural embassy, gave the organization its name; the IC "was established to emulate" ideals promoted by its namesake, "harmony: physically, culturally, and religiously" (IC Website 2010).

During my first visit to the Istanbul Center on January 13, 2010 I was informed that the IC chooses annual "themes." These themes are chosen by the United Nations and that this year's theme was "Who is My Neighbor?" while the previous year it had been "Alliance of Civilizations." These yearly themes are important as the IC's events and outreach activities are designed around them. The yearly UN/IC theme is also the title of each year's IC art and essay contest, an event that will be discussed at greater length later which exemplifies two of the IC's main four areas of concentration: education and

culture. The other two areas of concentration focused on by the IC are dialogue and humanitarian work.

The four main foci of the IC (dialogue, education, culture and humanitarian work) are what allow the organization to serve the city and communities of Metro Atlanta through a variety of activities and events. Therefore, dialogue and the creation of relations and facilitation of interactions between people of various faiths, politics, and identities are paramount to the IC. The IC promotes dialogue through events such as seminars, lectures and panels, breakfasts and luncheons, dialogue and friendship dinners and trips, outreach activities, and Abrahamic gatherings (gatherings made up of people of the three "Abrahamic" traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). First off, the IC promotes dialogue through seminars and lectures, especially their Distinguished Speaker Series (DSS). Morton Abramowitz, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research (1985-1989) and U.S. Ambassador to Turkey (1989-1991), was brought as a distinguished guest speaker by the IC and the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs to give a lecture entitled "Where does Turkey belong? Western Perceptions of Turkish Foreign Policy and the American Response" and answer questions at Georgia Tech's Wardlaw Center in Atlanta on February 25, 2010 as a part of the IC's DSS. Abramowitz discussed the importance of Turkey in regards to the U.S and addressed major issues that Turkey is facing today.

As with any nation, Abramowitz stated that Turkey is diverse, eclectic and in a constant state of change. He said that Turkey, an important U.S. ally, and both a Muslim country and burgeoning democracy whose "economic crisis started in 2000," had been hit hard by the world economic recession but that its economy is picking back up, despite

the third world conditions of the southern part of the country, that Turkey is moving more toward democracy and that "if [Turkey] grows 5-6% it will get into the European Union (EU) by the end of the decade" (Abramowitz 2003:1) As Suveyda said during the March 16, 2010 Turkish cooking demonstration at the I-house, Turkey is at a critical period, politically speaking, because of its internal issues and its diplomatic and geographical connections to other nations. Turkey is an incredibly important nation when considering the tensions – especially political, secular, and religious – occurring contemporarily in addition to the geopolitical context that is the democratic Islamic nation-state of Turkey itself. For Abramowitz detailed that this "is an incredible moment in modern Turkish history" as the country is becoming increasingly polarized with the two main sides being the secular side, which includes the Turkish military, and the religious side, being composed of the Islamic democratic AK party (Abramowitz 2003:10). It is important to note here that, as aforementioned, Turkey is not a Middle Eastern nation but, rather a nation made up of both European and Eastern (Asian) elements. For instance, "the Islamist movement in Turkey differs from those of other Muslim countries in two major respects," because "republican modernization policies have had a deep impact on Turkish society" and because "the political and social culture is different from that of other Islamic countries" (Celik 2003:62).

Turkey is an important ally of the U.S. and geopolitically, in general, because of its location. For Turkey is quite literally a bridge, the crossroads between the Western and Eastern parts of the world, leading any regime changes or shifts in economics or power therein to be paramount, and the rest of the world is paying close attention to Turkey as it is bordered by Syria, Iraq, Iran, Armenia, and Georgia. Obviously, the U.S. and the

nations of the EU have major issues with Iran, leading Turkish-Iranian and US-Turkish relations and decisions made by the Turkish government incredibly important to the U.S. The other nations above are not without contemporary problems, either, for instance, the historical issues Armenia has with Turkey have not only led to tension between Armenia and Turkey but between the U.S. and Turkey. For in March of 2010 the U.S. Congress voted to define the slaughter of Armenians in 1915 by Ottoman forces as "genocide," a decision which catalyzed protests, rallies, and vigils in both Turkey and the U.S. (Champion 2010:A14). Mass killings of Armenians and Kurds, who constitute a massive population in Nashville, Tennessee, by Ottoman or Turkish forces' are thus "neuralgic [issues] of history and identity" for Turks and dredging these issues up in the U.S. have recently led to much tension between the U.S. and Turkey, for "Turkey argues that the events…don't amount to genocide" and that "the killings took place during WWI, as the Ottoman Empire was disintegrating and under attack from all sides" (Champion 2010: A14).

The current issues within Turkey and contemporary relations and issues between the U.S. and Turkey were broached during Abramowitz's question and answer session when an elderly Armenian woman stood up and asked how Turkey could not realize that the mass killings of "1.5 million ethnic Armenians," including all of her father's family members, "through executions, mass deportations, starvation and other means in 1915" constituted a "genocide" (Champion 2010:A14). Nobody, neither Abramowitz nor the Turkish IC staff, gave her an answer, highlighting the fact that the Turkish cultural centers are mainly engaged in "safe" forms of cultural marketing such as cooking classes and dialogue sessions (and others to be discussed at greater length later in this chapter). It

is important to promote intercultural/interfaith interaction and dialogue through events such as these but when people in attendance - Turks or non-Turks, alike – feel as if they are promoting multiculturalism and diversity when important, critical issues are not only being glossed over but completely ignored, the pervasive problems of intolerance and discrimination are not being solved and may even actually be perpetuated and rendered invisible.

The military continues to be extremely powerful in Turkey, having staged more than five coups against the government in the past, and recent military plots in the same vein have been discovered. However, Abramowitz detailed that the influence of the military in Turkey is "very powerful" already and that the current government vs. military power struggle is not only polarizing the nation but harming Turkey's foreign relations and its change of becoming a member of the EU. Thus, akin to the U.S, Turkey is extremely polarized and "increasingly at war with itself." I asked Abramowitz what he thought both the U.S. and Turkey could do to minimize the increasing political and religious polarizations that are occurring with ever-growing frequency during his February 25, 2010 lecture and he replied that the only way for these forms of polarization to be reduced in either country is through culturally-specific modes. "Turkey's polarization is sociopolitical and has everything to do with the military and differing opinions of the role of religion, especially Islam" while the U.S. "has smaller issues," answered Abramowitz, most of which are "ideological." The IC is thus attempting to create real change and provoke rethinking of both historical and current issues and nations through their use of powerful connections and networks that the organization has forged which are exemplified through their DSS.

The IC also hosts monthly "dialogue nights" at its location in the Norcross area of the city of Atlanta. The dialogue nights are designed to catalyze positive action and interaction at the individual level because the IC recognizes that individuals are the building blocks of every society and that to make real change individual people need to be educated in culturally-relevant, reciprocal, interactive, engaging ways. Through dialogue nights the IC "[seeks] to create a positive atmosphere of dialogue, maintaining an objective experience of communication" that catalyzes "proactive direction in" the communities of Atlanta because safe environments of dialogue and education lead to acceptance and "positive action" which changes individuals, then communities, then nations, then the world (IC Website 2010).

I attended the dialogue night on February 11, 2010 and both witnessed and participated in the event. The event was made up of a few Turks (IC staff members) and 10-12 or more non-Turkish, non-Muslim Americans, one of whom was vociferously Christian. Each month's dialogue night has a different guest speaker and February's was a sociology professor/formerly ordained minister from Reinhardt College in Waleska, GA. The IC has been hosting monthly dialogue nights on the second Thursday of every month for the past three years. The guest speaker of each month is invited by the IC to speak for approximately 15-20 minutes then lead the following hour or two of discussion and answer questions therein. Prior to and during discussion, tea and other beverages and homemade Turkish foods are served. Anybody from the Atlanta community (and abroad, as I, a former Knoxville resident and graduate student, was obviously present) is welcome to come and discuss the IC's yearly theme, the dialogue night's topic of choice, engage in conversations with other people in attendance and enjoy Turkish refreshments.

The February dialogue night was attended by 15-25 people. Some left early, some came in late.

The atmosphere of these nights is thus very casual and sociable, or "loose," because they are designed to promote dialogue and friendship through food and the intelligent, tolerant sharing of personal beliefs and opinions (Curtis 2005: 4). As the outreach director of the IC said before introducing the guest speaker, this year's themes is "Who is My Neighbor?" and the IC believes hence that starting change from the bottom up, through individuals within the city of Atlanta, will ultimately create a "better, closer community" in which "everybody knows each other" and in which pluralisms and polyvocality are appreciated. These dialogue nights seemed to be the most multidirectional and integrative of all of the IC events which I attended in that both Turkish and American people contributed thoughts, stories, and beliefs, even discussing history, science, religion, and politics, in a mutual atmosphere of community in which anybody was welcome to speak out and be heard.

To continue, the IC promotes their second concentration, education, a concentration shared by the works and movement of Fethullah Gülen, through all of its activities and programs. Specifically, the IC provides educational opportunities for people of all ages, Turkish or not, through language classes, art classes, tutoring classes, camps and field trips, seminars and lectures, and PSAT/SAT classes. The IC seeks to more interactive and aware communities by educating K-12 students in addition to college students and adult individuals in Atlanta about their own different, unique Turkish culture while celebrating sameness and diversity in the Southeast, specifically Atlanta. A prime example of the IC's educational activities which stress diversity appreciation is the

annual Art and Essay Contest, “a co-curricular activity supported by the Georgia Department of Education” that has been conducted for the past four years that aims “to have students in middle and high schools think about solving social problems and to think ‘glocally’ at an early age” (Fulton 2009:1). The ultimate goal of this program is to “point students toward looking for global peace and intercultural understanding” (Fulton 2009:1). Students are encouraged to create art and essay compositions in tandem with the yearly theme and as of 2009 winners receive a ten-day, all-expense paid trip to Turkey. Student winners’ teachers are also granted an all-expense paid position on these yearly cultural trips. “Officials at the Istanbul Center” work with “the Minister of Education of Turkey, Turkish business leaders and cultural organizations in the country to fund the trip” (Dodd 2009:1).

During one of my many visits to the IC, I met and interviewed Debi West, head of the Art department of Atlanta’s North Gwinnett High School. Debi is a teacher who went on the IC’s cultural trip last year as a result of her student winning the IC’s annual Art and Essay Contest of 2008 based on the theme “Alliance of Civilizations.” The cultural trip that she went on was the first in which the IC sent U.S. students and teachers to Turkey. Debi is also an accomplished artist and works with photography, collage, and other mixed media projects. During our interview on February 26, 2010, she told me that she believes in “art with a purpose” and that her curriculum always includes elements of “empathy” and “global awareness.” After receiving an email from the superintendent of Gwinnett County schools which detailed the impending 2008 annual Art and Essay Contest, Debi tied in the theme with her lesson plan and school assignments, believing

this would not only help her students to win the contest but that they would become "better humans" in the process.

The future of the world depends on people, especially the youth of the world's nations, and Debi believed that this project and contest were paramount in the process of promoting intercultural and interfaith knowledge, awareness, and empathy. As she assigned the project she told me that she told her students "close your eyes" then "envision 'alliance of cultures' and go deep" with it through their compositions. "I didn't want any stereotypical bridges or peace signs," she explained. She had her students do preliminary sketches for two days before having them complete their ultimate, final composition to be entered in the contest. Then a group of teachers came in and judged Debi's students' compositions according to a rubric and the relation of the pieces to the UN/IC theme, alliance of cultures. Two months later Debi was contacted by the IC and informed that out of 1,100 state-wide entries that one of her students had won 2nd place and four others had received honorable mentions. She and her student accompanied the other people selected to go on the coveted annual cultural trip to Turkey which lasted 10 days. She said that they were "VIP" while they were in Turkey, meeting the Turkish ambassador to the U.S., the Prime Minister of Turkey, school heads in Istanbul and Ankara, representatives of news stations, dignitaries and Turkish families and students. "Changed minds and changed hearts," Debi told me as our interview came to a close, "equal changed lives."

Education and culture, especially cultural trips to Turkey (Balcı 2008:367), are main foci of the Gülen movement which ultimately aims to "disseminate and revitalize [Turkish] Islamic belief and practice" through the pretext of cultural and religious

marketing achieved and promulgated by networks of elite Islamic Turks, usually academics and businessmen and women (Balcı 2008:366-367), who are living abroad (Balcı 2008:365) and connected to organizations such as the KTCC and IC. Through activities that claim to solely "contribute to the implementation of Turkish nationalism" and the celebration of both culture and diversity abroad "rather than religious values" the Istanbul Center, like the *cemaat* (community of *fethullahci*, the followers of Gülen), represents a hidden yet "essentially Islamic" core culture and influence (Balcı 2008: 365).

Another example of the IC's focus on education is the newly organized science project which the IC is the U.S. representative for and in charge of. Ali Boztas, the Humanitarian Program Project Director of the IC, informed me that this nascent project is part of the International Environmental Project Olympiad (INEPO), an international science competition organized by a Turkish university in Istanbul. "This is a new project," Ali explained, and the IC is starting this project in Georgia's middle schools and high schools this year but will be extending it to include the entire Southeast as of next year. This project is similar to the well-known Art and Essay contest in that the winners of this international educational and awareness-raising contest will be sent to Turkey with their teachers on the yearly cultural trip that is organized by the IC.

Next, the Istanbul Center serves the Metro Atlanta community through its focus on culture, which the IC believes to be the "preeminent means of expressing deep concepts such as respect, love, beauty and hospitality" and understanding the world (IC Website 2010). The IC promotes culture through concerts and performances, cooking classes, sporting activities, festivals such as their yearly Annual Atlanta Turkish Festival, art exhibitions, and cultural trips to Turkey. The Annual Atlanta Turkish Festival is

hosted in the late summer or early fall of every year and has become a "staple of Atlanta's international cultural arts scene" as it is an event which "[provides] a great opportunity, and an excuse, to have fun, eat great food, and meet new people" (IC Website 2010). Each year, thousands of people attend the AATF which is usually composed of a weekend (Saturday and Sunday) full of food, drinks, and programs such as videos and musical and cultural performances such as dancing, puppetry, bands, and concerts. The IC also organizes yearly cultural trips to Turkey. As mentioned previously, student winners (and their teachers) of both the Art and Essay Contest and the INEPO science program are sent on these yearly cultural trips. Other people who are sent on the IC's yearly cultural trips reflect a trend also found within the Gülen movement in that the trips exclusively invite local and national "power players" such as community leaders, religious and political, successful business people, prominent academics, and members of the IC's advisory board "to come to Turkey" (Balcı 2008:367). These cultural trips reflect how "besides business and trade, all kinds of cultural and human relations of the local community are to be nurtured" both within the Gülen movement and the Turkish cultural centers of the Southeast U.S, contexts in which a specific form of moderate to liberal Turkish Islamism is promulgated and sameness and difference are highlighted through interfaith and intercultural encounters (Balcı 2008:367). It is advantageous for Turkey to have the IC making political and cultural networks akin to how the Gülen community is based upon "a complex web of business networks and controls a large media empire," an empire including *Zaman*, a daily newspaper promoted on the IC website, because participation in "a strong free market is necessary to produce economic wealth" (Yavuz 1999:597-8). This wealth allows for the "modern educational system designed to produce

and control knowledge," knowledge harnessed by Turkey, Glen, and the IC through academic, business, and cultural networks that is ultimately used to "empower Muslims and the Turkish state" (Yavuz 1999:597).

Lastly, the IC conducts humanitarian work. The IC believes in "[playing] a direct role in our communities" by helping needy people in the community, which not only makes a difference in the lives of those helped but actually inspires and makes a difference in the life of the volunteer(s), as well (IC Website 2010). Thus, the IC further reflects the Gülen movement in that it represents a form of "dialogic humanism" and "hizmet (service for humanity)" based upon "love, compassion, and dialogue" (Kim 2010) and aimed not only to promote toleration between Turks, especially Turkish Muslims, and non-Turkish Americans but to help the indigent and to ameliorate the main problems of misunderstanding and violence in contemporary multiethnic and pluralistic contexts such as the city of Atlanta, Georgia through a Gülen-esque "combination of mobilized money, knowledge, media and students" (Yavuz 1999:597).

Two months ago the IC appointed Ali Boztas, an MBA student from, as the Humanitarian Program Project Director. Ali has been in the U.S. for two years as a graduate student and had been working part-time as a volunteer with the IC for the six months prior to his appointment as the organization's Humanitarian Program Project Director. Humanitarian projects that the IC conducts which Ali is directly involved in include assisting incoming Turks and other newcomers such as refugees, Turkish and non-Turkish, helping the indigent and hungry people, especially the 10,000 Atlanta homeless individuals, visiting hospitals and nursing homes, and aiding disaster victims such as those impacted by the February 2010 earthquake in Haiti. The IC has partnered

with the Atlanta Community Food Bank, the president of whom sits on the IC's advisory board, and donates items regularly and on holidays. In addition, the IC collaborates with nearby Kennesaw State University in hosting a yearly "homeless" week in which activities such as panels are hosted to raise awareness and food and services are donated to homeless people.

In addition to helping the needy and the homeless, the IC has also become increasingly involved in providing services to incoming refugees in Atlanta. Ali told me that there is a considerable refugee population living in nearby Stone Mountain, GA, and that the IC has partnered with the local refugee organization, Refugee Family Services, in order to engage in collaborative humanitarian projects conducted by volunteers and associated people and groups that focus on advancing the lives of the refugees through educating the children, providing medical support, and spending time with individual and family units. The IC and Refugee Family Services also host a festival every March for the refugees. This event is geared toward raising funds, amassing donations, and raising awareness.

The structure of the IC and the initiatives set forward by the organization's executive director, Tarik Celik, are paramount. It is interesting, though, that despite claiming to be a non-governmental, non-religious organization that all of the Turkish staff members with whom I discussed religion (at both the IC and KTCC, with the KTCC actually holding weekly Qur'an classes) were openly Muslim. In fact, while given the initial tour of the IC, my guide and I walked in on a Muslim staff member praying in a posture of submission on a rug on the floor in one of the conference rooms. Thus, the staff is acting upon their liberal, progressive Islamic beliefs, even though Islam is not

mentioned at all in any of the organization's literature, website, or brochures, in order to mobilize and effect change through the IC's outreach programs. However, it is important to note that despite the mission of the IC being outreach and Turkish-American integration, that the staff are not only all Turkish Muslim but the office space itself is decorated in specific Turkish manners: silver teapots, trinkets, and Turkish candies rest upon the coffee and end tables scattered upon books on Istanbul and Turkey while Turkish flags and portraits of Turkish leaders, both historical and contemporary, grace the walls. Realizing this uni-directional Turkish skewing of the IC, present executive director Tarik Celik is working to balance the promotion of "Turkishness," cultural boundary-marking and difference by hiring non-Turkish American staff members and establishing an IC advisory board comprised solely of non-Turkish Americans.

In 1998, Tarik came to the U.S. as a professional chemist with the intention of working as dean of a private university in Fairfax, VA. After working there for more than six years one of his former students from Turkey who was working as a principal in a U.S. school contacted him and told him about the Istanbul Center of Atlanta and how they were looking to hire a new executive director. Thus, Tarik came to the IC and like what he saw as many of the kinds of programs they were initiating, especially the educational initiatives, were the types of events that he is interested in and doing in his spare time. In August of 2007, Tarik Celik became the director of the IC, and by January 2008 the organization had grown so much that they expanded to a new, second location in midtown Atlanta, where their headquarters currently reside.

Upon being hired as the executive director, Tarik decided that the IC needed to be more inclusive in its staff and he proposed a novel idea: hire a non-Turk employee at the

center who was familiar with the southeastern U.S. After negotiating with his staff for months, a non-Turkish American woman was hired from more than a thousand submissions as an administrative assistant. A diverse staff is important because the IC, as a partner of the Turkish-American Chamber of Commerce (TACC), promotes Turkish culture while celebrating diversity within communities such as Atlanta. IN 2008, Tarik also had the idea to form an advisory board for the IC made up completely of non-Turkish Americans, power players that could give valuable, much-needed feedback to and forge substantive connections for the IC. The advisory board is thus made up of twelve American individuals and meets quarterly to review programs, edit documents, and brainstorm on how to better spread the IC's messages and goals while also effectively integrating non-Turkish Americans into the organization.

The IC "is more powerful and efficient," Tarik told me during one of our interviews, thanks to these important American perspectives and the creativity manifested therein. Polyvocality in regards to Americans, Turkish-Americans, and Turks and interactions therein are paramount. "I am a chemist and chemistry is based on reactions," Tarik says, "and ninety-percent of reactions are multidirectional. It is the same with society, which is why we need to increase programs that allow for integration and for the larger community." Thanks to Tarik's integrative efforts, the IC has grown by leaps and bounds. "There are so many programs that we are involved in," he told me. The IC hosts, co-sponsors, or is involved with over one-hundred programs annually and the IC works with more than fifty powerful organizations in the Southeast U.S. in addition to more than twenty in Turkey. "Thirty-thousand people were reached face-to-face" this past year by the IC, Tarik explains, through the three-hundred media coverages, including U.S.

newspaper articles and television spots, and twenty programs on Turkish television, that the organization disseminated. The IC, akin to Fethullah Gülen, thus recognizes that change and education, in addition to cultural marketing and the spread of Turkish Islam, has to start with individuals but that these individuals must be reached one-on-one in face-to-face forums, such as dialogue nights, festivals, or dinners, but also through national and international programs, media coverage, and cultural trips.

CONCLUSION

"The hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who remain neutral in times of great moral conflict." –Martin Luther King, Jr.

"What is needed today in America is a recognition by both religious and nonreligious peoples that the days are past when any one group, whether religious or nonreligious, can dictate a comprehensive philosophy that will prevail for the whole of the people." (Hutchinson 2003:232-233).

Summarily, this project was undertaken to collect anthropological and ethnographic data on Muslim student, immigrant and refugee populations in Knoxville and Atlanta. The goal was to bring to light contributions and life experiences of Muslim, Turkish, and Middle Eastern people in the U.S. This data has been synthesized and analyzed herein relative to existing literature on Muslim, Middle Eastern, Turkish, Turkish Muslim, and Middle Eastern Muslim populations in America to better understand the status of and experiences associated with being a Muslim of Middle Eastern or Turkish heritage in the southeastern United States. I interviewed fifteen people, either formally informally, or both, and interacted with an excess of thirty people during the course of fieldwork for this thesis case study in the southeastern cities of Knoxville, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia. Muslim participants were predominantly graduate students enrolled at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and staff members of either the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center or the Istanbul Center of Atlanta. This project

reveals how these Turkish Muslim and Arab Muslim populations are youthful and not only growing but becoming more visible and actively, publicly engaged in political, religious, and cultural forums while simultaneously reconfirming and consolidating their own unique identities and celebrating them privately and publicly through the American ideals of diversity, rights, and freedom of religion.

Anthropology as a discipline has much to contribute and needs to be more accessible to the U.S. public at large through research such as this thesis project because intolerance, polarization, and otherness are occurring on a grand scale (Rich 2010) and manifesting in conflict and even violence (Kim 2010) everyday in the contemporary world. "The sense for the other, for otherness, is both becoming lost and becoming more acute" in contemporary society as is the waning "aptitude for tolerating otherness-difference," rendering the need for cultural education and studies in history and contemporary politics and East-West relations paramount (Augé 1999:xv). Intolerance and polarization are occurring as a result of "the central problem of today's global interactions," which Arjun Appadurai (2008:515) relates to be "the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization," a tension which organizations such as the IC and KTCC are seeking to resolve. The IC and KTCC are attempting to act as socio-cultural palliatives through reconfirmation and celebration of sameness and difference within the veins of diversity, outreach and education (2008:515).

Tensions, misunderstandings, and stereotypes must be resolved because there is no changing the fact that the Southeast U.S., specifically the case study fieldwork sites of Knoxville, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia, is becoming increasingly diverse and pluralistic. Coexistence, "a concept that encompasses a wide range of efforts at all

societal levels," is being enacted by the Turkish cultural centers in the Southeast "to address the challenges that arise when different groups (such as cultural and religious groups) seek to live together" (Tyler 2006: 5). As various peoples and cultures come into frequent, if not ever-increasing, contact with each other in the Southeast, especially the interactions between Arab or Turkish Muslims and native-born, non-Muslim Americans, awareness of diversity, education, and tolerance - all of which are lessons that anthropologists are qualified to disseminate - are incredibly important if the contemporary interconnected, global system and every society within is to function because "intolerance itself creates, invents and structures otherness" (Augé 1999:xv).

Anthropological knowledge, in tandem with history and other social sciences, "[provides] accurate knowledge about other places and societies, it gives us an appreciation of other experiences and the equal value of all human life," and because, in doing so, "it helps us understand ourselves" in addition to sameness and difference shared with "the other" (Eriksen 2006:130). Anthropologists must, then, conduct future research at cultural centers such as the Knoxville Turkish Cultural Center and the Istanbul Center of Atlanta in order to better understand and explain how these organizations function and act as socio-cultural pressure valves, sites of identity formation and both cultural and religious expressions, especially if the pervasive religious and political aspects are downplayed to such a high degree as they are in the Turkish cultural centers of the Southeast. For, through promotion of a specific Turkish cultural identity and a pervasive yet practically invisible form of moderate if not liberal Turkish Islamism (Balcı 2008: 379), the KTCC and IC - like the Gülen movement itself - reflect a form of "hidden proselytism" (Balcı 2008: 365).

These forms of hidden proselytism and cultural marketing must be brought to light and explicated accurately by anthropologists and other social scientists before they are discovered by people who may misunderstand, fear, and even act out against the Turkish cultural centers and Muslims, in general, in the Southeast. Thus, the intended audience and scope of this thesis are as diverse as the sample populations and individuals who were interviewed and observed during the fieldwork process. It is my goal that this project be academically relevant yet also germane and accessible to interested everyday, non-anthropologically oriented American citizens.

"Critical engagement brought about by activist research" such as anthropology, writes Shannon Speed, "is both necessary and productive" in contemporary multiethnic and pluralist nation-states such as the U.S. (2006:66). For only when anthropologists, persons whose careers and reputations center on work which focus upon people, step into the fray and make sense of situations, issues, and interfaith/intercultural interactions and perceptions for the greater public, will awareness be raised the misconceptions be cleared and peoples' rights upheld (Speed 2006:67). Forms of hidden Islamic proselytism, especially in the Southeast, an area in the U.S. that is known for intolerance and Islamophobia, must be further studied and researched by anthropology and other social sciences in the future order to be accurately represented to the U.S. media and the public, both of which generally misrepresent and fear Muslims and the religion of Islam.

Islamic and Middle Eastern cultural elements were first transported to the territory now known as the United States by Christopher Columbus, a fact that most Americans are largely unaware of. On his first voyage to the New World in 1492, Columbus's crew contained two brothers of Islamic origin who captained the Pinta and Nina (Amir

Muhammad 2005). Columbus also utilized the works of Arab astronomers and geographers in tandem with an Arab mariner's compass to discover the New World and change the course of history for better or for worse (Curiel 2008:2,4). Thus, Columbus "knew that without Arab [and Islamic] knowledge" (Curiel 2008:3) that he would not have discovered the New World. It is then through the historical figure of Columbus that "the seeds of Islam" were planted in America (Curiel 2008:1). The seeds of Islam and Middle Eastern culture in the U.S., even the Southeast, have only grown since they were first planted.

As of 2008, an estimated 2.35 million Muslims live in the U.S., the majority of whom are first-generation immigrants whose parents who came to America from more than 68 countries, including Turkey and countries in both Africa and the Middle East (Jones 2008:115). More than thirty-six percent of America's Muslim population was born here and the majority of "American Muslims are young," with nearly seventy-five percent of the American Muslim population being under fifty years of age (Johnson 2005:226). Persons interviewed and interacted with from the selected populations reflect these broad patterns, especially since all interviewed and observed were under fifty years of age with the exception of one older Iraqi refugee couple encountered at a social gathering.

The numbers of Muslim people - especially Turkish and Arab Muslim people such as those discussed in this case study – continue to rise dramatically in the contemporary Southeast and the greater U.S. As Muslim populations from Turkey and the Middle East, populations made up of immigrants, students, and refugees, continue to grow in the southeastern cities of Knoxville, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia, they come

into increasing contact - physically, economically, geographically, and socially - with native-born, non-Muslim, non-Turkish, non-Middle Eastern Americans. It is crucial that mutual understanding and coexistence be established through the individuals such as anthropologists and organizations such as the Turkish cultural centers. It is only through mutual understanding, mutual expression of religious freedom, and interactions that coexistence and polyvocality may be fostered in pluralistic communities in the contemporary world.

Conflict, even "identity conflict is frequently unavoidable" but addressing differences or "tensions…in a constructive environment of tolerance and mutual respect," such as outreach and diversity events hosted by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, or the IC or KTCC as discussed earlier, will establish coexistence and "lessen religious, cultural, and sociopolitical discord" (Tyler 2006: 5). Coexistence, in tandem with dialogue, education, and nonviolent forms of conflict resolution, "is a pragmatic desideratum for reframing the complex inimical relationship between Islam and the West" (Tyler 2006: 5), a reframing that is completely necessary everywhere in which Muslims and non-Muslims are living in communities and participating in life ways that bring them into contact with each other, such as the southeastern U.S.

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