

WHEN RELIGION AND ORGANIZATION CONFLICT

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## ABSTRACT

### WHEN RELIGION AND ORGANIZATION CONFLICT

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After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the United States became a much different place to live and work for Muslim-Americans. Muslims are one of most discriminated, misunderstood, and feared groups in the US. This qualitative study used survey questionnaires to explore the potential role conflicts in the workplace faced by Muslim-Americans as they navigate their way through a post 9/11 world. In the workplace, Muslim-Americans are very aware of how they are viewed by other Muslims and non-Muslims alike. These views are considered when Muslim-Americans act and play a large role in what action and communication is selected. However it was noted that rather than role conflicts, Muslim-Americans appear to struggle more with role balancing and role ambiguity. Moreover, Muslim-Americans working in industries considered *haraam* are faced with a unique set of identity dilemmas and justification for their continued service in these fields was explored.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

September 11, 2001 was a landmark date in American and world history. It was an event that altered the lives of so many throughout the world. It affected millions of Americans, particularly the families who lost family members in the attack as well as the family members who directly or indirectly affected by the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. It has also dramatically affected the lives of the many Muslim-Americans who call the United States their home.

My study compares Muslim and non-Muslim issues of religious or spiritual identity in an organizational setting, a topic that is particularly salient for Americans since September 11th, 2001. In particular, I will be exploring comparisons between Muslims and individuals from other faiths. This study will arguably make an important contribution to the literature on religion in organizational settings and how we communicatively address, through verbal and nonverbal means, the various ways people from different faiths negotiate their religious (and spiritual) identity. There is little literature on both. Because this study is comparative in nature, it is possible gain a better understanding about what religious identity issues at work are particular to Muslims, non-Muslims, as well as issues that are shared.

To lay the groundwork for this thesis, I will begin addressing the concept of identity. Identity has been a source of communication inquiry for a long time. After addressing inquiry, I

will briefly couch the discussion of identity within an intercultural lens. Religion and spirituality are important topics of research within the cross-cultural and intercultural literature. After discussing identity and intercultural communication, I then turn to role conflict, the main theory used in this thesis. After covering the main tenets of the theory, I introduce a number of issues that are relevant to having a better understanding about issues of spirituality and religion at work, including an overview of Islam, Muslims in the workplace, legal issues related to religious expression, and employer concerns related to religion in the workplace.

The concept of "identity" is somewhat fluid, yet relatively stable. Identity is something that can and does change. Additionally, it might be more precise to say that the study explores how individuals identify with certain principles of their faith. I take the position that an individual has multiple identities, which are partly determined by the roles performed in society. Conceivably roles, and the expectations about roles, may conflict with one another. To take a non-religious example, a single mother may be going back to school to obtain a college degree. For purposes of illustration, the individual has at least three identities, two of which were stated in the previous sentence. The individual is a mother, which carries a set of expectations about how the individual should relate. The individual is a student, which carries another set of expectations. Finally, unstated is the fact that the individual is a woman, which carries assumptions about what it means to be a woman in the world. The illustration could be extended to include the categories of age and class, *inter alia*.

Religious or spiritual identity in an organizational setting was chosen because it has received less empirical attention than other types, such as gender or sexual orientation (e.g., queer studies), which have both been studied in depth since about 1970 (Huber, 2007). Just as

important, September 11th, 2001 was a defining moment in the history of not only the United States, but also the world. Although many non-Muslims may have been aware of Islam before hand, it has increased since that event according to Pew data. Moreover, the United States is based on pluralism, *e pluribus unum*, or out of many, one. As will be described later, Muslim individuals have to overcome a great deal to integrate into mainstream society. However, it would be an overstatement to say or assume that all Muslims want to fully integrate into "mainstream" society as some of the values are antithetical to their religious beliefs. Therein lies the rub. What happens if there is some conflict between the tenets of a Muslim's faith and some aspect of living in society? In essence, how does an individual deal with role conflict or role ambiguity? This is a question that pertains to any individual but is particularly relevant to Muslims. This question is especially relevant for Muslims due to the increased harassment and discrimination they face in a post 9/11 United States.

As will be discussed in a later section, individuals who actively practice their faith are desirable as organizational members. Desirable qualities include enhance creativity, honesty, trust, and commitment within an organization (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2002) to name a few. However, the main reason the organization was chosen as the primary context is because it is at work where we are most likely to interact with individuals from other backgrounds, including people from different religious backgrounds and spiritual perspectives. It is an area of life where the individual has less control over whom he or she works with. The other context would be educational settings.

## 1.1. Problematizing the Context

There is not much definitive public data available regarding American Muslims. The US Census is forbidden by law, from demanding that anyone reveal his or her religion. Muslims, allegedly, do not account for a substantive amount of the 307 million people in the United States. In 2007, Pew Research estimated that there are more than 2.3 million Muslims in the US (Dougherty, 2008) while the CIA Factbook estimates Muslims account for only .6% of the total US population, or about 1.8 million people (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>).

Current public opinion polling regarding Muslims and Islam gives us a snapshot of how accepting Americans are of this particular minority group. Most of the polling data indicates that the public does not have a favorable opinion of Muslims and Islam. According to recent Pew Research (2009), Muslims face more discrimination within the U.S. than any other religious group. In fact, among all minority groups, only gays and lesbians are perceived to face more discrimination. “To be a Muslim in America now is to endure slings and arrows against your faith” (Ghosh, 2010). A Time — Abt SRBI poll found that 46% of Americans believe Islam is more likely than other faiths to encourage violence against nonbelievers while only 37% of Americans reported actually knowing a Muslim American (Ghosh, 2010). This could be because images of violence overseas in the name of Islam have come to define the faith for many non-Muslims (Zoll, 2010; Haddan, 1997) and perpetuate xenophobia at home while ignorance about what Islam teaches is widespread (Zoll, 2010).

Research suggests that white Americans garner a bulk of information about other racial and ethnic groups from the media (Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Wänke, 1995). The Tan,

Fujioka, and Tan (2000) model hypothesizes that “the valence of portrayals of racial and ethnic minorities on television (i.e., positive or negative) predicts stereotypic responses associated with these groups” (Mastro & Kopacz, 2006, p.305). For example, Oliver and Fonash (2002) found that white consumers (irrespective of level of prejudice) were significantly more likely to erroneously identify seeing a Black suspect in newspaper stories when the article pertained to violent crime (Mastro & Kopacz, 2009). On the other hand, when the story addressed nonviolent crime, misidentification of white suspects was higher (though not statistically significant) (Mastro & Kopacz, 2009). Similarly, Oliver (1999) found that immediately after exposure to a crime newscast, whites were no more likely to incorrectly identify Blacks as criminal suspects than whites.

Perceptions toward Muslims and knowledge about Islam in this country are somewhat mixed with emphasis falling on the objectionable end of the spectrum. In another recent poll by the Pew Forum for Religion & Public Life, more than half of respondents said they knew little or nothing about the Muslim faith (Zoll, 2010). Yet another Pew Research survey reported nearly one in five Americans believe that President Obama is a Muslim; those who say he is a Muslim overwhelmingly disapprove of his job performance, while a majority of those who think he is a Christian approve of the job Obama is doing (Montopoll, 2010). In other words, if one does not like President Obama, they believe he is a Muslim. If one does like President Obama, they do not believe he is a Muslim. This sentiment is supported by a separate poll where 28 percent of Americans believed that Muslims should not be allowed to sit as a Supreme Court justice. Moreover, nearly one in three said Muslims should not be permitted to run for president (Montopoll, 2010).

Anxiety towards Muslims can be seen by contrasting reactions to two of the deadliest terrorist attacks in U.S. history: the Oklahoma City bombing and the September 11th attacks. On April 19, 1995 Timothy McVeigh bombed the Arthur P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City. At the time, this act was considered the deadliest display of terrorism this country had ever endured. The backlash this exhibition of homegrown terror created was not one of aggressive hatred toward White Anglo Saxon Protestants, which is a label that could be used to classify McVeigh. Rather, Congress tightened *habeas corpus* procedures (Freedman, 2001) by enacting the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 or AEDP. Congress also signed into law the Victim Allocation Clarification Act of 1997 which gave victims the right to view the trial proceedings and provide victim impact testimony (Lucas, 1997). Additionally, Congress passed legislation that would require customers to produce identification when purchasing ammonium nitrate fertilizer, and for sellers to maintain records of its sale (Vartabedian, 2007), as well as closing off Pennsylvania Avenue to vehicular traffic in front of the White House.

In contrast, Lee (2007) reports that Muslims in the US are increasingly the targets of hate messages, harassment, violence, false arrests, and intimidation. Some major legislation to come in response to 9/11 includes the Department of Homeland Security, The Patriot Act, and designating September 11th as Patriot Day on the American calendar to name a few (<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/terrorleg.htm>). It also birthed the war in Afghanistan and the largest manhunt in US history for Osama Bin Laden. In short, the events of 9/11 created an entirely new branch of government. From these results, it appears evident which episode the US government considered more important.

Although the US government was concerned about Islamic terrorist groups (e.g. Al Qaeda) they did recognize that in post 9/11 America, Muslims would face a much more intense status quo. The US passed H.CON.RES.227 a resolution condemning bigotry and violence against Arab-Americans and American Muslims and S.RES.173 a resolution condemning violence and discrimination against Iranian-Americans in the wake of 9/11 (<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/terrorleg.htm>).

The response to 9/11 and the treatment of American Muslims demonstrate to some degree how the American government has attempted to learn from its history. On December 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor was attacked by Japan. That same day, the US Justice Department organized the arrest of approximately 3000 people whom it considered dangerous enemy aliens, half of whom were Japanese (NPS, 2005). In mid-February 1942, the vast majority of a congressional committee hearing supported the removal of all Japanese, alien and citizen, from the west coast and placed them into internment camps or relocation zones in what is known as Executive Order 9066 (Drinnon, 1987). During the war the personal rights, liberties, and freedoms of Japanese-Americans were taken away by the US. It took roughly 46 years for the US to issue a formal apology in the form of the civil liberties act of 1988 (<http://digital.lib.csus.edu/mats/history.php>). No legislation was passed immediately following WWII to protect Japanese-Americans from the discrimination they faced when they returned home and even the order forcing them to relocate to camps was met with nominal hesitation (NPS, 2005). By enacting the two above listed resolutions, the US government is aiming to protect Muslim American relations, by law, in a way they failed to do for Japanese Americans during WWII.

After the terrorist attacks on September 11th, Americans have become increasingly aware of the Muslim presence at home. However, increased awareness does not necessarily lead to a reduction in ignorance. Based on the Pew public opinion data, intolerance towards the religion of Islam and Muslim culture is an issue that requires further inquiry. Added to the list of Muslim mistreatment is workplace discrimination. "Islamophobia has become the accepted form of racism in America," says Muslim-American writer and commentator Arsalan Iftikhar, "You can always take a potshot at Muslims or Arabs and get away with it" (TheMuslimGuy.com). In an experimental study, Ghumman and Jackson (2008) found that Muslims wearing religious identifiers were rated the most employable for low status jobs and least employable for high status jobs.

Therefore, Muslims (in the workforce and in society) potentially face discrimination and threats to their Muslim identity even though they are protected by law. Should the values of Muslim's interfere with their job functions or ability to work (Bell & Haque, 2003)? "According to Islamic teachings, fulfilling the duties of an employer is a fiduciary responsibility and an act of worship" (Ball & Haque, 2003, p.325). This raises a number of issues for practicing Muslims working in the US. Important issues are how avid Muslims manage the multiple roles they fulfill when a company's product and/or service conflict with their religious obligations or the organizations values are not in line with the individuals.

## 1.2. Theoretical perspectives

Several theories address the imbalances that individuals face and techniques used to overcome or poise these competing cognitions such as person-environment fit theory (Feij, van

der Velde, Taris, & Taris, 1999), social-exchange theory (Crede, Chernyshenko, Stark, Dalal, & Bashshur, 2007), personal value placement (Hyde & Weathington, 2006), and self-categorization theory (Hogg, & Terry, 2000). This study will focus on role-conflict theory- a branch of role theory.

Role conflict originally defined by Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964), is defined as the "simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other" (p. 19). Role conflict was selected as an applicable theory because, as Ball and Haque (2003) describe, a committed Muslim in the workplace has a dual role: trying to fulfill his/her responsibilities as an employee and responsibilities to God as a God-fearing Muslim. This role balancing is thought to be increasingly difficult when the product or service offered by an organization challenges major tenets of Islam or presents added difficulty for the committed Muslim. An example of role conflict is a father who is also the coach of his son's baseball team. The man takes on both the role of father and coach. If the boy makes a bad play in the game, a father would be inclined to support and comfort his son. A coach, however, would be inclined to explain to the boy exactly what he did wrong. This disagreement represents role conflict where two roles in an individual's role set cannot cooperate in a specific social situation.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Intercultural communication competence is crucial for the peaceful co-existence of citizens of the world in the current century. As discussed later, intercultural competence is not only important for living in a heterogeneous society, but also for organizational purposes. Although this study focuses on role conflict in organizations, specifically religious and organizational identity, it is perhaps best understood within an intercultural lens.

#### 2.1. Communication and identity

Identity has always been an important topic of inquiry for communication scholars and allied fields. Most notably, the symbolic interactionist perspective made an important contribution to understanding how the individual is constructed symbolically in particular contexts (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). Mead was crucially interested in notions of the self and in larger questions of identity. Mead popularized the concept of the "looking-glass self". It is not possible to know thyself through introspection alone. One only comes to learn about the real self when engaged in interactions with others. Mead was also interested in the role of perspective taking. The self is constantly being revised as the individual in a society addresses the subjective (I) and the objective (me) notions of the self. While undergoing this process, individuals are also incorporating the attitudes of others into their definition of self. An important aspect of Mead's

view of self in society is that individuals communicate with others in a community when there is something practical to communicate about. This pragmatic concern lends itself to cooperative activities.

Blumer was influenced by Mead and his thoughts regarding the self in society (or more accurately, the self in a community). Blumer contributed the idea that individuals assign meaning to things and people. Based on these given meanings, we act accordingly. Moreover, Blumer privileged the role of language in meaning construction. One of the most central tenets of the symbolic interactionist perspective is that meanings reside in people, not in things or objects. In other words, the locus of meaning resides in the agency of the meaning producer. Meaning is something that is constructed.

The symbolic interactionist perspective and the perspective's attention to the micro-sociological level of analysis were influential to many scholars. Erving Goffman was a seminal figure in sociology that further explored the various ways the individual managed and presented the self. One theme present in all of his writings is the concept of self-identity and performance. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1959) lays out a sophisticated view of the self in situated contexts. Two concepts from his seminal work are important for this thesis, performances and region. The concept of performance underscores the idea that we are playing a role for an audience. In fact, we are playing several roles. The individual needs to believe in the part that he or she is playing. Roles may be performed in the "front region" or the "back region". Of interest to most scholars is the front region. When an individual perform in the front region, or "on stage", he or she is intentionally trying to project an identity for others (the audience).

Some parts translate more easily than others into novel situations. If the performer knows what is expected out of a role, it is easier to perform in other contexts. If the requirements are unclear, it becomes problematic. Goffman calls this tension "dramatic realization". This dramatic principle is relevant to this thesis. A Muslim may have a clear idea of how to perform as a Muslim in religious contexts, when associated with those of the same faith. However, in novel situations, or when there is potential for conflict, knowing how to perform is less clear.

The idea of performance is also embedded in Goffman's treatment of facework in another nominal work, *The Interaction Ritual* (Goffman, 1967). Similar to Mead, Goffman considers the notion of face to be constructed in the interaction of others. Goffman uses the term "line" to describe face. Others impute a line of action to us. The face is a type of mask that represents the self. Individuals want their lines of action (or face) to be accepted. As such, they work carefully to manage their impression when with others.

## 2.2. Intercultural communication and identity

The concept of face is one of the most important concepts in intercultural communication. Although cultures prioritize the protection of face differently, there are going to be times when face is threatened. Ting-Toomey (1985) proposed a theory attempts to explain how and when individuals use facework strategies to manage conflict. There are three main parts of the theory, type of culture, type of facework, and type of conflict management. Ting-Toomey uses Hall's (1976) dichotomy of high and low context cultures to predict what type of facework strategy will be used. A high context culture tends to be collectivistic in nature and relies on the context of the situation. Meanings are deeply embedded in contexts. In contrast, a low context

culture tends to be individualistic in nature and relies on precise language to communicate meaning. America is more of an individualistic country whereas the countries where Islam is more prevalent tend to be more collectivistic. People from high context cultures tend to be other-oriented and use facework strategies that enhance the positive self-image of others (called positive face strategies). When there is conflict, they tend to manage conflict by using strategies such as obliging, compromising, and avoiding conflict all together. Conversely, people from low context cultures are prone to using face-restoration strategies. These tend to be reactions based on past face transgressions rather than future-oriented. Conflict strategies associated with individuals from low context cultures include integration and domination.

Ting-Toomey has updated her Face-Negotiation Theory with several new propositions (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). The basics of the theory remain the same. The main import for this thesis is that individuals from different cultural background are centrally concerned about face. Face is an important aspect of identity, as noted in the work of the symbolic interactionists. Different cultural backgrounds may lead to different strategies for dealing with issues of identity. The remainder of this literature review is dedicated to articulating how conflict comes about in a particular context, organizational settings.

### 2.3. Role Conflict Theory

Role conflict occurs when two or more roles are partially or entirely incompatible. These roles are in competition for salience and the social actor must find ways to balance and manage these competing cognitions. Traditionally, role conflict has been examined in the context of organizations. Examples of role conflict in organizational studies include Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn,

Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964), Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970), and Jackson and Schuler (1985). There are a number of reasons that scholars have been interested in role conflict, which include stress, organizational commitment, and effects on productivity.

In the early development of role conflict theory, scholars were primarily interested in the impact of the organization on the individual. Role conflict has mainly stayed in the organizational arena but encompassed almost all types of work environments (Fisher & Gitelson 1983; Jackson & Schuler 1985; Johnston, Futrell, Parasuraman, & Black 1990). For example, these work environments include nursing and engineering (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Conley, 1991), education (Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982), and sales (Orville, Walker, Churchill, & Ford, 1975) to name a few. Role conflict theory has not advanced very much since the seminal work conducted in the 70's and 80's. However, it is still a vital theory, with more recent work expanding into the realm of work-family conflict (Boles, et al., 2003) and even sports organizations (Sakries, Doherty, & Misener, 2009). To date, role conflict theory has not examined the role of religion or culture.

Role conflict generally falls under the umbrella term of role stress (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009; Boles, Wood, & Johnson, 2003) and occurs when “a job possesses inconsistent expectations incongruent with individual beliefs, a situation that precipitates considerable frustration and other negative work outcomes” (Valentine, Godkin, & Varca, 2010, p.455). Moreover, by complying with one role, they [employees] cannot effectively comply with other roles (Katz & Kahn, 1966). The effect of role conflict in an organizational setting is stress. In the organizational setting, stressors occur when workers recognize that they “cannot meet the demands of the moment and still remain within their role as defined by the institution”

(Valentine, Godkin, & Varca, 2010, p.455). Role conflict emerges because of confusing, poorly supported, and/or divergent job demands that often collide with core values, beliefs, or motives (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970).

Some parallels of role conflict theory are role stress and role ambiguity, which have also been shown to accelerate burnout, low job satisfaction and work commitment (Perrewé, Zellars, Ferris, Rossi, Kacmar, & Ralston, 2004; Rizzo et al., 1970; Singh et al., 1994, 1996; Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009). Role ambiguity occurs when employees lack adequate direction and are confounded as to how to perform on the job (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009). Since its assimilation into the organizational psychology literature, role ambiguity has been a fruitful topic for many organizational scholars (e.g., King & King, 1990; Orqvist & Wincent, 2006; Tubre & Collins, 2000). Furthermore, the consequences of role ambiguity have been well documented in a number of settings (Sakries, Doherty, & Misener, 2009), such as education (Koustelios, Theodorakis, & Goulimaris, 2004; Thompson, McNamara, & Hoyle, 1997; Wolverton, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 1999), recreation (Pavelka, 1993), health care (Chang & Hancock, 2003), human service organizations (Pousette, Jacobsson, Thylefors, & Hwang, 2003), and nonprofits (Wright & Millesen, 2008). Furthermore, in business and industry, role ambiguity has been associated with decreased job performance, satisfaction, and commitment in business and industry (Abramis, 1994; Beard, 1996; Chang & Chang, 2007; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Singh, 1998; Tubre & Collins, 2000; Yun, Takeuchi, & Liu, 2007).

Early role conflict research focused on contradictory demands within a single workplace, research also suggests that role conflict becomes salient when employee's face paradoxical roles in society (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009). Since individuals work life also trickles into their

personal life (Dalton, 2003), role conflict/stress/ambiguity is something that employee's must consistently monitor and balance. Role stress is important because a direct relationship has consistently been shown between role conflict, role ambiguity, and job satisfaction in organizational literature (Fisher & Gitelson 1983; Jackson & Schuler 1985).

There are two major types of role ambiguity defined by Kahn et al. (1964): task and socioemotional ambiguity. Task ambiguity results from a "lack of information concerning the proper definition of the job, its goals and the permissible means for implementing them" (Kahn et al., 1964, p. 97). Socioemotional ambiguity "manifests itself in a person's concern about his/her standing in the eyes of others and about the consequences of his/her actions for the attainment of his/her personal goals" (Kahn et al., 1964, p. 94). This type of stress could be the most concerning for strongly spiritual/religious individuals in the workplace. Speaking religiously, the choices individuals make will determine the place their afterlife is spent and the major tenet of just about every religion is fulfilling a duty of service in this life and graduating to a more Utopia type place in the afterlife.

Role conflict theory is useful for explaining religious and spiritual identity and expression in the workplace because role theory, as defined by Conway (1988), is a collection of concepts and a variety of hypothetical formulations that predict how actors will perform in a given role, or under what circumstances certain types of behaviors can be expected. Schuler, Aldag, and Brief (1977) indicate that role theory can serve as a conceptual framework in which to relate the properties of the organization and the individual. In addition, when individuals are in an environment where their primary identity role is restricted from emerging, they must create new roles, hybrid roles between their primary role and a new one, suitable for additional social

functioning. Role theory is, therefore, a potentially valuable framework for examining role perceptions (Brookes, Davidson, Daly, & Halcomb, 2007).

Identity is an important principle in role conflict theory, particularly when multiple identities are incompatible. This is relevant for this study as individuals may have a religious identity (or spiritual identity) and an organizational role. Identities are enacted with particular contexts. The concept of face is closely tied to the concept of identity. In fact, a number of intercultural scholars have incorporated the concept of face and performance into their theories. For example, Merkin and Ramadan (2010) examined the importance of maintaining face when communicating with those from Arab countries based on Hofstede's rankings, Lina (2010) explored the ways in which diasporic identities are maintained, and Planken (2005) investigated how facework was used to achieve interpersonal goals in intercultural sales negotiations. This is a small list of the many articles dedicated to exploring the use of face as a social identity as it relates to intercultural communication.

In today's world, information travels faster than ever before and the days of small local retailers are long gone. Today's business model is dominated by global opportunity and rapid expansion into new and emerging markets. These markets' consumers are not only a world away in terms of distance but in terms of societal norms and observances as well. International business creates an opportunity ripe for misunderstandings. Not only abroad but also at home Americans are subject to encounter individuals with divergent backgrounds especially in the workplace. In an increasingly globalized workplace, the ability to communicate effectively across cultures is critical (Lui, Chua, & Stahl, 2010). As a result of this globalization process at both the societal and organizational levels, it becomes more and more important to be aware of

cultural differences and to be able to interact effectively with people from other cultures (Adler, 2002; Lane, DiStefano, & Maznevski, 2006). Studies of intercultural communication have shown that the amount of time and energy needed for communication, as well as the likelihood of miscommunication, increase significantly as cultural differences increase (Adler, 2002; Gudykunst & Kim, 1992). Part of understanding how to communicate with an individual from a different culture is understanding how the role of religion or spirituality plays into their sense of identity. Hofstede listed the level of religious level under the uncertainty avoidance index (<http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>).

#### 2.4. Spirituality/religion and work

A major theme of this thesis is spirituality/religiosity in the workplace. The notion of spirituality at work has been an increasing focus of attention in academic literature over the last ten years or so (Brooke & Parker, 2009). Scholars have pointed out the benefits of spirituality. It offers the opportunity for employees to bring their whole selves to work (Neal, 1999). If this spirituality is allowed to be expressed at an individual level, it can enhance creativity, honesty, trust, and commitment within an organization (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2002). Additionally, Neal, Lichtenstein, and Banner (1999) propose that spirituality and one's trust in the control inherent in life allows people to loosen their grip on reality in order to let new wisdom in and for societal transformation and a paradigm shift to occur. This shift will unfold because, as Neal, Lichtenstein, and Banner (1999) write,

According to new paradigm writers, our propensity to trust only our physical senses and what we can measure with our sciences is related to our need to dominate and control.

Thus, societal transformation will occur when a critical mass of individuals decide to let go of the control imperative and trust the design and control inherent in life itself (p.182).

Spirituality and religiosity are not monolithic concepts. Marques (2008) points out that they do share a number of characteristics, such as spiritual mind-set acceptance, understanding, consciousness, and peace. Moreover, spirituality and religious belief are compatible, though not identical; they may or may not coexist.

Although there are several different definitions that address spirituality in the workplace, pinpointing exactly what it means varies from scholar to scholar. Giacalone and Lurkiewicz (2003) define workplace spirituality as "a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy (p.13)." Ashmos-Plowman and Duchon (2005) describe spirituality at work as "the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community" (p.811). On the other hand, Marques (2008) defines spirituality in the workplace as an "experience of interconnectedness and trust among those involved in a work process, engendered by individual goodwill; leading to the collective creation of a motivational organizational culture, epitomized by reciprocity and solidarity; and resulting in enhanced overall performance, which is ultimately translated in lasting organizational excellence" (p.24).

These definitions contain a few common denominators. Each scholar identifies spirituality in the workplace not as the act of free expression by employees, but as the understanding and or facilitating of each individual's inherent right to express one's spirituality in the workplace.

Additionally, there is a theme that connects spirituality to being connected to someone or something. In fact, for many being spiritual is part of fulfilling one's duties and obligations at work (Giacalone & Lurkiewicz, 2003; Marques, 2008). Moreover, crucial to this study is the idea that spirituality in the workplace is made possible and maintained by management. Further, how individuals communicate, verbally and non-verbally, spirituality or religion and the consequences (good and bad) of that, is a point of interest in this study.

According to King (2000), religion is a set of values, doctrines, and principles that provide an ethical and moral framework for understanding, motivation, and behavior. If someone's religion were a large part of his/her self-concept, the freedom he/she feels to engage in religious behaviors (e.g., wearing religious clothes, discussing religious affiliations, and practices) would likely affect his/her satisfaction and well-being (Kutcher, Bragger, Rodriguez-Srednicki, & Masco, 2010). Further, religious expression in the workplace is an equivocal understanding. Blair (2010) describes the obstacles religious expression in the workplace creates.

Religious discrimination is the category of discrimination that has been the hardest for courts, employers, and employees to deal with. Discrimination that is based on race is relatively easy to spot and, in theory, to remedy. The same is true of discrimination based on sex, national origin, or color. Religion is different. First, employees who sue because of discrimination based on race, color, sex, or national origin are seeking to be treated the same as other employees. They want the ability to get a job, keep a job, and be paid the same as everyone else. Employees who seek redress for discrimination based on their religion do not want to be treated the same. Instead, they wish not to work a particular day or shift; or they wish to wear a particular piece of religious clothing that does not conform

to company policy; or they wish to groom themselves in ways that meet a religious obligation but that conflict with a workplace rule. Employees who complain of religious discrimination want to be treated differently—or "accommodated"—so that they can meet both their religious and work obligations (p.53).

## 2.5. Islam

The focus of this research is on American Muslims in the workforce. In an effort to better understand how Muslims function in the work force, it is important to illustrate what it means to be a Muslim. The word Islam comes from the word *salama*, which means to surrender to God and peace while the word Muslim comes from the same Arabic root and means one who surrenders or submits to what God has ordained (Ball & Haque, 2003). Muslims function by the Five Pillars of Islam, which include confession of faith, prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage, while how close one is to God is dependent on the consistency of executing these pillars. Muslims believe one must consistently labor to purify one's soul through remembrance of One God thus submit to God in action by abiding by the five principles (Ball & Haque, 2003).

The *Qur'an*, or Koran, is considered the actual words of God and is the absolute of all knowledge in which spiritual, social, political, personal, and family life of an individual is outlined. In Islam, the appropriate development of human life requires two things: the resources needed to maintain life and fulfill the material needs of both the individual and society and second, the individual's knowledge of the principles of individual and social behavior to allow individual self-fulfillment on one hand and the maintenance of social justice and tranquility on the other (Qutb, 2006).

The most important spiritual need of Muslims is met through the mandatory daily prayer, or *salat*, five times a day (Ball & Haque, 2003). This requirement of *salat* fundamentally alters the behavior of a practicing Muslim and becomes a conscious connection to God. While *salat* is not a casual thing it must be performed at particular times of the day and assumes a regularity and discipline requiring bowing and prostrating irrespective of where the person is at the time of the call of prayer (Ball & Haque, 2003). The *salat* typically lasts a few minutes and can only be performed after ablution or *wudu*, which is the cleansing of self. The most significant prayer is *Jumu'ah* or Friday prayer, which is performed after the weekly Friday sermon. At the mosque *Jumu'ah* prayer is typically the highest in attendance. From an employer's perspective, this creates an added obstacle because on a normal American workday, from 9am to 5pm, two prayers fall within this time frame, *Duhr* around 1pm and *Asr* around 5pm depending on the time of year.

## 2.6. Islam and the workforce

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, “thousands of Americans have been subject to an increase in discrimination in the workplace on the basis of their religion” (Caplen, 2005, p.582). According to Caplen (2005), the courts have witnessed a significant recent increase in the number of cases brought by Muslim Americans and Sikh Americans. The First Amendment and civil rights laws protect public employees from discrimination based on religious faith and practices. However, since September 11<sup>th</sup>, employers are more aware of the Muslim presence in the workforce and possibly concerned about how they will integrate (Ball & Haque, 2003; Masters, 2005). Increasingly, the workplace has become a significant and public sphere where

individuals of diverse religious perspectives encounter one another (Hicks, 2003). Conflict amongst those with different religious views is almost inevitable.

Similar to individuals from other religious traditions, a committed Muslim in the workplace has a dual role, trying to fulfill his/her responsibilities as an employee and responsibilities to God as a God-fearing Muslim (Ball & Haque, 2003). In western culture where most business casual dress codes are mundane and rather tedious, it is easy to see how anything that challenges those codes will cause a distraction amongst workers and managers alike. However, if a “public employee says he must wear a beard as part of his religion, the court has ruled that the belief must be sincerely held, and that he is the sole interpreter of his religion, not the *Qur’an* or imams” (Ball & Haque, 2003, p.318).

Islam, like other social systems, allows for rankings of management. However, those managers are forbidden from exerting unfair dominance on their subordinates regardless of their religious affiliation (Williams & Zinkins, 2010). A practicing Muslim faces a challenge in the contemporary work environment. Particular challenges include meeting the spiritual and dietary needs as well as dress codes; as stated before, how close one is to God is greatly dependent on the consistency of executing the five pillars (Ball & Haque, 2003).

One of the most discussed aspects of the Muslim religion in the workplace is appearance and clothing (CAIR, 1997; Schachter, 1993; Malone, Hartman, & Payne, 1998). Islam prescribes that both men and women behave and dress modestly while practitioners believe that an emphasis on modesty encourages society to value attributes void of aesthetics. Muslim women may express such modesty in dress as the inclusion of a *Hijab* or *Khimar*. This religiously compulsory garb usually includes covering the hair, neck, and body except for the face and

hands. Muslim men, similar to Jewish men, wear a small head covering called a *kufi*.

Further, it is quite common for Muslim men to display beards mimicking that of the Prophet Mohammad. The wearing of a beard has become a symbol of devotion to the teachings of the Prophet and Muslim brotherhood and unity (Ball & Haque, 2003). Recently, the dawning of Islamic religious identifiers came under scrutiny when National Public Radio commentator Juan Williams was fired for saying, “When I get on a plane, I’ve got to tell you, if I see people who are in Muslim garb and I think, you know, they are identifying themselves first and foremost as Muslims, I get worried. I get nervous” (Tabacoff, 2010).

Hard work is central to the Muslim ethic, as is devotion to prayer. However, there is a hierarchy. “A Muslim is urged to seek wealth and develop his life in this world, but prayer comes first, and although work must be stopped when it is time for worship, it is equally clear that when prayers are finished, a good Muslim returns to work” (Williams & Zinkin, 2010, p. 520). The Koran specifically speaks toward being at work during the call of prayer “[62:9] *Jumah-o ye who believe when the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the day of assembly) hasten earnestly to the remembrance of Allah and leave off business; that is best for you if ye but knew*” Abdullah Yusuf Ali]. *Salat* or prayer is one form of worship. However Islam also requires that Muslim serve Allah (God) through good behavior in all aspects of their daily life, even in their work and business life (Williams & Zinkins, 2010). Communicating Islamic identity directly or indirectly at work in a post 9/11 western society brings about challenges for Muslims based on the public opinion data which is reflected in comments like the ones Juan Williams made. This study will attempt to expose those challenges and reveal communicative and actionable techniques Muslim and non-Muslim individuals use to manage the additional

attention. Moreover, how individuals manage and communicate religion or spirituality at work will be explored.

## 2.7. Religious expression

There are differences in the methods for governing religious expression and spiritual expression at work. Most legislation has focused on religious expression, although there are legal limits. Ball and Haque (2003) describe how the courts have attempted to address religious expression. “The Supreme Court indicated that a government agency must have wide discretion and control over the management of its personnel” (p.318). Further, the court distinguishes between speech and conduct and for that “proselytizing and discussions of religion are acceptable if treated and regulated in the same manner as any other private speech” (Ball & Haque, 2003, p.318). For example, if Muslims in the workplace are discussing *jihad* or *fatwa*, such speech probably appears more threatening in that environment than a request to pray even though *jihad* or *fatwa* can have several interpretations.

The Free Exercise Clause protects religious expression against governmental power by prohibiting any intentional burden on its practice. The Court requires that laws do not constrain a worker to abandon ones religious convictions in the workplace (Ruan, 2008). Further, the Workplace Religious Freedom Act of 2005 aims to establish provisions with respect to religious accommodation in employment. This has been a latent issue in the court until recently. The last time the Court examined religious accommodation in the workplace was in the 1970s and 1980s when the Title VII statutory mandate was reviewed (Ruan, 2008).

Religion is given special protection under a variety of constitutional and statutory

principles and a person's religious identity, although changeable, is a primary personal decision parallel with recognized basic rights such as marriage and procreation (Ruan, 2008). An individual's religious affiliation is sometimes a very salient part of who they are because it is "set at a very early age and is an authentic expression of their worldview" (Ruan, 2008. p.7).

When thinking about protecting religious expression, it is common to think about such communication in an affirmative sense. Individuals from a particular religious community freely talk about or engage in religious activities. However, as Garcia-Zamor (2003) notes, people are often uncomfortable seeing religious expressions at work. As such, they may seek to express an opposing viewpoint or limit the degree to which one can express religious messages at work. Thus, there is often a tension between religious expression and harassment.

Previous studies have explored the difference between religion and spirituality (King, 2007; Pargament & Mahoney, 2003; Hartsfield, 2003; Nash & McLennan, 2001). Defining each in black and white terms continues to be debated.

The line between free religious expression and harassment is convoluted by defining what is considered religious expression and what is considered distracting or of a harassing nature. Several cases have been brought to the Court addressing this very issue (*Trans World Airlines, Inc. v. Hardison*, *Ansonia Board of Education v. Philbrook*, *Wilson v. U.S. West Communications*, *Hussein v. Pierre Hotel*, *Pickering v. Board of Education*). The results of these cases indicate that there is no precise definition of how to govern religious expression at work rather; it will continue to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. This almost certainly guarantees that there will be multiple interpretations to the law and individuals of varying religious associations will continue to find a balance between work and religious identity. A gap does still

exist in the research in the area of how an organizations product or service conflicts with a major tenet of religious dogma. For some Muslims, the degree to which religion is salient is presented by physical indicators, for others, the importance of faith is negotiated and managed internally. How individuals communicate their faith and the social ramifications as a result of that will be explored in this study.

## 2.8. The juxtaposition of religious and workplace identities

Religion and faith are often central aspects of an individual's self-concept, and yet they are typically avoided in the workplace (Kutcher, Bragger, Rodriguez-Srednicki, & Masco, 2010). With almost 95 percent of Americans stating they believe there is a God, and 81 percent of American adults indicating a specific religious affiliation (Kosmin et al., 2001), religion is not something employers can realistically expect employees to "leave at the door" when they come to work (Conlin, 1999). While research does not indicate that a greater percent of Americans are becoming religious (Kosmin et al., 2001) surveys do show an increasing trend for many religious Americans to want their religion integrated into all areas of their lives (Gibson, 2005). Discussions of religion, spirituality, and politics in particular have been avoided in the workplace because historically they have been well known for causing division and strife among co-workers (Cline, 1998).

There is a potential conflict relating to religious and workplace identity for American Muslims. How do good Muslims serve Allah when the very product/service they are advancing is used adversely against other Muslims or runs counter to the principles of their faith? Many passages in the *Qur'an* encourage commercial and economic activity (Lewis, 2001) and every

individual is required to work in Islam (Iqbal & Mirakhor, 2007). All forms of productive work can be considered as an act of worship provided that any material enhancement and growth lead to social justice and spiritual enhancement (Williams & Zinkins, 2010).

## 2.9. Employer concerns

As noted earlier, there are many benefits for spiritual and religious people. These benefits extend to the organization. For people in management positions, adopting a spiritual position is a tool for increasing efficiency and profitability (Hicks, 2003). Additionally, previous research supports the idea that religious people have a wider notion of corporate social responsibility than non-religious people (Agle & Van Buren, 1999, p. 581; Brammer, Williams, & Zinkin, 2005; Rest, 1986; Weaver & Agle, 2002). In other words, an environment that encourages an individual's spiritual/religious expression promotes greater productivity out of its employees.

From the employer's perspective, additional adjustments must be made when supervising Muslim employees. "Specifically they [managers] must begin to explore how changes in the organizational environment may threaten employee's sense of identity and how that, in turn, can be ameliorated" (Dalton, 2003, p.7). Hicks (2003) adds, "managers should create conditions under which employees are able to express their religion at work within certain moral constraints" (p.2). Dalton (2003) further claims that changes in organizational roles can reduce or increase the salience of group membership. If this is true, then self-categorization can be dependent on the company an individual's keeps at his/her place of work.

Previous polling indicates that increasingly more people are seeking spiritual growth outside of places of worship. One place in particular where people are finding spiritual

fulfillment is at work (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). As an individual's place of employment continues to augment one's spiritual fulfillment, managers and the organization alike may begin to feel the increased pressure. Dalton (2003) asserts that managers who fail to understand that the degree of group identification varies from individual to individual may see their best efforts have unintended negative consequences. If this assumption is correct, then a solution that maintains a group's identity may be to amalgamate those of the same categorization together (e.g., a team of employee's consisting solely of Muslims). Further, Meglino, Ravlin, and Adkins (1989), proposed that employees whose values are congruent with their supervisor or organization would have a more positive effect on job performance.

Of course, the difficulties of an increased Muslim workforce population are omnipresent and "often not readily resolved" (Haddad, 1997, p. 8). Haddad (1997) outlines such conflicts with Muslims at work:

The basic obligation of daily prayer presents great difficulties in practice. Such prayer should be observed five times a day at prescribed intervals, including noon and early afternoon. Ablutions – the ritual cleaning up hands, feet, elbows, ears, face and head – are required before praying. This is often difficult or embarrassing in the workplace. The problems are compounded by the ritual requirement that the place of worship be clean and free of any pictures or portraits (p.8)

During these mandatory *salat*, other individuals will be needed to fill in while the Muslims perform their acts of worship. The repeat nature of this behavior might prove exasperating to those who are summoned to fill in. Haddan (1997), adds, "These Muslims who try to fulfill the

obligation to fast from dawn to sunset during the month of Ramadan frequently encounter job-related problems” (p.8). Another major problem with Muslims in the workforce per Haddan (1997) is that:

For most Muslims, traditional Friday midday prayer services (*Jumu'ah*) conflict with job responsibilities. The same is true of the principal Muslim religious holidays, unless they happen to occur on a weekend. While major Christian and Jewish holidays are recognized by most employer's, as a general rule, this has not been the case for Muslims (p.8).

This researcher learned that managers often show physical and vocal signs of frustration when Muslim employees ask to leave work for an hour or more on a Friday to attend *Jumu'ah* prayer. Further, a request for paid time off on the most significant Muslim holiday, *Eid Mubarak*, which falls on the last day of *Ramadan*, is constantly denied even though Christmas is considered paid time off to almost everyone in the United States.

Some scholars argue that “religious accommodation, especially for religious holidays, is expected whenever possible under current federal law” (Lansing & Feldman, 1997, p.374). Sometimes managers are not even aware of when the major holidays for people of dissimilar faiths are observed, let alone what work conditions employees of these faiths might want or need (Overman, 1994). One question still up for debate is just how much companies should do in providing accommodation and whether they should be proactive or reactive as needs arise, further how far a company goes in making its plans is more than a legal compliance issue; it is an ethical choice reflecting the culture of the company as a whole (Lansing & Feldman, 1997). Lansing and Feldman (1997) continue to outline two reasons why employers should be proactive

in accommodating the religious holidays of their workers: an emphasis by many companies to create and support a more diverse workplace and the principle of religious freedom. Garcia-Zamor (2003) argues that most workplaces understand that employees bring to the job personal moral core values that are linked to their cultural backgrounds and religions. If this is true, then why are provisions for many Muslim employees scarce?

#### 2.10. Summary of Muslims in the workplace

This brief overview of Muslims in the workplace highlights important challenges they face in the American work environment. First, most non-Muslims are ignorant of their religion and religious practices. Second, Muslims are common targets of discrimination. This may or may not be related to others lack of knowledge. Third, working Muslims, like other religious-minded individuals in America, find spiritual fulfillment at work. However, the manner in which they choose to do so may be different. Similarly, it is unclear how likely managers or supervisors are willing to accommodate Muslims desire to express or expose their religious identity at work, including but not limited to wearing religious symbols, providing space for daily prayer, and making accommodations for religious observances outside of work. These differences bring about communicative, organizational, and identity challenges.

#### 2.11. Research Questions for Role Conflict Theory

Role conflict theory has been studied in several organizational settings. This study seeks to extend previous work by focusing not only on stress and the negative consequences associated with role conflicts, but also how Muslims and non-Muslims communicate in an organizational

setting to deal with role variance. As a whole, the research questions address the sociocultural experiences of the participants.

The first research question targets which, if any, role conflicts Muslims have actually experienced in the workplace. The second research question addresses the level or degree of freedom individuals feel they are able to express their religious or spiritual identity at work. The third set of research questions addresses how Muslims and non-Muslims *perceive* role conflicts within their organization. The fourth research question pertains to certain types of strategies used to address role conflicts. Finally, after learning about the participants' perceptions and intentions, I address what situations individuals would avoid addressing role conflicts *communicatively*.

With that, this research will attempt to address the following research questions in regards to role conflict in an organizational setting.

#### *Experience of role conflict in the workplace*

RQ1 - What role conflicts, if any, do individuals experience at work because of their religious or spiritual identity?

#### *Freedom to express religious or spiritual identity at work*

RQ2-To what extent do individuals feel free to express religious or spiritual identity at work?

#### *Religious identity and perceptions of role conflict by Muslims and non-Muslims*

RQ3a - When people share a religious or spiritual identity, in what ways, if any, do they perceive that others with a similar or shared religious or spiritual identity face role conflict in the workplace because of their religious or spiritual identity?

RQ3b - When people have a different religious or spiritual identity, in what ways, if any, do they perceive that others with a different religious or spiritual identity face role conflict in the workplace because of their religious or spiritual identity?

*Intrapersonal and behavioral strategies for addressing role conflict*

RQ4 - What communication strategies and tactics do individuals use when addressing role conflict related to religious or spiritual identity in the workplace?

RQ5 - What situations, if any, do people avoid addressing role conflict related to religious or spiritual identity in the workplace?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Qualitative studies are about developing and forming knowledge. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), it is not productive to enter into a research project with a preconceived theory. Researcher bias stifles the creation of knowledge. Qualitative research is carried out for the purpose of explaining why/how things happen a certain way and to get to a deeper level and discover relationships in data. As opposed to quantitative research, qualitative studies are mainly an inductive activity, a method of research that surrenders nonnumeric data produced by reviewing phenomenon that cannot easily be quantified (Schwandt, 1997). The data stem from social action such as speech, gesture, movements, or artifacts (Lindlof 1991). Additionally, the social action transpires within a certain societal or cultural framework and some degree of investigator participation is consequently needed to successfully generate the data. (Pinkerton, 2006).

Questionnaires, much like interviews, have the potential to bring the participants narrative to life by providing an outlet for an individual to tell their personal account freely. Open-ended questionnaires take this process one step further and supply the individual with a blank canvas to fill with language, nuances, and personality that closed-ended questions deny. Open-ended questionnaires further have the ability to offer levels of rich data, breadth, and depth however, the one-on-one interviews yields the greatest returns on deep probing. Threats that normally appear in group settings such as social loafing, group-think, social facilitation, and

group polarization can also be eliminated with questionnaires in a controlled environment. Additionally, open-ended questionnaires give the researcher an opportunity to get a unique look at the world or some phenomena through the eyes of another individual through their subjective interpretation.

### 3.1. Recruitment of participants

Participants were recruited in two ways. First, an invitation letter was e-mailed to religious leaders of religious institutions in the area, including mosques and churches. The invitation included information about the nature of the study and a link to complete an online survey. Second, an invitation letter was posted on an online social network forum. It also included information about the study and a link to complete an online survey. Additional participants were recruited through snowball sampling. After individuals completed the questionnaire, they were asked to forward information about the study onto a friend or colleague. All participants currently live in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex.

### 3.2. Participants

#### 3.2.1. Muslim participants

A total of 20 individuals, 10 Muslims and 10 non-Muslims, participated in the study. For the Muslim population, 9 of the 10 participants were males. Three of the Muslims worked in the defense industry. The other participants were from customer service, finance, and the healthcare industry (pharmacy, medicine, veterinary). The average age of the Muslim respondents was 30.8 years, with ages ranging from 22 to sixty-eight. Apart from the 68 year-old participant, all

Muslim participants were 31 or younger. Except for two of the Muslim participants, all lived in the United States since birth with the average length of time spent in the United States 26.2 years. All of the Muslims in this study have been working at their current job for more than one year, with an average length of employment slightly more than 5 years ( $M = 5.38$ ).

The following are brief descriptions of the ten Muslim participants. The biographical information is based on the demographic questions participants filled out at the end of the survey in addition to information provided in responses. Each participant was provided a pseudonym. Muslim participants were provided with an Arabic pseudonym. Non-Muslim participants were provided with an Anglicized name.

#### Dabir

Dabir is a 30-year-old male and an engineer at a large US defense contractor. Dabir wrote religion is the primary part of his identity. He conducts all his activities and behavior around other people with his faith in mind. He prays while at work at the appropriate times. Fasting and charity are all regular requirements, which he observes. Dabir works on very high profile programs for his company and takes great pleasure in doing so. Dabir has worked at his current job for 7 years and has lived in the US for 15 years. Dabir is married with no children and both he and his wife work full time.

#### Maalik

Maalik is a 23-year-old male who works in the customer service industry for a large retailer. Maalik is a very proud and happy Muslim who practices religion thoroughly and is very keen on its importance but doesn't impose himself onto others. Maalik takes religion seriously, but doesn't shove it or the importance of it onto others. He grew up in a religiously strict household since his father was an Imam but his father is a very forward-thinking modern leader so he is conservative and liberal. For example he will not wear clothes that don't cover the majority of his body or have foul language or inappropriate pictures on them. His religious identity is a core component of his overall identity. His religion spells out how his actions, thoughts and character should be. Religion controls most of who he is overall. Maalik recently graduated from The University of Texas at Arlington with a degree in journalism. Maalik has lived in the US for 23 years and has worked at his current job for 4 years.

## Tabarik

Tabarik is a 31-year-old male who works at a large US defense contractor. Tabarik wrote that no matter where he works or what he does in life, his religion will be first (most important). Religion is very important to him and is something that he practices every day not just once a week. Tabarik was recently married as well as being a graduate of Southern Methodist University with a master's degree. Tabarik has lived in the US for 31 years and has worked at his current place of employment for 8 years.

## Jahid

Jahid is a 28-year-old male who works for a large US defense company. Jahid is a Sunni Muslim and it is a part of his daily life and quite important to his identity. Jahid is recently engaged as well as being having a post graduate degree from The University of Texas at Arlington. Jahid has lived in the US for 28 years and worked at his current job for 2 years.

## Fadwa

Fadwa is a 22-year-old female medical school student. Fadwa is from New York and attends medical school in the Dominican Republic. Fadwa describes herself as a Muslim; not too liberal and not very extreme...somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. Some aspects of the Islamic religion she has chosen to follow verbatim while others she has chosen to follow her own interpretations. Fadwa says that being Muslim is a very important part of her overall identity. She finds that it helps shape her and her choices (for the most part). It is important to her overall identity because it is one of the ways she identifies herself, and also helps guide her when she feels lost. Fadwa is engaged and plans to marry after she completes her schooling. Fadwa has lived in the US for 22 years and has worked at her current job for 1 year.

## Saamir

Saamir is a 28-year-old male who is also a medical student. Saamir communicated that he wouldn't describe himself as very religious or spiritual at all. He basically just believes that the way to live life is to just treat others the same way you would want them to treat you. To just be kind, courteous, respectful, and helpful at all times. Religion is somewhat important due to the fact that he grew up in a very religious home. He is not very religious now but growing up in a strong Muslim community has shaped who he is. Saamir received an undergraduate degree from The University of Texas at Arlington in 2008. Saamir has lived in the US for 28 years and has been at his current place of employment for 1 year.

### Faizi

Faizi is a 23-year-old male who works in finance at the regional headquarters for a large investment company. Faizi wrote he is a Muslim, striving to be the best person he can be first. He thinks religious identity plays an important role in establishing his values, and setting the framework for the constructs of his life as a whole. On a daily basis, however, his awareness of the role religion plays is not at the forefront of his mind. He interacts with others the same regardless of their backgrounds or religion. Working within a corporate atmosphere has only added to this lifestyle. Faizi has worked at his current job for about a year and has lived in the US for 23 years.

### Raheem

Raheem is a 67-year-old male veterinarian who finds great pleasure in his job. As a Muslim, Raheem tries to help people as much as he can, it does not matter who the person is. Raheem has lived in the US since 1974 when he moved here to start his family. He has worked at his current place of employment for 22 years. He has a wife and three children.

### Owais

Owais is a 31-year-old male who works in pharmacology. He is a Muslim that believes in Islam and it is everything. His whole life revolves around Islam. It teaches how to live life, be patient and understanding toward others. He treats people with respect no matter what religion they are or what they believe. Islam, he wrote is my way of life, not just a part of it, but the whole of it. He has lived in the US for his entire life and worked at his current job for 6 years. Owais finds pleasure in helping people and says that assisting others is one of the greatest benefits of his job.

### Zaid

Zaid is a 24-year-old male student at The University of Texas at Arlington who works in kinesiology. Zaid wrote that his identity comes from his religion. Without his religion he would be a lost soul. Without his religion, he would have no identity. His religious identity is more than important to his overall identity. Zaid has lived in the US his whole life and has been at his current place of employment for almost 2 years.

### 3.2.2. Non-Muslim participants

The non-Muslim participants were comprised of 5 males and 5 females. Occupations represented by the non-Muslims included the defense industry, advertising, finance, customer service, and education. The average age of the participants was 33.6 years, ranging from 22 to 64. All but two of the non-Muslim participants have lived all of their life in the United States, with an average length of time in the U.S. at 41.1 years. Additionally, this segment of participants has been at their current job for an average of 3.95 years.

The following is a brief description of the ten non-Muslim participants.

#### Jena

Jena is a 41-year-old female in the advertising industry. Jena says that she is more of a spiritual than religious person yet she is a follower of Jesus and believes in God. She does not believe that every detail of the Bible happened exactly as described but she does believe in the truth being revealed through the telling of the stories. She believes in community and unity and that we are created to help each other. She claims she does not have a lot of tolerance for religious people from reading the story of Jesus; it was the religious people he was always frustrated with. She enjoys the atmosphere of her current job and finds it fulfilling as well. Jena has lived in the US for 40 years and has worked at her current place of employment for 10 years.

#### Rachel

Rachel is a 30-year-old female who works in finance at a large bank. Rachel wrote that recent events have made me more spiritual (would never call myself religious) than I've been in the past. My spiritual identity is one that isn't exactly sure who "He" is, but believes there is a "Him". She has lived in the US for her entire life and has been at her current place of employment for almost 6 years. She seems only moderately happy in her current employment and cites it as a steady paycheck.

#### Randy

Randy is a 22-year-old male student who also works in customer service for a large retailer and a Christian. Randy wrote that being "Christ-like" urges me to remain patient and positive through the tough and stressful hardships during the job. Randy has been lived in the US for his entire life and has been at his current place of employment for

nearly 4 years. Aside from working full time, Randy is also a student working toward his first degree.

#### Quinn

Quinn is a 48-year-old male who works in the defense industry. Quinn said I consider myself a spiritual person who was raised going to church every week, strong faith (Christian). Quinn has spent his entire life in the US and been at his current place of employment for 2 years. Quinn enjoys the people and the environment in which he works.

#### Ron

Ron is a 69-year-old male who is a consultant in the defense industry. Ron wrote he is a Christian by choice. A Christian, by definition, is one who has accepted Christ as their personal Lord and is committed to living as “Christ-like” as possible. It is the most important facet of life itself; I have the promise, from God, of eternal life with HIM in the hereafter. It is my duty to share and spread HIS Word. It is omni-important. The manner in which I conduct myself in the workplace should mirror Christ. Of course, we all fall short in that area but by the Grace of God, we continue. While I can and must accept others, I cannot accept anything that differs from the teachings of the Bible. Ron has lived in the US for 64 years and been consulting for 4 years. Ron believes that which makes his work satisfying is “the opportunity to share personal beliefs.”

#### Betty

Betty is a 56-year-old female Quaker who works in the defense industry. Betty considers herself more spiritual than religious. She was raised as a Quaker (aka member of the Society of Friends), and although she is not an active member of a meeting, she is still spiritually connected to the Friends' philosophy. She is more about ministries of love and justice and a pacifist. Betty has lived in the US her entire life and been at her current place of employment for 2 years. Betty reports that she greatly enjoys the work.

#### Becca

Becca is a 23-year-old female student teacher at a large Texas university. Becca considers herself a Protestant Christian, but is not affiliated with any particular denomination. She does not attend church because she does not find it very beneficial to her spiritually. She prays daily and pursues a relationship with God on her own terms. She does not believe in the divinity of priests or preachers, rather, God is accessible to anyone, anywhere. She does believe that Jesus is Christ and that acceptance of him will lead to eternal life. She believes Jesus is divine and also a man, therefore, the Son of God. Becca has lived in the US all her life and has worked at her current place of employment for almost 1 year. She enjoys the freedom to work independently.

Mark

Mark is a 57-year-old male who works in the manufacturing industry. Mark wrote that he believes in God and the Supreme Being and that it is very important to him because he feels it is the right thing to feel. Mark has been at his current job for 5 years and has lived in the US for his whole life. Mark has 2 children and finds happiness in satisfying customer needs.

Katie

Katie is a 42-year-old female who works in the defense industry. Katie wrote she is Christian but it is not a part of her identity, instead it is more a part of her moral character. She doesn't go to church, but believes in God and Jesus is her savior. She tries to practice the morals of a Christian person. It is a very large part of her moral character and is important because it affects her everyday life in almost all actions she takes. Katie has lived in the US for her entire life and been at her current place of employment for 5 years. Katie is in a domestic partnership and enjoys the people and the benefits of working for her organization.

Nathan

Nathan is a 28-year-old male who works in library services. Nathan said he is an agnostic/ humanistic and it helps to shape who he is and feels that being a religious minority allows him to peak in to the window of others religions and see the good and bad while forming his own opinion, not one he was taught to follow. Nathan has lived in the US for his entire life and been at his current place of employment for 2 years. Nathan enjoys being able to use his time to study while at work as his is also a part-time student.

### 3.3. Survey

After consenting to participate in the study, participants completed an online survey questionnaire. Initially, the survey questionnaire was in the format of an Adobe PDF. However, due to problems with some participants unable to open the PDF as well as difficulties in sending back data, the survey distribution method was modified. Instead, Survey Monkey was used to collect responses. All participants received the same questionnaire. A copy of the survey questions is included in Appendix A. Open-ended questions were used in an attempt to return the

richest most in-depth detail as possible. Basic demographic questions including age, sex, and career field were also asked at the end of the survey.

Due to the potentially sensitive nature of this topic, participants were not required to provide any identifying information, such as their name, name of workplace, or e-mail address.

### 3.4. Data analysis

Grounded Theory was used in the analysis of data. In this section, I provide a background of Grounded Theory, including assumptions and procedures. In simplistic terms, constant-comparative inductive coding techniques were employed to generate categories, and from categories themes. Procedures established by Strauss and Corbin (1990) were followed in this study.

Grounded Theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and was further detailed in subsequent work (Anderson, 2006). Grounded Theory is a methodology that can be used for quantitative or qualitative data or both, although it is mostly used for qualitative data, the purpose of the methodology is to produce theory using an inductive approach (Anderson, 2006).

“In analyzing data, the researcher begins at the micro level and moves toward the micro level and at the micro level the researcher analyzes the data and tries to look for links that exist within the data and hypothesizes its relationship with the phenomenon” (Hafidz Haji, Dayang, Tiawa Awang, Alias, & Islam, 2010, p.277).

A theory should have data that can support, strengthen a phenomenon so that it can be tested, replicated and generalized (Newman, 2002).

The primary goal of Grounded Theory is to build a theory based on naturalistic/real data, this being with the researcher investigating and trying to get an in- depth understanding of a particular phenomenon by looking at the similarities and differences that exist in the data collected in the field (Hafidz Haji et al., 2010). The researcher can approach the work without a hypothesis or research question, the raw qualitative data is studied and coded and from the codes, categories will emerge (Anderson, 2006). Relationships between categories surface (axial coding); one category may be identified which organizes the material, a core category (selective coding). I started with open coding, which began with no prior categories (Banks, 2009).

In building a grounded theory, the term coding is used to look for relationships between categories. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe the coding process as: “Analysis or coding of qualitative data represents the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized and put back together in new ways. It is the central process by which theory is built from data” (p.43). In the coding process, data is sorted and analyzed inductively using the three-stage model of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding involves identifying concepts based on certain criteria. Data gathered from interviews, documents, observations and other sources are compared and sorted according to themes. This involves the process of categorization before moving on to the second stage axial coding.

In this stage, the researcher begins to look for link/relationships between categories and sub- categories. This is done through interviews and also observations that focus primarily on information which are linked to the related themes (Hafidz Haji et al., 2010). The story line is developed through the comparative comparison method that supports and validates the relationships and establishes a story line that describes the phenomenon. In this way, subsequent

data collection efforts will look for answers to any new questions or concerns that emerge from the previous analysis (Hafidz Haji et al., 2010).

In the selective coding stage, the researcher looks for recurring regularities in the categories. This is then organized into key patterns or themes. Throughout the coding process, the researcher is constantly aware of the developments in the data being analyzed and validating them with new themes that emerge (Kelle, 1995).

From the three stage coding process, the theory begins to take shape. “Throughout the process findings are checked against the data by a process called the constant comparative method, a way of combing through the material to extract as much detail as possible” (Anderson, 2006, p.330). This permits the researcher to check emerging hypotheses, which leads to the development of substantive theory. “Substantive theory may have relevance beyond the field studied, in which case further abstraction may lead to the formation of formal theory, it is an inductive methodology in which theory is grounded in the qualitative data” (Anderson, 2006, p.330).

For the coding stages of this research, a second Muslim coder was used. Data was read over by each coder and discussed until an agreement was reached as to how to interpret responses. The basic premise of reliability requires a categorization and/or rating scheme that coders agree upon as well as the ability of the coders to apply the scheme consistently (Wang, Wiley, & Zhou, 2007). The benefits of having a second Muslim coder include a different interpretation of the data. However, because coding consensus is usually based on shared meaning systems, it [consensus] becomes hard to reach when coders are influenced by different cultural meaning systems (Bakeman & Gottman, 1997; Kenny, 1994).

As responses were discussed, each coder created a set of suitable themes. In order for a response to fit into a category, it had to be agreed upon by both coders. When there was a disagreement, arguments were presented and the coder who made the most convincing case filed the response under the appropriate code. For Muslim responses, the Muslim coder was relied upon heavily to help with interpretation and his opinion carried extra weight because of his experience with the language and feelings of the Muslim participants. If a category could not be agreed upon, a new category was created and the response was filed under the emergent theme.

Grounded theory was selected because as individuals share their life experiences, they tend to communicate those series of events as a narrative. As a basic communicative technique, individuals place special emphasis on or repeat words important to their story. Owen's (1984) thematic analysis identified special emphasis placed on written words: recurrence, repetition and forcefulness. Recurrence occurs when at least two parts of the dialogue reflect the same thread of meaning, even though different words are used. Repetition occurs when key words, phrases, or sentences are repeated in at least two parts of the discourse. In written form, forcefulness is communicated by underlining, circling or highlighting letters or words; forcefulness is not anticipated in the questionnaires.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

A main task of this research is to discover the discursive themes of what role conflicts, if any, are faced by individuals in their organization because of their religious or spiritual identity and what communicative strategies do individuals use to address those conflicts. A Gallup Poll reported roughly 6 in 10 Americans say religion is a very important part of their lives (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/12115/religion-very-important-americans.aspx>) and most participants in this study reported that their religious or spiritual identity is a major part of their overall identity.

RQ1 asked what role conflicts, if any, do individuals experience at work because of their religious or spiritual identity, Muslim participants returned four themes: religious morals, celebrations, job demands, and racism while non-Muslim participants yielded one theme: dissimilar beliefs.

#### 4.1. Muslim themes

##### 4.1.1. Religious morals

Muslim participants reported that the organization sometimes restricts their ability to express religion. This restriction appeared in the form of the work schedule and the nature of the business conflicting with the tenets of Islam. “Medical school and Islam are not compatible in

the sense of men touching women (and vice versa) for physical examinations, or even conversing with each other for appointments, etc...depending on how conservative the views are.” Dabir noticed how the nature of the business he is in can create religious moral dilemmas: “The work itself can motivate these feelings as well. Working on anti-personnel missiles made a moral dilemma frequently.” What Dabir was referring to in the first part of his response was “discussions [that are] going on around him that puts a spotlight on my beliefs which contrast sharply with others.”

The US work schedule typically varies in hours and holidays but for the most part there is consistency in regard to holidays. Many organizations allow their employee’s time off Good Friday, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Some Muslim participants reflected dichotomy in their responses: “The only dissatisfying aspect that comes to my mind is the fact I feel like I go through a little bit of a struggle when it comes to celebrating my religious holidays since they are not on set days every year” responded Maalik. Tabarik also noticed this sentiment, “I wish our company and other companies respected the other religions besides Christianity and gave us our religious days off.”

#### 4.1.2. Celebrations

In today’s corporate climate, some employees prefer to gather after work to reflect on the day’s events. Further, if entertaining a customer, the day can sometimes last into the evening and accompanying potential customers to dinner has become common place. However these types of gatherings, or celebrations are off limits for Muslims because they can involve the consumption of alcohol or some other activity considered *haram*, or forbidden. Some Muslim participants

noticed that celebrations and social gatherings outside of work create conflicts because of their religiousness.

Zaid has been faced with this predicament before and viewed it as a conflict. He wrote in reference to his work colleagues: “They may want to go out and drink or go clubbin’ or things along those lines.” In Dabir’s line of work, these types of gatherings present a problem for religious individuals. “The only part of the organization that I feel is not compatible is the aspects of the social interaction outside work. The norms tend to be bars and happy hours, so interaction outside of work for people that don’t drink are problematic.”

Fadwa realizes her religiousness creates added issues of incompatibility between her and her organization. “Celebrations are always interesting here at "work"...I don't drink and often times my colleagues don't understand why. I choose not to from a personal and religious stand point, and that isn't always compatible with the views of my colleagues.”

#### 4.1.3. Job demands

Muslim participants communicated job demands as conflicting with religious identity in a similar manner as they way they expressed celebrations. Job demands created conflict because of hours required to work or office politics and policies, corporate structure. Jahid noticed conflict because sometimes job demands can disrupt an individual’s work/life balance: “Sometimes work can become somewhat stressful when dealing with deadlines and hot pressed issues. This can make work a bit dissatisfying, also working overtime, which can cut into your life balance sometimes, creates a sense of dissatisfaction.” Faizi admits he must always be cognizant of office politics and corporate structure. He communicates this because he admits that his “religious

identity plays an important role in establishing my values and setting the framework for the constructs of my life as a whole.” He says that he has no problem disclosing that he is a Muslim but also because religious discussions are not permitted in his workplace.

Dabir reflected on the demands of his job and the subsequent feelings he gets from the time he is required to devote to work.

Sometimes when we are pressed for time and forced to stay late to meet a deadline for a customer, it becomes hard to break away from the task at hand in order to make prayer during the day or on Friday. I imagine co-workers would not think it was fair if I left and they had to stay. It makes me try to work faster in the future so that I do not push aside my religious obligations.

#### 4.1.4. Racism

Racism is a term used by one participant but outlined by several. Some Muslim participants used this term to describe prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against them based on racial differences. Fadwa explained that racism has made day-to-day living a challenge: “A slight degree of racism have [sic] made parts of this experience dissatisfying.” This experience she mentions is her everyday encounters at work. Maalik too experiences a degree of racism in his current place of employment and shares that it began after 9/11:

Ever since September 11, I've had the occasional racial references or jokes thrown my way but never in a demeaning manor as far as I can tell. Each time it was also said to me by people I am familiar or comfortable with. I do feel that since my religious beliefs or practices are not very well known among the masses, when I bring a religious holiday up

or a custom someone isn't used to I feel like I have to convince the people I work with that it's real and important.

Dabir vividly illustrates his encounters with racism at his place of employment.

Dealing with some people in the company has been dissatisfying. There are some that are not aware that the people around them have different views, opinions and feelings and openly express themselves regardless of who is around them. In one instance an engineer (a white very vocal Christian) who was upset that his daughter was *learning* about Islam in one of her school classes. It wasn't being preached they were probably being educate [sic] about other religions, but the idea seemed downright offensive to him. What was even more surprising was the fact that this came from one of the more educated people that I've worked with. An hourly employee who was very vocal about the fact that Obama was a Muslim...After an NPR public commenter was fired for comments about being afraid of Muslims on planes, a co-worker was commenting that she agreed with him and that it was normal to be afraid. Most of the people I am around have a fixed opinion and are looking for an argument rather than understanding someone else's point of view. In some sense these are the people that need to hear the debate the most but also have already formed an opinion. In many cases it seems like that I have to defend bad information that most people have accepted as normal.

## 4.2. Non-Muslim theme

Non-Muslims in this study also deal with issues of role conflict because of their religious or spiritual identity. Although, there was only one theme to emerge from their responses, they too face incompatibilities with their organization. Dissimilar beliefs was the theme arrived at inductively here and it was communicated in a number of ways including conflicting organizational actions with personal values, cognitive dissonance stemming from working in the defense industry, and conflict with other employees outlook.

### 4.2.1. Dissimilar beliefs

A few non-Muslim participants noticed that on occasion, the organization acts in a manner that is opposite of how they themselves would act. Jenna and Katie wrote, “There is sometimes more emphasis on money than people, but it's a business”, and “I believe on occasion sometimes the actions of the organization acts in a manner that is opposite of my ethical beliefs” respectively. Becky struggles with cognitive dissonance as she sometimes struggles with her own morals and those of the defense industry.

I wrestle sometimes with working in the defense industry because spiritually, I am a pacifist and wish that we did not have to fight wars and risk and lose so many lives. However, I realize that military actions are often necessary to protect and preserve. Additionally, I have been on the receiving end of some negative actions from team members and I have sometimes found some individual's behavior inappropriate and unprofessional.

Jena struggles with balancing her values against being in a position of authority.

Because of my position, I am consulted on hires, fires and clients. I always attempt to be an advocate for the people (clients, employees, etc.) in any situation. I try to communicate in terms of people considerations over money questions. That sometimes means making extremely difficult decisions. Sometimes saying the truly loving thing means saying very difficult things, but my strategy is to as honestly as possible look out for the other person's best interest. The non-compatible aspects are all due to values and moral questions (i.e. - living together before marriage, homosexuality, definition of love, how to handle finances, etc.). Colleagues make different choices than I do in their personal lives, but I've found that if our relationship is grounded in love and respect, we can easily talk about differences in value judgments. That's what Jesus did. He hated certain bad morals, but He never hated people. He was accepting of all people. That goes a long way in living with the incompatible things.

Becca noticed the conflicts that arise in being a Christian and required to profess faith.

Christianity says that followers should profess their faith always to others and try to persuade others to believe as well. However, I do not feel this value is compatible at work in any place. We live in a secular society and I respect the value of freedom.

Some participant's role conflicts were a result of interaction with co-workers. Randy explained, "Others who are strongly against my identity may find my openly expression offensive to their beliefs."

RQ2 asked if individuals feel freedom to express religious or spiritual identity at work. The major theme communicated here by Muslim participants was that they are given religious freedom to express themselves by their organization. Some ways in which this freedom was granted include freedom to pray and respectful toward others. Moreover, a few Muslim participants expressed that there are barriers to their freedom of expression. The non-Muslim themes were freedom: expressed through daily interactions, and limits: expressed through region and hesitation.

### 4.3. Muslim themes

#### 4.3.1. Freedom to express

Some Muslim participants reported no obstacles in regards to religious expression at work. Faizi admitted that religious discussion are not permitted in his workplace but he did not see that as a form of oppression. He also reported that he has no need to hide his religious identity and that he has no problem disclosing that he is a Muslim. Raheem also feels unrestricted to express religion at his place of employment. He reported that co-workers are “very respectful and somewhat curious when they first meet me and knew I was Muslim they asked me about how many wives I can have.” Owais served in the US Navy and expressed no limitations to his freedom to express his religious identity. He further stated, “When I need off for work for a religious event, it [work] allows me to be off.” When Dabir answered this question, he reflected on a recent event that took place at his place of employment.

The organization as a whole goes to great lengths to remain impartial to different faiths but sometimes taken to extreme. In one area there is a dedicated prayer room set aside and

furnished for use by Arab customers. However, after a handful of us employees started using the room, it was promptly locked. The reasoning behind this was that if the company provided *US* with a prayer room they would be obligated to do the same for other groups.

#### 4.3.2. Prayer

Many Muslim participants responded to the second research question with freedom to pray as a method feeling the freedom to express religion at work. Zaid reported that his managers and organization are very understanding when he must take five or ten minutes to go and pray and the organization does not limit his ability to maintain his religious identity. He also wrote,

I feel 100% free to practice my religion publicly. Whenever it is time for prayer and I am out, I find a place outside in public to make my prayers. I have no shame or hesitation in doing so, the day I feel I am not able to, is the day I am a weak Muslim. I pray to always stay a strong believer. Nobody can stop you from practicing your religion.

Maalik feels that his organization is supportive of his religious identity when it comes time for prayer also. “Yes, I am allowed to take breaks to pray, take religious holidays off, and keep my beard. My religious values are not changed, altered or pushed aside due to any aspect of the organization.” Jahid sees his organization as being supportive for Muslims attempting to pray. Jahid wrote that he can take breaks to pray and fast during Ramadan without any issues. Tabark is given freedom to pray at the specified times as well. In response to the second research question, he wrote

This is a tough question because the organization allows you to freely express yourself but you don't hear anyone preaching religion at work or even debating religious views. They do however allow us to pray in conference rooms when available. They allow us to flex time to make our Friday prayers.

#### 4.3.3. Respectful

A few Muslim participants reported that they are allowed to express freely as long as they are respectful to others. This theme was communicated in the form of individuals not overbearing others. Fadwa reflected on her experience: "Medical school is basically an open forum and so long as you are not hurting anyone or being unethical, we are allowed to freely express our religious identities and I do not feel limited in any way." Dabir noticed this theme when he wrote

The organization takes a very neutral role when it comes to expression of religion. So long as you are not preaching to other co-workers and productivity is not hindered, the company is very encouraging. Days off for religious holidays are granted without any difficulties, and co-workers are supportive and even curious when it comes time for fasting.

#### 4.3.4. Barriers

A few Muslim participants reported that their organization has limits in place to control religious expression. Barriers included the organization and co-workers. Fadwa said that she does not feel free expressing herself in public and the way she does this is by going to the

mosque. Owais wrote, “I am Muslim, so some people do not understand the religion and believe what they see in the media and believe we are violent people, when our religion clearly tells us to be peaceful people.” Dabir reported

Most of the time I do not feel free to express myself since the impression I get from the people around me is that people have formed their own opinions already which would be more difficult to change with any single conversation. My approach is to demonstrate in my daily interactions rather than engage in any single debate. I feel free to speak *if invited* to do so and if the audience is receptive. If a civil dialog is possible, then an intellectual conversation is actually enjoyable. However most of the people I am around have a fixed opinion and are looking for an argument rather than understanding some one else’s point of view. In some sense these are the people that need to hear the debate the most but also have already formed an opinion. In many cases it seems like that I have to defend bad information that most people have accepted as normal.

Maalik offered his perception, which was shaped by the events of September 11.

I feel like legally I am free to express myself religiously in public however, in terms of society and people, I don’t really feel like I can. I know deep down that no one can do anything about it if I express myself religiously but since September 11 I am a lot more hesitant due to the closer eyes people put on Muslims and I also fear for any kind of action against me if I express myself religiously. I feel like I have to hide my religiousness in airports and airplanes first and foremost. I feel like problems would arise

if I were to pray at an airport. Speaking in Arabic also causes suspicions among the people around me in airports and airplanes.

Jahid expressed his perceived barriers as stemming from organizational policy.

Sometimes I feel I have to go out of my way to express myself in public especially when it comes time for one of the five daily prayers. Most locations do not have a facility to pray in so I have to go out of my way to find a location to pray in. I believe I will make every effort possible to make sure I follow my beliefs whether in a public or private setting, but they could provide better facilities for prayer to make it easier.

#### 4.4. Non-Muslim themes

##### 4.4.1. Freedom

Non-Muslims returned some similarities as the Muslims as far as freedom to express religion at work was concerned. A few non-Muslim participants wrote that they do feel free to express themselves religiously or spiritually at work with no pushback from the organization. Jena is a manager who said she helped create the corporate culture at her organization. “I have some authority in the organization, so I have helped create the culture. I also have little chance of losing my job over the matter.” The matter she was referencing was how free she feels to express religion at work. She also communicated that she believes the organization does not limit her ability to express religion in any way. Nathan shared this point of view by writing he feels no censorship at his place of employment.

#### 4.4.2. Daily interactions

Some participants wrote that they do feel free to express religion at their place of employment but rather than verbally express this view, they express it in their daily interactions. Randy said, “I am able to express this by being joyful and positive about the outlook on daily situations. I don’t feel restricted by the organization in freely expressing my identity.” Ron was another non-Muslim who wrote that as long as an employee’s expression is not “overbearing or coercive”, free religious expression is permitted. Jena was a third non-Muslim participant who expressed religion or spirituality through her actions rather than speech. She does this with some trepidation: “I do feel free to express myself in public, but I try to live it out instead of simply talking about it. My only hesitation in speaking freely is in being stereotyped, but if I am living out my faith honestly, that is less likely to happen.”

#### 4.4.3. Region

Some non-Muslim participants felt limited in their freedom to express religion at work and attributed those feelings to a specific region of the country. Nathan and Rachel both commented on their experience of life in the Bible belt. Nathan wrote, “I live in the Bible belt where lynching [sic] do happen, I think public expression in there [sic] area historical [sic] turns out bad.” And Rachel commented, “I live in the Bible belt. People here can be pretty intolerant of beliefs that don't exactly match their own. I don't feel the need to express myself in that way, though, so it's not a problem.” Becky, a Quaker reflected on how life in this region of the country has shaped her view:

I have felt like I could not express myself particularly in this region of the country, people here are not that familiar with Quakers. When I try to explain the sect and beliefs they think it's a cult and I've been accused of not being a true Christian.”

#### 4.4.4. Hesitant

The final theme to emerge with non-Muslims was that they do feel free to express themselves in public or in their current place of employment with some degree of hesitation in doing so. Becky wrote about her hesitations:

I generally do not freely express my spirituality or religious beliefs in public, unless asked or in a discussion about it, I would not freely and openly express my beliefs. My company does not allow us to witness, pass out religious literature, or openly preach or encourage our religious practices. However, we do honor religious holidays (Christian and Jewish) and people are allowed time off to practice their beliefs outside the workplace. In December, they place both a decorative Christmas tree and a Menorah in the lobby. For people of the Islamic faith, the women may dress according to their theology. I think the policy is fair and I do not feel that my spiritual identity is limited.

Katie offered her perspective and some anecdotal information to illustrate her point. In response to the question of whether or not she feels free to express her religious or spiritual identity at work, she wrote:

Yes, but I rarely discuss my beliefs especially at work, because we (the employees) are getting paid to work not discuss personal beliefs. In my personal life, the discussion of

religion rarely comes up as a topic. A person in my department who is a devout Christian tried to explain the importance of going to church and practicing religious beliefs in the way he practices was the only way to be a good Christian. He made me feel as if I wasn't really a Christian by just practicing good morals. I am not comfortable discussing my religious identity with just anyone, because I feel it is a personal preference and everyone should have the right to believe what they want to believe regardless of whether it is the same way I feel or not. We also have a Christmas/Holiday party each year and people are given Sunday off to worship if they choose. In Israel, they are given off the religious holidays to worship if they choose.

Becca, a schoolteacher described her experience with religious expression at a Christian institution:

I do not often talk about my spiritual views, but I would not feel comfortable expressing the particulars of my views outside of saying, "I'm a Christian", especially at the workplace. Although I work at a Christian university, I still believe it is not appropriate to discuss religion in class.

Rachel and Quinn had similar views toward religious expression in the workplace. Quinn responded with

I'm able to "freely" express myself in public. I don't express myself in public because I don't believe I have to prove anything. I think there are times that it is not "appropriate"

to express yourself in public. At work, you can [sic] wear what you like...rules because it a manufacturing plant.

Rachel wrote

I believe I would be allowed if it were something I wanted to do. But it's not important to me to share that sort of thing with everyone. I think a person's spirituality is a very personal thing. If someone asks, of course I don't mind discussing it, but it's not something I offer up freely.

RQ3 was broken into two parts. The first part of research question three asked when people share a religious or spiritual identity, in what ways, if any, do they perceive that others with a similar or shared religious or spiritual identity face role conflict in the workplace because of their religious or spiritual identity? Muslim participants returned themes of similar conflicts and depends on the person. Non-Muslim participant themes were moral conflicts, same as me, and avoidance.

#### 4.5. Muslim themes

##### 4.5.1. Similar conflicts

The most common response from Muslim participants here was that they believed others with similar religious values have similar role conflicts as they themselves face at work. In other words, they see all Muslims facing common issues of role conflicts regardless of place of employment. Zaid wrote, "I believe their organization allows them to express freely. They all

have their times to stop what they are doing and go answer the call for prayer.” Saamir responded,

I have friends that work for a company where they don't mind them taking breaks to go pray. Normally being a Muslim can put restraints on where you can work or the types of businesses you can open. But with most of my Muslim friends there [sic] work is very compatible with their religious views. As a Muslim anytime you're selling alcohol you are going directly against your religion. Most times these individuals will just choose to look the other way and ignore the fact that what they're doing is religiously wrong.

Taabir reported on his perceptions of others with similar religious views. Taabir wrote, “Very compatible you would not even know that they’re religions differ with the rest of the employees at the workplace and they can pray at work and attend religious prayers on Friday when they take their lunches.”

#### 4.5.2. Depends on the person

Depends on the person was a theme that arose among a few participants and was described as meaning conflicts between individuals and their organization were dependent upon the individual. Fadwa reported on this:

It depends on the place of employment, how steadfast the person is in their religious views, and if they give in to peer pressure easily. As long as no one is getting hurt/being unethical/offended, then they are allowed to express themselves. An example I can think

of is a Muslim banker and the fact that he has to deal with interest rates. Interest is considered *haraam* in Islam, but the Muslim banker still needs to deal with it every day.

Dabir wrote that he believes it depends on the person as well.

We all make compromises with our beliefs at some point and those who flex more than others allow themselves to integrate more readily, and seem less “alien” to their peers. That flexibility is different for each person. My wife has had similar experiences but a more diverse workforce make it few and far between. (I am the only minority in my group while my wife group is with 1 Latino, 1 Filipino, 1 gay Caucasian, 1 British guy). My wife works in supply chain and has to product allocations that involve large quantities of alcohol. While not selling directly, and not drinking, being involve [sic] with purchasing and distributions does pose a dilemma.

Raheem had a similar perspective in that he believes it depends on the individual.

Sometimes it depends on the person sometimes they don't care what people do or they are not that close to their religion. A lot of people come from overseas for training so they know a lot about Islam so they let them, they have their own prayer place, when the time comes for prayer, they are very free. I think once the person expresses he is Muslim, the employer respects that

Maalik also felt that it depends on the individual's level of commitment to their religion but added a caveat.

I think this depends on the person. The only problems I have heard of from others would be that sometimes problems arise when it's time for a Muslim to pray. Some jobs aren't really open to providing time or space for a Muslim to pray at their workplace.

#### 4.6. Non-Muslim themes

##### 4.6.1. Moral conflicts

Some non-Muslim participants expressed that they perceived others with their same religious or spiritual affiliation to have conflicts brought about by morals. Jena wrote

I am fortunate to be in a position of some authority in my workplace. That makes it much easier in my opinion to live out my values at work. I know many people who share my values and feel like they have no power to share them openly and are pressured to act in ways that go against their values, even feeling that their jobs are threatened. Most of the examples I can think of have to do with simple honesty. Tell the client what they want to hear, it's easier to ask for forgiveness than permission, that sort of thing. That attitude has become standard operating procedure in many workplaces. You are forced to "play the game." In fact, clients even expect it sometimes. I think we live in an overly political correct society that is looking to bring a lawsuit at the drop of a hat. In an effort to allow all faiths to speak freely (a good idea) we have actually limited that speech in order to not offend anyone. Companies tend to follow that rule. We have lost the freedom and become way too easily offended.

Becky had a similar outlook when she responded to research question three:

For most of the Quakers I know, they have chosen professions in education, counseling, or care-giving fields. Their profession is very much in alignment with their values. However no matter where individuals go to professionally find their calling, they encounter individuals, company edicts, and situations that are not in synch with their spiritual values.

#### 4.6.2. Same

Many non-Muslim participants believed that others with similar religious or spiritual values face the same role conflicts as participants themselves. Randy wrote: “I perceive the compatibilities from others the same as my own. Others who work mainly with customers (ex: waiter) may freely express themselves around the workplace by being uplifting and positive or if the customer wishes to hear more about their beliefs and identity. Others who work mainly with customers (ex: waiter) might be limited if the customers wishes not to hear about their beliefs and identity.”

Several other non-Muslim participants communicated this thought in so few words. For example, Becca said, “Probably the same as at my place of employment” meaning the role conflicts she expressed earlier are ones she believes others probably face at their place of employment.

#### 4.6.3. Avoidance

Avoidance was the final theme to emerge for non-Muslim participants answering research question three. This theme was communicated by non-Muslim participants and means

that some individuals do not discuss job related conflicts with others who share their religious or spiritual outlook. In response to this question, Nathan wrote, “I try not to bring it up, but if it does come up, be respectful of others. If the place or work is a religious based employer, believing in Darwin may look bad.” Katie reported that she simply has not discussed her beliefs with enough people to answer the question.

The second part of research question three asked participants when people have a different religious or spiritual identity, in what ways, if any, do they perceive that others with a different religious or spiritual identity face role conflict in the workplace because of their religious or spiritual identity? Muslims respondents reported here similar to the way they answered the first part of research question three. The theme to emerge here among Muslim participants was that they perceive others with a different religion to face the same role conflicts because of their religion as they themselves. For non-Muslim participants, the themes were compatible and limits.

#### 4.7. Muslim theme

##### 4.7.1. Similar conflicts

The most popular response to this question was that Muslim participants perceive others, regardless of religious or spiritual identity, to face the same type of role conflicts as they themselves face in the workplace. Zaid, reported that he believed others religious identity and their organizations’ are very compatible, creating no conflicts. Owais, who reported earlier that he is able to take breaks to pray, wrote that he perceived others are, “able to take off work because of religious reasons.” Saamir, who also reported no conflicts at his place of employment

wrote, “None of my non-Muslim friends seem to have any problems with compatibility in the work place.” Fadwa responded with, “Most religions don’t cause a major change in behavior or actions so organizations' values are compatible with theirs.” Tabark wrote, “I have never seen a job seriously hinder someone’s religious views. I’m sure there is something out there but I really can’t think of it. I can’t provide any specific answers because I have not personally witnessed it before.” Faizi believed there is compatibility between the two as he wrote,

Most others I know make it a point of emphasis to believe in the values of their organization without any conflicting religious values. Most others I know work in environments that share similar policies to mine regarding religious discussions, but this does not limit them in their spiritual identities.

Finally, Maalik offered his perspective with a clause: Most jobs don’t strain against religious identities at work; some jobs won’t allow Muslims to pray. Muslims cannot have beards if they want to be police officers or pilots among other jobs.

#### 4.8. Non-Muslim themes

##### 4.8.1. Compatible

Similarly to Muslim responses, non-Muslims believed that others with divergent religious or spiritual views face the same types of role conflicts as they themselves. The most popular response here was that they perceive others to face similar issues of incompatibility. Randy reported that he saw others as facing the same incompatibilities and added, “Their values would give them a sense of direction on how to handle certain situations with the organization.” Quinn

and Nathan wrote that the views are compatible among others' religious values and their organization and they he believes they are able to take breaks to pray respectively. Becky wrote

I think the policies are the same for religious or spiritual identity, I have not heard anything contrary. They [others] often work in fields that I have no interest in nor would I endorse or want to be a part of. I do not think they view their career as a part of their spiritual values, so it does not matter if it's compatible or not. As long as they have a job and especially if they make a lot of money. For the most part I think our laws allow people freedom of expression to a point, (i.e., clothing, certain holidays, time off, etc.)

Jena wrote

Although I do not think America is the Christian country we claim to be, we do still have some very puritanical ways about us. Most religions of the world agree on basic morals and so there is compatibility with most spiritual people of all kinds.

#### 4.8.2. Limited

The theme of limited was communicated by non-Muslim participants by way of them expressing how they perceive others with a different spiritual or religious outlook to experience role conflicts in the workplace because of their religious or spiritual identity. Nathan perceives that others may not be allowed to dress how they want due to organizations having a dress code. Becky also commented on an area where she perceives conflicts

Companies do not allow individuals to preach or impose their religious expression on others. For some, if they were not allowed to freely express their religious views (i.e., work policy) they might do so anyway, or be angry that they could not.

Finally, Jena wrote

Because I have friends whose spiritual views are also vastly different from American cultural views, there are other areas of incompatibility. For example, eating and praying practices, religious holidays, drinking alcohol, etc. The difference is that it is magnified if their religious views are not some form of Christianity

RQ4 asked what communication strategies and tactics do individuals use when addressing role conflict related to religious or spiritual identity in the workplace? Themes returned here for the Muslim participants were avoidance and deal with, while the sole non-Muslim theme was avoidance.

#### 4.9. Muslim themes

##### 4.9.1. Avoidance

In response to what communication strategies and tactics individuals use when addressing role conflicts related to religious identity in the workplace, many Muslim individuals reported that they would avoid addressing them. Raheem wrote, “Sometimes at the parties if they are serving alcohol then I don’t go or they have dancing then I don’t participate in those and I tell my co-workers that as I Muslim I cannot participate.” Jahid reported, “I possibly wouldn’t

involve myself with an activity that I feel that may go against my belief structure, but what they do outside of the work values is their business.”

Fadwa had a similar outlook in the way she would address role conflicts brought about by her religious identity in the workplace.

I am not ultra conservative so I do not see the harm in a male touching a female or vice versa for a medical examination, because this is to help someone out with their health.

Dabir also believes that avoidance is the method he would select for handling role conflicts in the workplace brought about by his identity.

I don't think there is much that can be done in this respect of outside work activities.

However there were a handful of activities that weren't related to bars and happy hours.

You don't want to be “that guy” that changes everybody else's idea just to suit your own.

And being vocal about it just seems like foisting ones beliefs on another, which goes both ways. My response to address the incompatibility has been passive. I make no attempts to

hide who I am, but at the same time, I don't go out of my way to draw attention to my

faith either. I've learned that trying to force the issue can raise resentment even faster. I

hope that the quality of my work and character will be enough to win their respect over.

With concerted efforts to try and change people, there ends up being a very cynical

response. Quite often, white Americans feel that they are getting the short end of the stick with corporate diversity strategies, and affirmative action. Trying to force this type of

culture change can often backfire. I do see improvement and attitudes slowly changing. I

see problems largely with the older generations that are getting to retire. The emerging

workforce is used to being around people with different beliefs and I see the problem

getting better. When working with groups composed of people less than 40 years old, there was little to no issue with trying to deal with contrasting beliefs.

#### 4.9.2. Deal with

Some Muslims believe that the best way to handle role conflicts in the workplace brought about by an individual's religious or spiritual identity is to deal with it directly. Some participant's method is to confront the source and attempt to mitigate the issue. Tabark wrote that he would have a conversation with the individual for conflict resolution and avoid, "screaming, yelling, and violence." Zaid wrote,

I tell them it is not for me and that is [sic] conflicts with my religious beliefs. I am straightforward with them, I tell them that is not my scene and it is against my religious values. One thing I wouldn't do is judge them. I am no one to judge, I just know it isn't for me.

Fadwa had felt that explaining herself to colleagues was the best approach as well.

I usually try explaining to my colleagues the reasoning behind my choices.

I try to avoid using the religious standpoint and try to make it more of a personal thing because there are things that I do that are considered "against" the religion, but obviously I do not feel as strongly about those than I do the drinking issue, or other issues for that matter.

#### 4.10. Non-Muslim theme

##### 4.10.1. Avoidance

The only theme to emerge from non-Muslim participants was avoidance. Non-Muslim participants also believed that avoiding the source of the role conflict was the best approach.

Becky wrote

I generally don't respond to them. If asked, I sometimes challenge them with thinking about the golden rule, examples of Christ's forgiveness, and remind them about what the Bible says about being judgmental. In the cases of bad behavior, I escalated the situation to my director per the company's policy. I also figured out ways to better manage my reactions in dealing with these individuals. I have found that an important tactic is to never "feed off of" negative behavior or to engage in arguing or confrontation. Also figure out what your real goal is. Generally, it's about meeting a milestone, or getting data that you need. Figure out how to get that in another way rather than argue with a person who is making it a problem for you.

Becca believes that she would not do anything to address the incompatibilities. Randy also uses an avoidance method, "I would just simply be positive and not say anything pertaining to my identity that would trigger offensive tension in any faced situation such as this." Jena wrote in regard to handling role conflicts:

Because of my position, I am consulted on hires, fires and clients. I always attempt to be an advocate for the people (clients, employees, etc.) in any situation. I try to communicate in terms of people considerations over money questions. That sometimes

means making extremely difficult decisions. Sometimes saying the truly loving thing means saying very difficult things, but my strategy is to as honestly as possible look out for the other person's best interest. You have to first solidify your relationships. You cannot deal with incompatible values before you prove you love and care about the other person. The "strategy" is to love people and show them they are important to you, then deal with incompatibilities. Value judgments are FAR less important than simply loving and respecting people.

RQ5 asked what situations, if any, do individuals avoid addressing role conflicts related to religious or spiritual identity in the workplace. Muslim participants communicated that as a majority, they would only use one method: they would withhold from any action. Non-Muslim participants also communicated one theme: they would avoid anything that could cause a confrontation.

#### 4.11. Muslim theme

##### 4.11.1. Withhold

In response to the fifth research question, some Muslim participants said they would withhold from any action whatsoever as an avoidance method for addressing role conflicts in the workplace because of their religious identity. Fadwa wrote

I don't speak up when I don't like something, I try to just be quiet and work. When I first started I wanted to move up but then I realized it just isn't going to happen so I stopped

caring. I used to try and go above and beyond, I used to try and make it a better place but now I don't.

Jahid wrote, I possibly wouldn't involve myself with an activity that I feel that may go against my belief structure." Zaid reported that he would avoid making judgments about others. Dabir reflected in his response, "Mandatory training for matters like this seems excessive. There is already mandatory training that covers this. Trying to force it, or isolate a specific example is likely elicit complaints about "political correctness"."

#### 4.12. Non-Muslim theme

##### 4.12.1. Confrontation

Most non-Muslim participants reported that they would avoid anything that could cause a confrontation between themselves and the source of the conflict. In response to this question Becky reported, "Depending on the situation or the person, sometimes it's best to not engage in discussion and just let it go. I have to remember that I should not judge either." Randy believes in avoiding as well: "I would avoid forcing my beliefs upon someone else rather than just sharing with them." Jena wrote

There have certainly been times when I kept my mouth shut when the majority was against me to avoid making waves. We have on occasion represented clients that I did not trust and did not want to be associated with professionally. The problem is the personal and professional relationships blur in my business. But, I'm attempting to look out for the best interests of my employees, my partners and the client, so it gets complicated. Do not

approach those kinds of incompatibilities until you have built a relationship with the other person. Any conversation without the relationship will end in confrontation that seems more important than the people involved. The people involved are always more important than the issue.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

This research set out to understand the relationship, if any, between individual's religious or spiritual identity and potential role conflicts brought about by incompatibilities from those individuals place of employment. Based on the interactions with twenty individuals, ten Muslims and ten non-Muslims, several themes arose which can help to address the research questions.

As the responses to the questionnaires were read and reread, several themes began to emerge. Upon initial glance it was noted that if all clues were removed from participant's response, it would appear difficult to assign a religion to a participant due to anonymity. One Muslim even participant noted that it would be difficult to distinguish religious affiliation at his workplace if individuals did not profess their faith. In looking at the macro-view, these religious participants have many qualities in common.

Research question one asked what role conflicts, if any, do individuals experience at work because of their religious or spiritual identity? From this question Muslim participants reported religious morals, celebrations, job demands, and racism while non-Muslim participants reported dissimilar beliefs.

For religious morals, individuals noticed that sometimes the work limits their ability to express their religion. Moreover, Muslim participants noticed the dichotomy that exists in regard to religious holidays. Many employers in the US observe Thanksgiving and Christmas yet these are primarily Christian holidays and many regardless of observance receive the time off. Some

minority group holidays are granted as well including Martin Luther King Day, Veterans Day, and Labor Day. Yet, central Islamic holidays such as *Eid Mubarak*, and Ramadan are ignored and Muslim employees must work. These employees are sometimes allowed to use vacation or any other time they have acquired throughout the year to observe their chief holidays but it is not a widely recognized by employers as paid time off.

Religious morals were creating a role conflict were communicated via a sense of cognitive dissonance by both Muslim and non-Muslim participants. These role conflicts consisted of the nature of the business conflicting with the rules of individual's religion, such as the intermixing of genders at work and contributing to a product or service that goes against one's religious beliefs. These cause moral dilemmas for individuals, which require the individual to find some method to reduce dissonance. For example, one can weigh the positives and negatives of their work and then assess their relative values with relationship to their faith commitments. This is the approach that Dabair took as he wrote about what makes his work satisfying and dissatisfying.

The work is extremely satisfying. There are plenty of places I could work as an engineer but few places have such exotic products such as ... From a broader perspective, the products we use are globally recognized as the finest military equipment available. Dealing with some people in the company has been dissatisfying. There are some that are not aware that the people around them have different views, opinions and feelings and openly express themselves regardless of who is around them. Through this, it was surprising to learn people's view of other religions and ethnicities.

Dabir does realize the role conflicts he is faced with due to the high salience religion plays in his life. He said

My religion is the primary part of my identity. I conduct all my activities and behavior around other people with my faith in mind. There are five daily prayers and I pray while at work at the appropriate times. Fasting and charity are all regular requirements, which I observe.

With his religious identity playing such an important part of his overall identity, Dabir has probably learned to rationalize his work in some form. He says that he is happily employed and that he is able to take times out of the day to answer the call of prayer.

Non-Muslims also noted instances in which the organization conflicts with actions they would take. These incompatibilities included, wrestling with working in the defense industry, more emphasis on money than people, the organization acting in a manner that is opposite of ethical beliefs, and witnessing at work.

In regards to the statement by Williams and Zinkins (2010), can working with or around items or practices considered *haram* be regarded as an act of worship? After all, the work is productive and social justice can be interpreted differently depending on whose social justice is in question. Further, if the “material enhancements” gained from this type of work are used for “social justice” or “spiritual enhancements”, does that negate the manner in which it was received? Apart from the defense industry, there are other potential conflicts with Muslims in the America workforce such as Muslim’s who work with and around alcohol, or even a chef as Muslims are prohibited from consuming or handling pork products.

Perhaps individuals similar to participants in this study are able to live with role conflicts rather than attempt to overcome them if the organization that supply's them is able to accommodate the religious expression aspects of their employees. Respondents in this study said that they are able to perform religious expression at work with no obstacles presented from management. If this is true then they may feel role strain and some role ambiguity. Based on responses with these individuals, I never got the impression that they were struggling to establish an identity because of their beliefs and their work. Participants are simply able to live with the fact that sometimes the values and actions of their organization do not sync with their own. The satisfaction they receive from doing their job well and other freedoms is all participants need to balance competing cognitions. Some participants seem contempt on living with a level of role ambiguity.

Contrary to uncertainty reduction theory, some Muslim participants understand that even though fulfilling the duties of an employer is a fiduciary responsibility and an act of worship, some jobs present cognitive dissonance. An interesting thought is why are individuals willing to accept some degree of ambiguity? For Muslim's, a possible explanation could be because work is a form of worship. Or perhaps the fact Muslim's keep jobs that present moral dilemmas are based on some sort of exchange. Social exchange theory proposes that social behavior is the result of an exchange process. The purpose of this exchange is to maximize benefits and minimize costs. According to this theory, people weigh the potential benefits and risks of social relationships. In the case of this study, the relationship is between the Muslim and his/her religious salience. When the risks outweigh the rewards, people will terminate or abandon that relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In this case rather than terminating or abandoning

the degree to which Muslim's value religion; they briefly exchange that salience for gainful employment.

Further, if religious identity is exchanged, it could then be questioned how intrinsically invested in that role the individual actually is. Individuals socially invest in roles meaning, an investment in, and commitment to, adult social roles (Roberts & Wood, 2006; Roberts, Wood & Smith, 2005). The primary adult social roles that define social investment are centered in work, family, and community. (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2008). "It is more important to examine not whether people are working, or married, or attend mass once a week but rather, how they participate in these activities" (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2008, p. 72). Religious investment is manifested in concrete means through the frequency of attendance at organized religious services and the frequency of involvement in personal religious practices such as prayer and meditation (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2008).

Muslim participants reported that sometimes celebrations create role conflicts between themselves and their organization. Celebrations were reported in the form of co-workers engaging in activities outside of normal working hours. These engagements, as reported by Muslims, include mostly opportunities for colleagues to consume alcohol. The consumption of alcohol is *haraam* in Islam and creates issues of incompatibility for Muslim employees. Their continued absence from group interactions could pose a threat to group cohesion and cause their colleagues to view them as more of an outsider.

Job demands were communicated by Muslim participants as creating conflicts because of the amount of time that must be sacrificed for the work, the supplemental role that must be created in order to adhere to corporate politics and structure, and the organizations position on

religious expression. Some Muslim participants said that the requirements of the job present role conflicts in regard to work/life balance and how their time is allocated. Jahid and Dabir noticed that sometimes the job demand is so great that there is little time to devote to outside work activities such as prayer. Naylor, Pritchard and Ilgen (1980) proposed that each individual allocates a fixed amount of personal resources in terms of time and energy to various roles. The allocation of increased resources to the work role, as indicated by high levels of job involvement and organizational commitment, may result in the allocation of less personal resources to other significant life roles, e.g. religious life roles. Wiley (1987) further anticipated that this resource allocation process is carried out with the objective of maximizing anticipated outcomes. Unfortunately, it would appear that at times, individuals have little to no control over how to allocate resources and to what roles. In the situation of job demands, participants are required to allocate available time and energy into their work role. This undesirable allocation process does not come without conflicts as mentioned by Dabir when he said that he tries to work faster in the future so that he is able to dedicate time to the religious role.

Racism was the final theme to emerge from Muslim participants. Racists can be extremely difficult people to engage, especially if they are individuals that one must work with consistently. It is sometimes hard to tell the religious affiliation of an individual, yet difficult to miss skin color. Since Muslims are typically darker individuals, it likely that racism would still occur from time to time even if they did not adhere to Islam. It is possible that racism in life is avoidable by evading racist individuals or places; however racism at work is sometimes inescapable. The added stress caused from dealing with racist individuals and the work relationship dynamic set the stage for low job performance and decreased organizational

affiliation. Further, racial slurs are usually against corporate policies and could result in the termination of an employee. No one should have to go to work and feel uncomfortable because of prejudicial treatment by a co-worker. On the other hand, participants were asked if a person with a different religious/spiritual identity said or done anything to them to make them feel either negative or positive about their religious/spiritual identity and what were their thoughts and feelings about their religious/spiritual identity. There was a split consensus in the way racist comments made Muslim individuals feel. Some Muslims were not affected and best summarized by Maalik: "My religious identity is important. It doesn't matter what others think about it. What matters is what I am supposed to do and the fact that I do it or don't do it." Dabir best summarized Muslim individuals who were made more aware:

These types of incidents definitely made me more self-conscious about my identity, but at the same time makes me more aware of my role as a Muslim. It makes me paranoid about meeting new people in new groups since I still have to evaluate how to interact with them. The positive is that it does provide a mechanism for introspection that probably would not otherwise be there. It keeps me on my toes, and makes me strive for self-improvement in my own faith.

The sole theme to emerge from non-Muslim participants was dissimilar beliefs. Dissimilar beliefs as communicated by non-Muslim participants occurred when their organization acts in a manner that is opposite of how they would act. These situations cause role conflicts because for non-Muslim, they did not like being associated with something that has divergent beliefs. Cognitive dissonance was present for Becky when she wrote about being a

spiritual individual and working in the defense industry. She does realize that sometimes military action is necessary but the nature of the business still creates conflict for her. Her outlook is more peaceful and although she wishes there were no wars, the nature of her business helps promote the same cause she contests. For non-Muslims, they seemed to be able to rationalize their feelings and overcome the conflict in the same dialogue. For example, Becky said

I wrestle sometimes with working in the defense industry because spiritually, I am a pacifist and wish that we did not have to fight wars and risk and lose so many lives. However, I realize that military actions are often necessary to protect and preserve.

Jena wrote, “There is sometimes more emphasis on money than people, but it's a business” to name a few. This phenomenon could lead one to believe that these individuals are attempting to downplay their emotions in order to alleviate the role conflict they face as they make their way through life. These individuals appear to also be using a social exchange to justify their actions. It can be suggested that based on the findings presented here and the Cropanzano and Mirchell (2005) proposition that when the risks outweigh the rewards, people will terminate or abandon that relationship, the risks of dealing with cognitive dissonance at work do not outweigh the rewards.

The second research question asked if individuals feel freedom to express their religious or spiritual identity at work. Muslim themes reported here were freedom to express, prayer, respectful, and barriers. Non-Muslim themes were freedom, daily interactions, region, and hesitant. Dabir’s comments on the use of a dedicated prayer room offer a minority’s perspective toward freedom to express religion at work. Dabir stated that Arab customers furnished a room

dedicated to prayer and when Muslim employees began to use the room, management locked it. He then stated that the reasoning behind this was that if Muslim employees were allowed to have a room dedicated to religious expression, then the company must accommodate all religions equally. This is a fair assumption to make however the situation could have been handled differently. Earlier he said that his organization takes a very passive stance toward religious expression yet they were quick to lock a prayer room. The act of “promptly” locking the room seems to be an aggressive stance. Rather than lock the room and allow no company property to be used in that manner, the organization could have found ways to allow other religious individuals an outlet for expression. By providing such accommodations, the organization would appear sensitive to the religious needs of its employees and possibly strengthening their organizational commitment and reduce the likelihood and severity of any issues involving role conflicts, role stress, role ambiguity, and role strain.

Prayer was another theme to emerge as reported by Muslim participants. This theme was conveyed by Muslims expressing that they are not only allowed to pray at work but that they “feel” free to do so. The feeling is part is the important part of the equation here. Simply because something is allowed does not mean it is not frowned upon when executed. It was reported that non-Muslim co-workers are often inquisitive to learn more about Islamic traditions when they learn about Muslim prayer processes. The fact that Muslims feel a sense of freedom to pray is important for maintaining good relationships at work. Feeling free to perform is not the same as being able to perform as management can control what freedoms employees have but they have no control over how employees feel about something.

Muslim participants reported that one of the stipulations of freedom to express is that they must be respectful of others who might not share their religious point of view. By this they mean they must be cognizant of others around them who may not want to engage in a religious discussion or be one the receiving end of a religious lecture. “Others” was a term used to refer to the organization itself in that as long as productivity is not encumbered, employees may express religion. This seems rather intuitive, as an individual’s place of employment is not a forum for religious lecturing or recruitment. By organizations allowing employees to express levels of religion at work, they are attempting to permit employees to be able to bring a piece of their individuality with them rather than leave it at the door. As six in ten Americans report being religious and seventy two percent of Muslims in a survey reported that religion is very important to them, it would be unreasonable for organizations to think employees could turn off religion when they arrive for work.

While many Muslim participants reported freedom to express religion at work, others noticed that some barriers do exist inside the organization, which limit expression. These barriers, aside from policies about religion, were mostly co-workers and their perceptions of Muslims. Owais’s comments provide support for the Pew data listed earlier in that forty-six percent of Americans believe that Islam is more likely than other faiths to encourage violence against non-believers. Dabir had a similar perspective and commented that he only feels able to speak freely if a civil conversation is possible. Much of the public opinion data taken from Pew is corroborated in Muslim participant’s responses here. The Pew data show Americans to be fearful, ignorant, and misinformed about Islam and based on Muslim comments, it does have an effect on their behavior. Maalik’s comments are an inside look at how other Muslim could feel

because of September 11. Maalik says he abandons his religious identity in airports and airplanes all together fearing ramifications otherwise. Maalik probably endures a great amount of stress from being forced to suppress such a salient part of his identity when in these environments. Jahid expressed that he feels like he must go out of his way to make his five daily prayers because most places do not have a facility to pray in. The practice of prayer is actually quite strict in that there must be no noise, nothing hanging on the walls, and Muslim must face north toward Mecca. Ideally, these prayers are completed in a mosque but they can be performed outside of a mosque if the conditions are right. From all the guidelines, it is easy to see how accommodating such a process would be problematic from an organizations point of view. The Muslim employees in Dabir's case had an entire room specially dedicated for this process and it was taken away.

For non-Muslims, the first theme to emerge was freedom. Freedom was communicated by way of non-Muslims being uninhibited by their organization to practice religion. It is important to note that non-Muslim participants said they are free to express which should not be confused with feeling free to express. For non-Muslims, depending on the religion, the organization may have an easier time accommodating values. For example, Easter, a very critical Christian holiday always falls on Sunday and several workers in the US are off work anyway, in addition, Thanksgiving and Christmas provide paid time off. Christian's major service is on Sunday so there is little organizational accommodation needed there and Christians are not required to pray five times a day. Becky noted that her Israeli owned organization places a Christmas tree and a Menorah in the lobby during Christmas to celebrate. In other words, in our society, organizations can be supportive of Christianity without much sacrifice.

Region was another theme to appear and was communicated by non-Muslims as a limit to free expression. Some participants believed that because they currently live in the Bible belt, expression of divergent views from the majority are not acceptable. According to a 2008 American Religious Identification Survey, the Bible belt is an area in the southeast US that touches roughly fifteen states and consists mostly of Baptists and Catholics. It is interesting to note that, according to a few participants, if the Bible belt is an intolerant place, why did no Muslim participants report issues from living here? Perhaps because Muslims, due to race, are viewed as outsiders and white Americans are harder on their own group members for skewed behavior. According to self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987) individuals are typically more persuaded by messages from their in- group than by messages from the out-group. The negative reactions non-Muslims receive from other non-Muslims could be strong enough to influence a behavior change.

The final theme to emerge in regard to freedom to express was hesitation. Some non-Muslim participants said they are hesitant to express themselves at the workplace. Some reasons for this include, certain forms are not allowed, we are here to work, not appropriate, nothing to prove, and not important to share. Most of these reasons are not limits by the organization but limits individuals have placed on themselves. Most all organizations have boundaries in regards to religious expression however the ones that do not leave it up to the discretion of the individual to exercise appropriateness. Individual' listed here reasons they placed on themselves for being hesitant to express religion at work. Non-Muslim participants reported more religious fluidity than Muslim participants as they communicated less stress in having their religion kinetic. Non-

Muslims reported having fewer issues with regard to a religious role exchange than Muslim participants.

The first part of the third research question asked when people share a religious or spiritual identity, in what ways, if any, do they perceive that others with a similar or shared religious or spiritual identity face role conflict in the workplace because of their religious or spiritual identity? Muslim participants returned two themes: similar conflict and depends on the person, while non-Muslim participants reported moral conflicts, same, and avoidance. It is worth mentioning here that saturation began to occur as participants consistently reported on similar issues. Muslims reported that they believe other Muslims face common concerns of role conflicts regardless of place of employment. That is, individual Muslim participants do not feel singled out for differential treatment. The most referenced point that Muslims spoke toward was how they perceive others Muslims pray at work. Muslims believed that other Muslims are allowed to take a break to pray when necessary.

Depends on the person was another theme to emerge from Muslim participants. This theme was communicated by way of Muslims believing that the question can only be answered if more information is known about the person. Muslims said that they do not feel comfortable making judgments about others regardless of religious affiliation. Further they speculate that it depends on the organizations. Maalik said that it depends on the person however, he has heard of issues arising when it comes time from Muslims to pray. Though the business need is different depending on the industry and the organization, companies must be careful when limiting employee's religious expression. The same thing is true for organizations attempting to limit employees who chose to dress in traditional religious garb. Title VII says that the individual is

the sole interpreter of his/her religion, not the organization. With that, it is easy to see how conflicts may arise and, based on the increased number of cases brought before the Supreme Court since 9/11, this will continue to be a hot button issue.

The first non-Muslim theme to appear was moral conflicts. Moral conflicts were communicated via non-Muslims believing other non-Muslims face moral conflicts in the workplace based on non-Muslim participant's perceptions. That is, for example, Becky wrote that as a pacifist, she does not condone war yet she understands her place within her organization. She believes that other non-Muslims could face similar issues of moral conflict in regard to their religious or spiritual affiliation and the nature of their industry. Jena makes an interesting comment about how people are expected to behave sometimes. She mentions that, "You are forced to play the game; in fact, clients even expect it at times." By clients she could be referring to internal or external clients where by co-workers would be internal and customers would be external. Jena noticed that at times, individuals are expected to be someone else and follow rules they do not necessarily believe in. Depending on an individual's level of commitment to their faith, this could present an opportunity for role conflicts. The fact that she mentions, "forced" is more cause for concern since forced implies individuals do not have a choice in the matter. The consequences of breaking these "forced" social codes could result in a failed effort to win a client and the termination of employment depending on the situation.

The next two themes to emerge for non-Muslim participants were same and avoidance. These themes were communicated in the form of non-Muslim participants believing that other non-Muslims face the same types of role conflicts in the workplace as they themselves, although few examples were actually provided here. This is the area that began to see heavy saturation in

regard to responses. Avoidance was also communicated and meant that religious discussions were not held at or participants were simply unaware of how to answer this question. It should be noted that the questions attempting to answer research question three fell at near the end of the survey questionnaire and participants possibly became restless toward the survey.

The second part of research question three asked participants when people have a different religious or spiritual identity, in what ways, if any, do they perceive that others with a different religious or spiritual identity face role conflict in the workplace because of their religious or spiritual identity? For Muslim participants the only theme to arise was similar conflicts. This was reported by way of Muslims believing that non-Muslims face similar conflicts as Muslims at their place of employment. Any Muslim participants believed that individuals who are not Muslims have compatible values with their organization, much like Muslims in this study. All in all, Muslims did not see individuals of any religion having issues of incompatibility with their organization. Maalik was the only participant who had the perception that there might be incompatibility issues with regard to Muslims, beards, and prayer.

For non-Muslim participants the themes to emerge were compatible and limited. Non-Muslim participants believed that individuals with a different religious affiliation encounter similar role conflicts as anyone. They do not perceive individuals dissimilar from themselves to face role conflicts because of their religion. In fact, they believed everyone regardless of religion faces similar role conflicts. Becky believes that others are able to overlook conflicts between religion and individual if the person is compensated well.

Limited was communicated by way of non-Muslim participants expressing that they believe others with a different religious affiliation are able to express themselves within certain

boundaries. For example, some non-Muslims believed that others might not be able to dress in traditional religious garb due to the nature of the business. Moreover, some participants believed others may not preach or impose their religion on another at work. Becky also perceived a role conflict arising here writing that if an organization limits a major tenet of an individual's religion, they would follow the rules of their religion and ignore the corporate policy. Jena perceives role conflicts arising possibly from eating, praying, religious holidays, and drinking alcohol. The possible role conflicts Jena referred to are surprisingly close to the role conflicts Muslim participants expressed. Perhaps in Jena's line of work these types of issues would create problems but Muslim participants reported no issues with such matters.

The fourth research question asked what communication strategies and tactics do individuals use when addressing role conflict related to religious or spiritual identity in the workplace? Muslim themes here were avoidance and deal with while the single non-Muslim theme was avoidance. Avoidance was conveyed by way of avoiding the situation responsible for the role conflict, avoidance of the religious aspect that conflicts with the organizational aspect, and avoids any tactics at all. For avoiding the source, Raheem said he would stay away from a situation he knew would cause him dissonance such as a party. For avoidance of the religious aspect, Fadwa believes that in certain situations, it is permissible to bend the rules of religion. Finally for avoiding any tactics at all, Dabir simply does nothing. All these participants with the exception of Fadwa risk threats to group cohesion as they excuse themselves from social situations. The prolonged absences from group gatherings could cause peers to view Muslims as more of an outsider.

Deal with emerged as a tactic used by Muslim participants to address role conflicts. Many people chose a more passive approach to deal with role conflicts that result in them simply living with the conflict rather than attempting to minimize or stop them. Muslim participants reported no hesitation when addressing incompatibilities directly. For non-Muslims, avoidance was the only theme to emerge and was conveyed as meaning participants ignored any tactics. Jena makes an interesting connection when she describes her strategy. She says that before a direct approach is possible, she says a relationship must be solidified. She believes that unless there is a mutual respect for both parties involved, addressing the conflict is fruitless. Becky also makes a connection as to why she believes avoidance is the best method. She mentions she attempts to remain calm and not reciprocate any negative behavior.

Research question five asked what situations, if any, do individuals avoid addressing role conflicts related to religious or spiritual identity in the workplace. There was only one theme per religious group to emerge for this research question. For Muslims, the theme was withhold and the non-Muslim theme was confrontation. A few Muslim participants wrote that when they do not like something, they simply withhold from any action. The types of actions they described were verbal and physical actions. Fadwa said she became disenfranchised when her efforts to make a change went unnoticed. The result of this was she lost faith in her organization and lost commitment. She explains that because of this she stopped caring.

The non-Muslim theme of confrontation was communicated by participants saying they would avoid anything that could cause a confrontation between themselves and the source of the conflict. Addressing conflict at work presents challenges because co-workers are people that we interact with everyday. Every interaction puts face in jeopardy and a goal of communication is to

maintain face. If the confrontation goes poorly, the relationship could be ruined and negatively affect the professional relationship.

## 5.2. Limitations

As with any study, limitations began to appear. The first obstacle to affect the outcome was the operational definition of what it means to be an avid practicing Muslim. Several Muslims in the study said on multiple occasions that it is not their place to judge another person's character or their devotion to the Islamic faith and that it is difficult to outline a definitive set of characteristics that would epitomize a "good" Muslim. What could be agreed on were some loose behaviors that could signify a person who follows the teachings and could be labeled a practicing Muslim. The drawback to only using Muslims based on a practicing status is that religious salience is still difficult to verify. The researcher learned during the course of this study that existential topics such as religion couldn't be cataloged as black and white concrete data. A deep connection to the uniquely human experience is required to attempt to understand phenomena that are greater than us.

Moreover, in the short time spent with these individuals, labeling their dedication to Islam would be unfair. Future scholars could benefit from conducting a study similar to this as a longitudinal study as it would better serve in summing up individuals' behavior. The religious salience of an individual proved to be a massive undertaking into the personal and spiritual sphere of an individual's schema. Participant observation would further help the researcher in getting a glimpse of the intricacies of what it means to be a Muslim-American working in the western world. This researcher had brief access to the Muslim experience and believes there is

much more to the lifestyle than exposed in this study. A trip to Mecca or *hajj* would possibly give the researcher an intimate look at one of the most important and fulfilling experiences in a Muslim's life. Immersing oneself in the culture is a critical component and a step closer to understanding the life of another. This study provided a snapshot into the very complicating lives of a few individuals and to put a designation on them after a short time would be jumping to a conclusion without enough evidence. Although this study does scope or operationalize an avid practicing Muslim, the researcher feels a disservice could be served by being unable to accurately identify qualified personnel.

A second limitation to appear was the survey questionnaire itself. As could with all questionnaires, the argument could be made that order was a limitation. No matter the order, responses will be affected based on the preceding question. For example, the questionnaire first asked for the participant to describe their work experience followed by questions asking what, if anything, made either work satisfying or dissatisfying respectively before it gets into the core of the issues being examined. If questions asking about participants religious/spiritual values were asked first followed by general questions about respondent's place of employment, associations between their work role and their religious/spiritual role might have been made.

The questionnaire also proved to be a third limitation. The problem with survey length materialized in the form of short responses toward the end of the questionnaire, the skipping of questions toward the end, and a repeated use of "I don't know". Respondents also felt that several questions were asking the same thing and consequently became confused and expressed concern that they did not correctly answer the question. Confusion was expressed in some of the participants responses including comments like "as I answered in the previous question", or

“same as before.” This diminishing interest in the questionnaire could be a reason for the lack of detailed responses toward the end and the unsettling average 5.7 questions per participant being left unanswered. In a strictly survey questionnaire study, it is paramount that all questions are answered as detailed as possible. The high rate of question avoidance proved detrimental to the study. Failure to provide rich data for every question limits the output and validity of the research.

The delivery method of the initial form of the questionnaire (later changed to an online survey) supplied the fourth limitation. The program used to create, administer, and receive questionnaire data was not universally compatible with each participants computer system configuration. Respondents using Mac and PC operating systems reported flaws in their experience with Acrobat Pro. The program only worked depending on the user’s security settings and the version of the software the user was operating on. Some participants were allowed to complete the survey and the submit button required to transfer information from participant to researcher did not appear. In a few cases, the button appeared but was not functional. Further, these participants were unable to save the PDF and were required to take the survey again typing answers into a separate word document and sending it directly to the researcher. A few participants were able to save the document with their answers included and email it directly back to the principle investigator. This was only made possible after the participant contacted the researcher and informed him of their situation. If the participant failed to save their answers, they were asked to take the survey again. The addition of these extra steps frustrated participants and could have caused them to think in a hurry when filling out the questionnaire for the second or

third time. It is the concern of this researcher that some questionnaires returned contain second and third attempt answers and may not be as forthcoming as they were upon initial completion.

A similar study would benefit from a shorter survey and different mode of delivery. As stated, the length and method for delivery proved cumbersome at times and individuals lost interest in or their computer configuration was not compatible with the questionnaire. Survey best practices according to Strawman (2004) are to keep the survey to a reasonable length, efficiency is more important than length, and avoid a long series of items about the same topic.

A negative aspect of questionnaires is they do not allow for instant feedback or real-time communication. Undoubtedly, one-on-one interviews will produce a narrative unparalleled and complete with the visual cues and an environment required to produce a truly unique experience for researcher and participant. Prospective researchers could benefit from conducting one-on-one interviews in addition to survey questionnaires. The nature of a study such as this lends itself to an atmosphere conducive to a deep conversation between researcher and participant. Survey questionnaires could provide vital information for developing and interview schedule and line of questioning. Questionnaires can also lay the groundwork for understanding where to probe the respondent for more information. Questionnaires are designed to work in concert with interviews not independent. Due to time constraints, this study was limited to questionnaires only.

A fifth limitation was the recruitment process. Using a snowball type sample is one of the weakest methods to obtain participation. A truly random sample across the board would have served the study better however locating a niche group such as Muslim-America's working in a specific industry willing to speak about their experiences can be difficult at times. Moreover,

participants in a very specific community may be less likely to come forward making snowball type sampling the only method available.

One innovative method for recruiting participants might be to solicit them outside a prayer such as *Duhr* because this prayer falls at about one in the afternoon. This would give the researcher an idea about a potential participant's organizational culture as it pertains to religious practice or an idea about how highly the individual places religion on their personal hierarchy. Since the codes surrounding prayer are precise, a mosque is the ideal place to pray. As stated before, it is difficult to judge the salience of an individual's religion but for an individual to take the extra step to make sure prayer is performed in a mosque could provide evidence for a case of an avid practicing Muslim.

A final limitation was the sample population. Male Muslim-American's dominated the population overshadowing the perceptions of female Muslim-American's. Without the addition of female commentary, this researcher feels that the portrayal of Islam in this study is only partial. While performing background research, it was revealed that wearing religious identifiers made Muslim individuals least employable for high status jobs and most employable for low status jobs. Moreover, Muslim's are the second most discriminated group in the country. Most men in this study only wore religious identifiers during prayer and only one had a beard. The women however had much more overt signifiers such as *hijab's* and/or *burqa's*. Future research could focus solely or more so on the female Muslim-American's working journey through the western world. In the highly matriarchal society we live in where hegemonic masculinity is dominant, researching female Muslim-American's would help to bring a muted group's voice to the forefront.

Moreover, the mean age of the Muslim-America population was only 30.8 years. The average was pulled upward by the participation of Ray, a sixty-eight year old veterinarian. While considering participants for a future survey, the researcher could benefit from a broader age range of individuals. This generation Y group has experienced much in their lifetime but the study could benefit more from the wisdom and experiences of more individuals of older age. To obtain an accurate understanding of experiences, future researchers should recruit from a variety of different age groups to make the exploration a generational affair. Also, the non-Muslim population was recruited through word of mouth from the Muslim's. This sample is not representative of a random sample. A larger sample size recruited from a truly random sample would serve future researchers better in collecting the most organic data possible and providing a better representation of the population.

### 5.1. Implications for future research

In this section, implications for future research are discussed. First, main findings from this study are linked to existing theories, particularly role-conflict and self-categorization. Next, implications for communication research are detailed focusing on how other communication scholars can extend this research. This section concludes by examining how others interested in spiritual and religious communication can draw from and adapt this study.

Role conflict occurs when two or more roles are partially or entirely incompatible. These roles are in competition for salience and the social actor must find ways to balance and manage these competing cognitions. When the individual is in role limbo, he/she is said to be experiencing role ambiguity. Role ambiguity refers to the lack of clarity and predictability of the

outcome of one's behavior (House & Rizzo, 1972). This ambiguity leads to role stress and can have a negative impact on the individual's performance at work and in their life. Role ambiguity and role conflict significantly influence commitment (Singh, Goolsby, & Rhoads, 1994).

Role conflict and role stress has been examined in sports and in organizational settings but not in a religious capacity. Previous research suggests that non Muslim-Americans struggle with role stress and this study proposes that Muslim-Americans face a slight degree of role ambiguity depending on the industry they work in. This study did not find evidence that role conflict among Muslim-Americans was as critical as role balancing. All Muslim participants held their religion in high regard and called on it to guide their decisions. This study suggests that Muslim-Americans are faced with common identity predicaments and struggle with balancing their career and their religion. This study also suggests that Muslim-Americans face similar communicative predicaments when conflicts do arise. The majority of participants expressed an inclination to address the conflict.

Managers and organizations alike can benefit from incorporating role stress training into new hire orientation. Explaining that individuals uniquely address situations can expose non Muslim-Americans to the variety of mechanisms people use to negotiate obstacles in their lives. Further, a greater religious tolerance for others can decrease xenophobia and increase cultural competency.

Self- categorization theory states that self-definition is established and maintained through the placement of self and others within multiple situational and motive-specific group categories (Mastro & Kopacz, 2006). Research stemming from self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987) has demonstrated that individuals are typically more persuaded by messages from their in- group

than by messages from the out-group. This tenet did show up at times in this study referenced by what participants like Saamir and Fadwa had to say about perceptions of other Muslims. Saamir made claims that he does not like to go to the Mosque at times because he is worried that if he completely expresses himself to his parents, they would “quickly think I’ve gone astray.” Fadwa said

Someone once told me that I wasn't praying properly because my hair wasn't covered all the way. I told them that I didn't mean to uncover my hair because of a malicious intent, but my head wrap must have slipped. They continued to give me a lecture and I just walked away. I stayed away from the Mosque for a while after that because I do not like to deal with hypocrites. This made me have a bitter view towards trying to be a "good" Muslim, but I eventually got over it. I prefer not to take advice from someone who preaches one thing and practices another. (She happened to be a *Hijaabi* who wore extremely tight clothing, which also happens to be against Islam)

This study suggests, however, that individuals are also very persuaded by messages (and behaviors) from out-group members. This is evidenced by the testimony of participants like Dabir and Maalik. Dabir is cautious to have a conversation about Islam with individuals over forty and Maalik is reluctant to act out his religion in airports or airplanes. This hesitation is justified though according to Haddad (1997):

The basic obligation of daily prayer presents great difficulties in practice. Such prayer should be observed five times a day at prescribed intervals, including noon and early afternoon. Ablutions - the ritual cleaning up hands, feet, elbows, ears, face and head - are required before praying. This is often difficult or embarrassing in the workplace. The

problems are compounded by the ritual requirement that the place of worship be clean and free of any pictures or portraits (p.8)

Given that religion is a major contributor to these individuals identity, it could be concluded that messages from outsiders are just as strong, than messages from group members. It could be that individuals are more concerned about judgment from others who are not like them. This rationale could be a product of 9/11.

Islam allows for rankings of management however, those managers are forbidden from exerting unfair dominance on their subordinates regardless of their religious affiliation (Williams & Zinkins, 2010). This aspect of Islam has to do with what Hofstede called power distance. “Power distance is the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 2001, p.262). Power distance describes the extent to which employees accept that superiors have more power than they have. Islamic managers who are avid practicing Muslims are then placed in a highly ambiguous situation with regard to roles. How do Islamic managers manage their employees if exerting unfair dominance is *haraam*? Hofstede claims that Arab nations are highly rule oriented with laws, regulations, and controls in order to reduce the amount of uncertainty ([www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com)). In order to keep the peace with Muslim supervisors, organizations and subordinates alike need to understand how their culture views power distribution and delegation. It would be unfair and culturally insensitive to purposefully place an individual in a situation where they would face cognitive dissonance.

This research plays an important role in other areas of study as well. As mentioned above,

it can be a valuable tool for organizational communication scholars in helping to understand how Muslims perceive their work environment, their work colleagues, and the day-to-day policies of the organization. Our personal lives tend to be dominated by homogeneous group members. The workplace is only one of a few institutions in which individuals are forced to interact with heterogeneous individuals. This increased daily exposure to work colleagues whose values differ from our own can potentially cause problems and miscommunications unless proper education is received. Organizations can benefit from being sensitive to Muslim-Americans religious needs and providing accommodations for after work activities that are in-line with commonly held values. Increased group cohesion, productivity, and organizational commitment can result from the extra efforts taken by organizations to facilitate an environment enjoyable by everyone.

Organization-focused research has shown a steadily growing interest in religiosity and spirituality over the past decade (King & Crowther, 2004). Moreover, mounting evidence indicates that various dimensions of religiousness and spirituality may enhance subjective states of well being (Ellison, 1991), lower levels of depression and psychological distress (Idler, 1987; Williams, Larson, Buckler, & Heckmann, 1991) and reduce morbidity and mortality. “It is almost certain that religiosity and spirituality have always been significant influences on individual attitudes and behaviors and the potential for that influence to have an effect in and for the organizations that employ them has always existed” (King & Crowther, 2004, p. 83). Religion and spirituality helps individuals deal with the mounting stressors of today’s fast paced society. Religion and spirituality attempt to bring inner peace to those who follow the guidelines. Individuals who categorizes themselves as deeply religious or spiritual (as most participants in this study did) and whose values, beliefs, and goals are in line with their organizations can expect

a healthy, mutually beneficial, and productive relationship with their organization.

The positives for organizations allowing individuals to self manage their religious/spiritual expression at work continue to far outweigh the negatives and from an organizational perspective, there is relatively little investment needed to reap the benefits. Religious/spiritual expression has been found to be linked to positive results for business management: it makes organizations grow faster; it increases efficiency; it enhances organizational performance; it improves communication and a greater sense of team and community (Duerr 2004); and it is related positively to employee's attitudes towards their work (Lloyd 1990; Collins & Porras 1994; Heskett et al. 1997; Grant 1998; Milliman et al. 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz 2004).

The literature on the correlation between spirituality in the workplace and organizational performance points to three factors: motivation, commitment, and adaptability (king & Crowther, 2004). The integration of spiritual values into the workplace increases employee commitment (Feldman & Arnold 1983; Kouzes & Posner 1995; Dorsey 1998; Izzo & Klein 1998; Pfeffer & Vega 1999; Milliman et al. 2003); and employees in organizations that exhibit higher levels of spirituality are more flexible and less resistant to organizational changes, and experience less stress (Maccoby 1988; Wagner 1996; Salzman 1997; O'Reilly & Pfeffer 2000; Adams et al. 2003; Pfeffer 2003). Some authors have suggested that spirituality and spiritual values are potentially the most powerful variables related to personal, team, and organizational effectiveness (Heermann 1997; Neal & Biberman 2004).

By taking into consideration that Islam allows for rankings of management, yet, those managers are forbidden from exerting unfair dominance on their subordinates, and the fact that the Arab countries have a large power distance and uncertainty avoidance, this study begins to

see a method for how Muslims control identity management. The lowest Hofstede Dimension for the Arab World is the Individualism ranking. This low ranking translates into a Collectivist society as compared to Individualist culture and is manifested in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group', that being a family, extended family, or extended relationships. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount, and over-rides most other societal rules. Muslims are a highly collectivist group by culture and religion therefore their desire to foster good relationships is not only encouraged, but somewhat required. This need to maintain good working relationships was communicated in this survey by Muslim participant responses. An example of this need was their strategy for dealing with incompatibility.

An aspect of identity management is maintaining face. As mentioned before, every encounter places face in jeopardy. Since Muslims are very concerned with identity management, or face work, they are very aware of the status of their own face as well as the face of others. Moreover, some research suggests that the workplace is an institution integral to the maintenance of identity (El Akrem, Sassi, & Bouzidi, 2009) while others say that individuals relate to themselves in terms of what they do for a living (Heidegger, 1968). The workplace remains both a place and a factor for identity development. Thus, multiple signs of recognition may contribute to reinforce and stabilize the identity at work. Since identity is an ongoing process, it is shaped and reshaped by continuous interactions with others. Work is an important place in the construction and confirmation of self. (El Akrem et al, 2009). Today's organizations are more diverse, global, and yet interconnected than ever before.

As stated before, the workplace is an environment where heterogeneous individuals are forced to interact, social psychology has established that people prefer to interact with others

whom they perceive to be like themselves and that they are less likely to have meaningful contact with people who are different from themselves (Ohlott, Chrobot-Mason, & Dalton, 2004). Given that commerce has gone global, it is more important than ever before for individuals understand the importance the workplace has on identity management. For Muslims, this means interacting with individuals who are uninformed toward the Islamic culture and also interacting with cultures they themselves may not fully understand. Islam teaches that everyone, regardless of religious affiliation, must be treated equally respectful, yet in the often highly stressful domain of the workplace, this tenet can be unintentionally overlooked. This study suggests that Muslims attempt to remain steadfast to their religious identity even highly influential working world.

Islam considers work as an essential element of man's success in his life; thus Islam does not only encourage individuals to work, but also motivates them to seek perfection and excellence in all that they do. In this regard, workers should work with full capacity and commitment to achieve excellence and success for themselves as well as for the society, and more importantly for the life in the Hereafter (Yousef, 2001; Sidani, 2005; Mostafa, 2003). A study by Hashim (2010), found that organizational commitment was highly and significantly correlated with Islamic approach in human resource management when the company is owned and managed by Muslims and deals with Islamic products. This is commonplace in the Arabic world but what about organizations with Muslims in upper management in the US? How do organizations develop high organizational commitment among Muslim employees when the products are not Islamic in nature and the culture organizational culture is based on western philosophy? This study shows that as long as the values and goals of the organization are in line

with their employees (at any level), high organizational commitment can be achieved. Muslims in this study with strong organizational commitment working in the US defense sector are an example of how this can be achieved. The values of the organization from top to bottom reflect honesty and integrity and these characteristics seem to be in line with Islam and other world cultures.

The results of this study can be applied practically to simple human resources training. Since Islam is concerned with maintaining strong working relationships, when faced with incompatibilities addressing the conflict early and attempting to reach solutions that maintain rather than devastate relationships is desirable. Further, empirical research shows that the workplace is a strong force for identity management and formation, thus organizations should try to incorporate more Muslim observances in their culture. For example, the ability for Muslim employees to observe religious holidays, also, if after work social gatherings are taking place, perhaps they could be company sponsored rather than ad-hoc thus allowing for the same guidelines employees are used to at work while meeting after work. These gatherings could be held at neutral locations where employees and clients alike could find enjoyment.

New hiring training could place more emphasis on cultural sensitivity and employee relationship management rather than have the bulk of information concerning operational procedures. Individuals are fluid and dynamic, corporate policy is always the same. A strong skill to have is to understand the way individuals behave in situations and having the competency to handle these encounters. Since the workplace has an influence on identity management, organizations should try to nurture existing identities rather than attempting to shape employees and categorize them under the same class. A diverse workforce allows for interdisciplinary ideas

and thinking. Further, if these organizations do business worldwide, having cultural awareness among employees will be an attractive quality to have. The participant's organizations appeared to have an open-door policy in regard to incompatibility management. Companies should continue to foster an environment that allows for open communication of conflict. For Muslim employees, face work is important to healthy relationships and it is almost a requirement culturally and religiously. Organizations should encourage open communication and provide the forum and outlets to do so. To take cultural sensitivity further, organizations could integrate their willingness to support a sensitive environment into their mission, vision, and values. This type of shift would show that the organization takes sensitivity issues seriously and desires a change from its very core.

APPENDIX A  
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1). Please describe your overall work experience at your current place of employment?
- 2). In thinking about your work experience, is there anything that has made it satisfying? If so, please describe what has made it satisfying.
- 3). In thinking about your work experience, is there anything that has made it dissatisfying? If so, please describe what has made it dissatisfying.
- 4). In your own words, how would you describe your religious or spiritual identity?
- 5). How important is your religious/spiritual identity to your **OVERALL** identity? Please explain or provide examples of why it is important or not important?
- 6). Considering where you work, how important is your religious/ spiritual identity to your **WORKPLACE** identity? Please explain or provide examples of how it is important or not important.

**Now, please think about others who have a DIFFERENT religious/spiritual identity than your own.**

7). Has a person with a **DIFFERENT** religious/spiritual identity said or done anything to you to make you feel either negative or positive about your own religious/spiritual identity? Please explain or provide an example of what was said or done to you to make you feel positive or negative about your own religious/spiritual identity.

7b). If you answered **YES** to the previous question, what were your thoughts and feelings about your own religious/spiritual identity?

**Now, please think about others who have the SAME or SIMILAR religious/spiritual identity as yours.**

8). Has a person with the **SAME or SIMILAR** religious/spiritual identity said or done anything to you to make you feel either negative or positive about your religious/spiritual identity? Please explain or provide an example of what was said or done to you.

8b). If you answered **YES** to the previous question, what were your thoughts and feelings about your own religious/spiritual identity?

9). In thinking about your religious/spiritual identity, do you feel that you are able to freely express yourself religiously/spiritually in public? If so, please explain how you express yourself.

10). In thinking about your religious/spiritual identity, are there any times when you feel that you are **NOT ABLE** to freely express yourself religiously/spiritually in public? If so, please explain why you feel that you are not able to freely express yourself.

**Next, we would like to know about how AWARE you are of your religiosity/spirituality in general.**

11). Please describe any situations when you feel **AWARE** of your religious/spiritual identity.

12). Please describe any situations when you are **NOT AWARE** of your religious/spiritual identity.

**Next, we would like to know the extent to which your religious/ spiritual values are compatible with your organizations' values.**

13). In what ways do you feel that your religious/spiritual values are **COMPATIBLE** with the values of your organization?

14). In what ways do you feel that your religious/spiritual values are **NOT COMPATIBLE** with the values of your organization?

**If you thought of incompatible values in the previous question, please reflect on your answer and complete the next two questions.**

15). Please describe what you have done or would do to address the incompatibility. Please discuss any **tactics** or **communication strategies** that you would use (or have used) to resolve the conflict.

15b). Is there anything that you would **AVOID** doing (or have avoided doing) to resolve the incompatibility? Please provide an example or anecdote.

**Next, we would like to ask you about the compatibility or incompatibility of YOUR religious/spiritual values with the religious/spiritual values of YOUR WORK COLLEAGUES.**

16). In what ways do you feel that your religious or spiritual values are **COMPATIBLE** with the values of your work colleagues?

17). In what ways do you feel that your religious or spiritual values are **NOT COMPATIBLE** with the values of your work colleagues?

**If you thought of incompatible values in the previous question, please reflect on your answer and complete the next two questions.**

18). What have you done or would you do to address the incompatibility? Please discuss any **tactics** or **communication strategies** that you would use to resolve the conflict.

18b). Is there anything that you would **AVOID** doing to resolve the incompatibility? Please provide an example or anecdote.

**Next, we would like to learn more about OTHERS who SHARE your religious or spiritual values and their experience at work. For this question, OTHERS refers to individuals who do not work at the same place as you. Similar to the previous questions, we would like to know the extent to which you perceive their religious/spiritual values to be compatible with their organization's values.**

19). How would you describe the **COMPATIBILITY** of others who **SHARE** your religious/spiritual values with the values at their place of employment?

20). In what ways do you feel that their religious/spiritual values are **NOT COMPATIBLE** with the values at their place of employment? Please provide an example or anecdote.

**If you thought of incompatible values in the previous question, please reflect on your answer and complete the next two questions.**

21). What could they do (or have they done) to address the incompatibility? Please discuss any **tactics** or **communication strategies** that they would use (or have used) to resolve the conflict.

21b). Is there anything that they would **AVOID** doing (or have **AVOIDED** doing) to resolve the incompatibility? Please provide an example or anecdote.

**Next, we would like to learn more about OTHERS who have a DIFFERENT religious or spiritual identity than yours. For this question, OTHERS refers to individuals who do not work at the same place as you. We would like to know the extent to which their religious/spiritual values are compatible with their place of employment's values.**

22). In what ways do you perceive their religious/spiritual values to be **COMPATIBLE** with their organizations' values?

23). In what ways do you perceive their religious or spiritual values to **NOT BE COMPATIBLE** with their organizations' values?

**If you thought of incompatible values in the previous question, please reflect on your answer and complete the next two questions.**

24). What could they do (or have done) to address the incompatibility? Please discuss any **tactics** or **communication strategies** that they would use (or have used) to resolve the conflict.

25). Is there anything that they would **AVOID** doing (or have avoided doing) to resolve the incompatibility? Please explain with an example or anecdote.

**For this section, please think about your organizational culture and the extent to which it allows for or prohibits your ability to FREELY EXPRESS your religious/spiritual identity.**

26). Do you feel that your organization **ALLOWS** you to freely express or maintain your religious/spiritual identity at work? If so, please provide examples of how you are able to express your religious/spiritual identity.

27). Do you feel that your organization **LIMITS** your ability to freely express or maintain your religious/spiritual identity at work? If so, please provide examples of how you are **NOT** able to express your religious/spiritual identity.

**Now, we would like you to think about OTHERS who SHARE your religious or spiritual identity and the extent to which their organization allows them to freely express or maintain their religious or spiritual identity at work. For this question, OTHERS refers to individuals who do not work at the same place as you.**

28). Do you feel that their organization **ALLOWS** them to freely express or maintain their religious identity/spiritual identity at work? If so, please provide examples of how they are able to express or maintain their religious/spiritual identity.

29). Do you feel that their organization **LIMITS** them from freely expressing or maintaining their religious/spiritual identity at work? If so, please provide examples of how they are limited or discouraged from expressing or maintaining their religious/spiritual identity at work.

**Now, we would like you to think about others who have a DIFFERENT religious or spiritual identity than yours and the extent to which their organization allows them to freely express or maintain their religious or spiritual identity at work. For this question, OTHERS refers to individuals who do not work at the same place as you.**

30). Do you believe that their organization **ALLOWS** them to freely express or maintain their religious identity / spiritual identity at work? If so, please provide examples of how they are able to express or maintain their religious/spiritual identity at their work place.

31). Do you believe that their organization **LIMITS** them from freely expressing or maintaining their religious or spiritual identity at work? If so, please provide examples of how they are limited or discouraged from expressing or maintaining their religious/spiritual identity at work.

Gender:

Age:

Career Field:

Length of time in US:

Length of time at current place of employment

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