American Muslim Philanthropy in Flux: Effects on Community Building and

Identity Formation

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ABSTRACT

American Muslim Philanthropy in flux is concerned with several interlinked ideas. From a discussion of how American Muslim communities have emerged, to the role of identity and philanthropy in creating them, this study is a careful examination of the central role that philanthropy has played in these processes. While mainstream American discourses have had and continue to have a profound impact on how religiously inspired giving occurs, recent scholarship has shown that the ways in which religious giving is changing in America is quite unique. Several discourses impact how we understand charity and philanthropy – including, but not limited to those of religion, economy, social policy etc. I argue, through the papers that comprise this dissertation that philanthropy has a key role in how community is shaped among American Muslims and also that new formulations of philanthropic giving are emerging, that are moving in the direction of more 'strategic' giving, incorporating ideals of a marketized, consumer driven philanthropy. The discourses of giving are impacting practices and I suggest that a close examination of organizational discourses will help us understand how American Muslim identity, civil society and philanthropy are being formulated.

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I.   Introduction

These papers reflect my research program as a student/ young scholar of philanthropy and civil society in America. The main theme cutting across these papers is the role of philanthropy in identity and community building among American Muslims. My central thesis is that Islamic Philanthropy is moving from a purely religiously inspired model to a more 'strategic' or results-oriented model that I argue can be considered 'secular.' This is evident, I argue, in the way charity is being 'institutionalized' and 'bureaucratized,' through giving to nonprofit organizations and other institutional means. While Islamic Philanthropy (*zakat* and *sadaqa*) was – and continues to be - traditionally given to individuals, often to those who are close, either in geographic proximity, or often next of kin – the expectations and discourses of giving are changing rapidly. With calls for giving to 'humanitarian causes' or 'social justice' becoming just as relevant and mainstream as giving to the local mosque or orphanage, there has been, arguably, a greater push towards a cosmopolitan and a-religious positioning of Islamic philanthropy, as much as there is a pull towards 'local' causes and issues in the U.S. (Haddad and Harb, 2014). Between this push and pull of ideas and issues, I suggest that we are seeing a new way of conceptualizing *zakat* and *sadaqa[1]*, the religious forms of giving in Islam.

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[1] *Zakat* refers to the obligatory tax-like charity, while sadaqa is any voluntary charity given to anyone in need. Note that my study does not cover Waqf, or Islamic endowments, an entirely different framework of philanthropy that is actually quite well researched and documented

So, what exactly is *zakat (and sadaqa)*? As Jonathan Benthall (1999) points out, *zakat*

derives from *zaka*, which means to purify. He says that this is meant as a spiritual exercise in

purifying one's wealth and one's own spiritual self, through giving away what one loves –

wealth, in this case – and forms a core religious obligation for Muslims, around the world.

Indeed, it is the third of the five 'pillars' of Islam. The other four being: belief in one god, prayer,

fasting during *Ramadhan* and Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. In the West, in particular,

there is a growing recognition among American Muslims that the average Muslim is trying to

find ways to meaningfully contribute to community, as well as be involved in one's own

religious community (Singer, 2008). Re-interpretation and re-articulation of some of these

rituals, in a manner that is unique to the setting of America seems to be part of the *zeitgeist* of

our times. I argue that re-articulation of philanthropic practices among American Muslims is a

trend that deserves our attention, as it is at the core of Islamic religious practices, and its

transformation can tell us about the 'Americanization' of Islam and (or) the influences of culture

on religious practices.

While I am discussing 'philanthropy' I must clarify the sense in which I am using the

term. As is commonly understood by scholars of philanthropy and social welfare, the word

charity refers to a more emotional and short-term giving practice, while philanthropy refers to a

realm of more 'scientific and rational, professionalized, secular action.' (Singer, 2008, p.6).

Though these two words stand for slightly different formulations, I suggest that often, it is hard

to distinguish one from the other. I will use the term 'philanthropy' to denote the all-

encompassing act of giving assistance and distinguish it from charity only when necessary and

where the distinction matters, either analytically or conceptually. As Singer argues, in the scholarship on Islamic philanthropy, *zakat* and *sadaqa* have been used interchangeably, as well. Singer's point is that though there is a distinction between the two, often, they intersect in ways that is hard to distinguish *zakat* from *sadaqa.*

Amy Singer offers the example of the Fischers family in Pennsylvania, USA, who established a scholarship in memory of their son, who died in an accident. She suggests that they framed their scholarship endowment in a very 'secular' context, but understood it as being part of a 'Sadaqa-*e-Jariah*,' a tradition, where Muslims are encouraged to set up 'educational facilities or programs that will continue to benefit people even after the donors are gone.' (2008, p.1). While there is no absolute dichotomy between 'religious' or 'secular,' conceptions of charity in this particular case; I suggest that there are cases, such as giving for International Development, Civil Rights campaigns etc. can be considered more 'secular,' given that there is no direct religious motive.

While the tradition of *Waqf* or endowments is as old as Islam itself (some argue that it is a pre-Islamic concept) that found its way into the Western traditions, by way of the Muslim world (Singer, 2008; Berkey, 2003; Constantelos, 1968) the practices of *zakat* and *sadaqa* are evolving much more quickly than those involving *Waqf.* My discussion in this dissertation will not cover *Waqf,* and will focus primarily on *zakat* and *sadaqa*. This choice is intentional, as there is an enormous body of literature on *Waqf*, but not a significant amount of work on *zakat* and *sadaqa* (Benthall, 2008). While *zakat* and *sadaqa* refer to different forms of charity, in Islamic history, both words have been used interchangeably (Singer, 2008).

What is context and need for this study, one might ask? In addition to the growing discourse of inequality in America and the role of the state in addressing it, there is an increasing call for individuals to step up and do more for others, through volunteering and philanthropic efforts. Both at the policy level and social discourse level, there is a growing call for increasing philanthropy. Scholars such as Bishop and Greene in their book *Philanthrocapitalism* (2008) have suggested that the 'rich can save the world,' through philanthrocapitalism –or the ability to use business like thinking to social problems- while others are deeply suspicious of such a rhetoric. Similarly, there is a call for greater involvement of the faith-based communities and this phenomenon has also been quite extensively documented and critiqued (Cnaan, 2002; Wuthnow, 2008).

The rise of 'scientific' management of philanthropy to address the root causes of poverty is one of the crucial developments in the study of philanthropy in America. This process has reached an advanced stage, with corporate foundations and individual giving strategies converging to having become more and more 'scientific,' and 'efficiency' driven, with a strong emphasis on 'results' on 'social investment'. The language of business has entered the world of philanthropy, and the lines between business world and philanthropic world have become blurred. I suggest that this is not necessarily a positive development, as 'results,' and 'efficiency,' can become hegemonic in their reach and the *purpose* of philanthropy could be lost in the quest for better results.

While it is widely acknowledged by scholars that most charity was, in the beginning, religiously inspired –either by the Church, Mosque, Synagogue or the Temple – this trend is shifting, to a more 'non-religious,' or what I call 'secular,' philanthropy. By this, I mean, the

symbolism used in philanthropy is being increasingly drawn from non-religious and non-scriptural sources. In the case of organizations that I offer as examples, this is occurring across the board – with Islamic Relief, Islamic Society of North America, Council on American Islamic Relations – each one positioning *zakat* and sadaqa as calls for 'humanitarian causes,' 'community building,' and 'civil rights,' respectively. I further suggest that while these organizations do deploy some religious rhetoric in their discourse of philanthropy, there is an indication that their narratives are increasingly being defined by non-religious symbolism involving development, social justice etc.

In addition to the above environmental factors, a more pressing contextual factor is the discourse of 'Islam in America,' and the role of American Muslims – both institutionally and individually, in addressing some of the pressing concerns that face America, as a nation. I suggest that perhaps we are witnessing a new configuration in terms of charitable giving among American Muslims, and this discursive shift is a result of various factors, including, but not limited to, increased 'consumption philanthropy,' as scholars such as Nickel and Eikenberry have argued (Nickel and Eikenberry, 2009). This is also occurring in the context of a trend of 'Americanization' of Islam, in the sense of rooting American Muslim identity in a very local and geographic context. Notions of 'essentialism' and 'global Islam' are being deployed by both American Muslim organizations and leaders in an effort to legitimize and construct an 'American Muslim identity' (Harb and Haddad, 2014; Ghaneabassiri, 2010). Philanthropy is being positioned by some groups as the antidote to addressing the problems of political participation among American Muslims. Given that philanthropy is intimately linked to identity, this mix is worthy of our attention.

Further, this 'identity dilemma,' is being acutely felt by the young American Muslims, in particular, as captured by the work of scholars such as Yvonne Haddad (2013), Grewal (2014), Jamal (2013) among others. While the 'mediatized' representation of Islam in the West has been a point made by Edward Said in his famous book *Covering Islam* (1981), the various levels of 'representation' of Islam and Muslims, both at the level of discourse and praxis need further investigation. One aspect of this representation of Islamic norms and laws is that they are considered doctrinaire, while in fact, most Islamic laws are perspective and offer a hermeneutic through which they can be interpreted, argues Kambiz Ghaneabassiri (2010). Ghaneabassiri argues that this means that local customs, traditions and historical circumstances have played a key role in the evolution of Islamic values and norms, as much as Islamic law.

Similarly, Amaney Jamal argues, the question of identity, in particular, the Muslim American identity is one of 'political representation,' (2013, p.99). The deep anxieties felt by many American Muslim organizations and their representatives about various identity issues could also be seen as a reflection of the fact that over 63 percent of the American Muslims are foreign born. Further, ethnographic work by Amena Ghaffar-Kucher has also demonstrated how the 'American Muslim' identity has undergone 'religification,' i.e., primarily become identified by the religion of the adherents, rather than being seen through the lens of ethnicity or race (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2009). This, I suggest has implications on how Muslims view themselves as well as on how the 'mainstream' of American society views them.

I build on the arguments made by scholars such as Kambiz Ghaneabassiri(2012) whose focus on 'practices of Muslims' in the West has shown us a new methodological possibility of studying the experiences of American Muslims. The crux of his argument is that by recalling the

way that Muslims have formed their religious practices, community building practices and interpretations of Islam in the West, we can 're-think many of the ways in which we conceptualize this relationship of Muslim majority and Western societies in the modern era.' (p.46). This means re-envisioning what we mean by 'Islam in America,' and seeing the religion of Islam as an 'American' construct, rather than something that took form in the Middle East. His call is also to de-center the study of Islam and place it in contemporary debates of race, ethnicity, and immigration; as much as looking at it as a 'revealed' religion, in the seventh century A.D. This tension between understanding and framing Islam in its 'essentialist,' aspects versus placing it in the American socio-historical context is a very real one. This tension manifests itself at the level of praxis, at the grass-roots level as well as in scholarship.

Following this, I suggest that Muslims are increasingly being socialized into American culture by taking part in these (new secular) forms of philanthropy, a trend that is seen in the gradual movement of the nature of philanthropy over the last few decades.

The process of identity formation and socialization is a rather multi-layered one, as Berger and Luckman have argued, and I will delve into these aspects as well (Berger and Luckman, 1966). The story of American Muslims is also the story of other minority communities in America – for it demonstrates how a small community that is roughly one percent of the total population[2] is coming to terms with its own internal diversity, the diversity of American society and the ways in which it is expected to 'Americanize.' Identity is a construct that has emerged as a central organizing one in this process.

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[2] There is no agreement as to how many American Muslims there are, as the U.S. Census does not collect data on religion. Pew Research Estimates that there are roughly 2.6 million Muslims in the U.S. while organizations such as the Council on American Islamic Relations claim this number to be higher – in the range of 4-6 million.

Added to this dimension is the ongoing public discourse of the role of private values in the public sphere. In particular, the understanding of how much symbolism – cultural, religious and otherwise –should and can play out in the American public sphere is a deeply contested ideal. Philanthropy can be one of the most visible manifestations of this symbolism, as Peter Frumkin has argued in his book *Strategic Giving* (Frumkin, 2006). The fact that private philanthropy can have a public impact can make it immensely problematic[3]. The ideals of social change that conservatives seek, for instance, is an example of such private interest trying to impact public policy. As Peter Frumkin points out, this push to 'reform' the public sphere has occurred in the U.S. As he says, from "George Soros's efforts to legalize some drugs to high-tech entrepreneur Tim Draper's efforts to change public policy to give all California families school vouchers, donors have pursued a change in agenda, supporting grassroots initiatives aimed at moving policy and politics" (2006, p.13). He says that these efforts have had mixed results but brought forth tensions in these individuals' pursuit of their agendas and public interest. The issues of effectiveness, accountability and legitimacy of philanthropy have also been part of public and scholarly discourse from the early 19th century, he suggests (Frumkin, 2006).

In this dissertation, I offer an analysis of the discourses of philanthropy among American Muslim Non-government organizations (NGOs) and suggest that a closer examination of these discourses can inform us about how religiously inspired ways of giving are being transformed by the mainstream conceptualizations of philanthropy in a 21st century economy. The 'mass philanthropy,' that started with WWI fund-raising techniques has morphed into a cultural artifact

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[3] Another critique of philanthropy, in general is the Marxist critique, first proposed by Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci suggested that elites use education and culture to maintain class distinctions. For a more thorough analysis see Roelofs (2003)

that defines the *zeitgeist* of American popular culture (Zunz, 2012). Humanitarianism, whether it is global humanitarianism or social welfare at home, has had a profound impact on the discourse of the role philanthropy in our lives. While the Cold War inaugurated the American philanthropic involvement, the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) has taken this to a new level, where US Government agencies and local NGOs are working closely to gain influence in areas of conflict. As much as the American government has promoted this expansion of 'aid' this 'development,' discourse has been criticized both domestically and internationally for its hegemonic tendencies and also its interventionist nature (Escobar, 1996). The politics of aid notwithstanding, there seems to be a growing consensus among Americans that philanthropy, both in the U.S. and to the outside world is good – both for Americans and those who receive it.

The new professionalized way of conducting philanthropy could be considered a 'discursive formation,' or a scientific discipline (Foucault, 1972). This discipline that is being shaped as we speak is being positioned as a panacea to cure all the ills that face us – from providing shelters to homeless people, to taking care of the elderly to the provision of education. This study seeks to critique this claim, by offering an alternative reading of how philanthropy is being conceptualized among American Muslims. Given that giving to organizations itself is a new phenomenon in the U.S., as individual giving was more prevalent in the early 20th century, I suggest that focusing on organizational discourses can offer us insights into this ongoing change.

The papers in this dissertation offer a contribution to three areas of literature:

1. The way in which American Muslim 'civil society' / community is being formed, and the role of group and individual identity in this process

2. The manner in which organizational discourses shape practices

3. A close study of American Muslim philanthropy can also offer us insights into how religious giving in America is transforming, more generally. While not restricted to the Muslim community, one can see how the forces shaping this particular community are also impinging on others. Though my study is not comparative in nature, I suggest that some of the lessons learnt here can (possibly) apply to other communities as well, despite the particularities of the American Muslim experience.

The tensions in the field of philanthropy manifest themselves as the struggle between dialogic and anti-hierarchical models of voluntary action versus bureaucratized, hierarchical models. As Singer points out, a study of power- relations and discourses is key, as it tells us about how 'normal' behavior is defined in a society. Singer argues that by studying the prison system, practices of defining what is 'normal,' and what is not, Foucault set the trend for theorizing about poverty, as well as defining legal strictures for managing it. One can see that this approach in defining and creating a system of knowledge and 'professionalizing,' of the field of philanthropy itself can be seen as a 'discursive regime,' which Foucault spoke of (Singer, 2008; Foucault, 1972). I further suggest that given the somewhat unique positioning of American Muslims in the U.S., with their demographic and other particularities, this study may shed light on aspects of power-relations between American Muslims and other groups that have not been studied before. Further, this study can also shed light on the internal dynamics of how American Muslim communities are themselves negotiating amongst themselves and prioritizing what forms and shape of philanthropy should be practiced and how. In the next section, I outline how I conceptualize civil society and 'community.'

What do we mean by 'civil society'?

There are a great many formulations of 'civil society' in academic literature. As Bruce Sievers suggests, scholars around the world acknowledge the centrality of the concept of civil society and the values that go with it: 'pluralism, distinctive social values and a creative tension between individual interests and the common good' (Sievers, 2010, p.1). The guiding assumption of the civil society discourse is that there is a sphere outside of the state, that is voluntary and in which private visions of public good play out and 'intersect with one another to shape the social agenda'. This also implies that this could be an area of contestation and conflict. And going by the liberal democratic model of what a society is supposed to look like, this fits into the narrative of a 'free' society, quite well. Several scholars have contributed to this rich debate about the definition and scope of civil society (Sievers, 2010; Neocleus, 1995; Henderson, 2010; Chambers, 2002; Kaviraj and Khilnani, 2001).

For the purpose of this dissertation, I will use the definition of civil society as

> 'the space of societal self-organization existing between the state, market and private sphere, a realm of associations, circles, networks and non-governmental organizations that assume and expect it to be a space of public discussion, conflict and understanding, a sphere of independence of individuals and groups, a realm of dynamic and dramatic change and innovation and a place for the pursuit of the common good, however differently that may be understood in a pluralistic society.' (Jurgen Kocka, 2000, p.21).

 In this definition, I am including faith-based organizations as NGOs (as the American tax-code does, when it defines tax-deductible organizations). I would also stretch this definition to include social movements and loosely held voluntary 'third-sector' organizations that are not

necessarily legally incorporated: Muslim Student Associations, informal groups formed to address certain issues such as racial inequality, incarceration etc.

There has also been an implicit assumption in academic literature, and a wide consensus among theorists that civil society and democracy go hand in hand. Indeed, John Locke wrote about the central notion of civil society in the 'founding framework of government' (Sievers, p.9). Locke calls for the community to be an 'umpire' when it comes to deciding the 'common good', using the authority bestowed upon it by the constituents of this community. He says "But because no political society can be, nor subsist, without having in itself the power to preserve the property, and in order thereunto, punish the offences of all those of that society; there, and there only is political society, where every one of the members hath quitted this natural power, resigned it up into the hands of the community in all cases that exclude him not from appealing for protection to the law established by it" (Locke, 2010). Throughout the Second Treatise on Government, Locke makes this point clear, that government derives its legitimacy from 'civil society' and the 'community' that comprises it. This notion of 'appealing for protection to the law,' seems to be a recurring theme, where the power to arbitrate and decide on the legality of laws and ability to form them rests with different organs of society – namely the judiciary, executive and legislative bodies.

Our understanding of civil society has come much further, since Locke's writing. Recent work in Democratic theory can be seen as part of the 'push' for the notion of civil society. Robert Dahl's contribution to the field stands as one example. Dahl's notion of 'Polyarchy' or rule by the many is an important construct to understand how democracy has been conceptualized in recent literature (Dahl, 1968). The emergence of democracies in the former

Soviet Union countries in Eastern Europe was certainly one reason for the emergence of the discourse of 'civil society' and 'democratization.' The same can be said about the efforts to promote democracy in Latin America and the Middle East – with disastrous consequences – as many scholars agree.

One of the most controversial uses of the notion of 'civil society' promotion has been in the recent efforts by the U.S. to promote 'Democracy in the Middle East' as the solution to all the problems, in the region. While this trend was at its peak during the George W.Bush era, the debate also conflated cultural and religious elements of Islam, Arab culture and democracy and brought into sharp focus, whether Islam and Democracy were compatible (Zakaria, 2003; Huntington, 2001;Bellin, 2004; Skocpol, 1979). In an American context, the notion of 'associational democracy' has become prevalent, and one can find its origins in the ideas proposed by Alexis de Tocqueville, the French aristocrat and writer, whose *Democracy in America* (1945) was the outcome of a nine month tour of the United States in 1831. Tocqueville, during his visit to the U.S. in the 19th century noticed how Americans came together to form all sorts of 'associations,' to help one another. This was completely of their own free will and for the improvement of society. This, he termed 'associationalism,' and argued that the phenomenon was uniquely American. Tocqueville felt that while French individualism had brought about the French Revolution, he saw dangers in the excessive individualism of the French, while the American individualism was holding things together.

Tocqueville's insights continue to heavily influence discourses of democracy and civil society to present day, though they call for revision and adaptation to the current socio-economic context, which is quite different from his era. His observations and remarks about the remarkable

nature of associations he found and the fragility of America's democracy are considered prophetic. Further, his observations on the power of the legal system to restrict the power of the rulers are also useful to our analysis of civil society and we can see how the judiciary has actually intervened, in several instances – in the history of philanthropic action – to limit what a philanthropist can and cannot do. The deep contradictions that Tocqueville found – in terms of the presence of rugged individualism alongside a communitarian ethos, puritanism alongside a capitalistic ethos – are still present today, and inform many debates in our society.

While Tocqueville's is but one particular conception of civil society in America, it is one that seems to have stuck, both in scholarship and in popular imagination. Mark Neocleus (1995) points out that Hegel's conception of civil society was an essentially modern one that was formed in the aftermath of the French Revolution, and also contained a social dimension. Neocleus argues that in Hegel's formulation, civil society as a concept emerged to account for the dimension standing between the state and family. He suggests that Hegel's formulation suggested a 'socio-economic' formulation in civil society, rather than a purely political one and also secondly, that this is a bourgeois sphere, one of self-seeking individuals. He further suggests that both Hegel and Marx saw civil society in capitalist terms. The American notion of 'civil society' seems to have evolved in a different way than that Neocleus suggests, in that there is almost an independent evolution of 'associational democracy' in the U.S. – as noted by Tocqueville – unlike Hegel's understanding that civil society develops under the influence of the state. The deep-rooted suspicion of government in the popular American imagination may have something to do with this trend.

Civil society and 'community'

Following the discussion of civil society in the previous section, I argue that there is a conflation between the concepts of 'civil society' and 'community' in the literature, as it pertains to the study of American Muslims. Added to this confusion is the discourse of 'Democracy and Islam' that emerged during the 'democratization' of the Middle East (or the 'Muslim world') efforts of George W Bush. So, when speaking of 'American Islam,' concepts related to 'global Islam' are also mentioned in the same breath (Kamali, 2001; Kukathas, 2003). While it is impossible to draw a line of separation between ideas, concepts and philosophies that govern Islam around the world and that of 'American Islam' I suggest that we must pay attention to the particularities in the way that American Islam and American Muslim identity are being shaped.

While scholars such as Bruce Sievers (2010) have placed 'civil society' firmly in a 'Western' tradition, and arguing for its 'interconnectedness' in a 'family resemblance' of concepts, as proposed by Ludwig Wittgenstein. Sievers says "Together, a family of concepts grouped under the same encompassing rubric – in this case, 'civil society'- shares interwoven meanings in such a say that there is not 'Some one fiber that runs through the whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibers' (Sievers, 2010, p.xiv). He argues that philanthropy has a central role to play in addressing the concerns of civil society. Sievers suggests that the idea of a comparative notion of civil society between cultural traditions could be an interesting one. Through the papers in this dissertation, I suggest that one can begin to see the linkages between the ideas of 'civil society' and 'community development' being deployed; particularly, when it comes to institutions and relationship building between the American Muslim communities and the state apparatus.

Similarly, Paul Henderson and Ilona Vercseg (2010) argue that civil society and community development have been conceptualized as a unity, in the European context, assuming that they go hand in hand; while similar debates have been ongoing in the U.S. since the 1990s. This idea of 'community' development, to replace government interventions in social welfare programs was started with the Reagan era, with the attack on welfare and increased privatization and contracting out of essential services to private parties (Cnaan, 2008; Wuthnow, 1998). This process continues, with the retreat of the federal government from provision of social services. As Wuthnow reminds us in *Loose Connections* (2008), Americans sense of belonging to the community and sense of civic duties have been decreasing over time. This is seen in the decline in membership in civic associations, participation in voting, and other social and civic activities. Americans have instead sought to form 'loose connections,' with each other, choosing to interact and work on projects and initiatives that do not require a lot of commitment or time.

I suggest that the discussion about 'community', social capital and civic engagement are all part of these 'family resemblances' of concepts, since they are essentially concerned about empowering the individual or group of people and mediating the relationship between this group and the state. Simply put, civil society can be conceptualized as 'society' as Chandran Kukathas has argued (Kukathas, 2003). A society, where there is freedom of association, expression and no restrictive or repressive apparatus, that unduly restricts expression of ideas or association.

American Islamic Philanthropy and civil society

American Islamic philanthropy has evolved in relation with mainstream norms of giving in the U.S. As several scholars such as Kambiz Ghaneabassiri (2010) and Adil Najam (2006) have shown, American Muslims have responded to their immediate situation and have been pragmatic

in their use of instruments of charity and philanthropy. As Frumkin (2006) has argued, there is a role for 'value-based,' giving in philanthropy and this is evident among American Muslims. While there are no exact numbers on how much money is given by which group of American Muslims, the case studies that I have studied demonstrate that much of the giving occurs with a view to either: a) ameliorate someone's suffering – i.e., in the form of humanitarian aid or b) institution building – mainly in the form of building schools, educational institutions or other institutions that preserve culture or religious values.

I would argue that philanthropy builds social capital and promotes solidarity, both within the Muslim groups themselves and also among other faith-based and secular groups in the U.S. and abroad. In many cases, where philanthropy has been used to address social issues (e.g., to reduce recidivism after prison incarceration), there is clearly a social benefit to those who are at the bottom of the social ladder. Organizations such as Inner City Muslim Action Network (IMAN)[4] in Chicago, are at the forefront of defining what Islamic philanthropy means and how it could serve a larger purpose to the community. IMAN's mission encompasses everyone in inner-city Chicago, irrespective of race, religion and ethnicity, thus offering an ecumenical vision for American Islamic philanthropy.

On the other hand, trans-national NGOs such as Islamic Relief are building networks and alliances with governments and civil society actors in the countries in which they work, this can be seen as building up both bridging and binding social capital, at times representing themselves as an American group and at other times, as a 'Muslim group' depending on who they are speaking with.

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[4] **Iman's mission statement is "IMAN is a community organization that fosters health, wellness and healing in the inner-city by organizing for social change, cultivating the arts and operating a holistic health center"**

I argue that slowly, but surely, American Muslim philanthropy is moving towards becoming more 'strategic' – along many of the five dimensions of the 'philanthropic prism' that Frumkin mentions. Frumkin's five key dimensions of philanthropic prism include: 1. identity and style of giver, 2. Logic model supporting giving, and 3.value produced through giving, 4.vehicle or institution of giving and 5.time frame guiding giving (2006, p.169). Some of the problems that Frumkin mentions regarding efficiency, accountability and legitimacy do persist among American Islamic NGOs. Frumkin's starting point is that strategy in philanthropy should look for a value proposition that increases both the public benefits as well as satisfaction to the donor. His prism of philanthropy is one tool to help 'compare, contrast and explicate the vast range of choices that the donors confront' (p.139). This framework can be seen as a way to bring some order to the chaotic and often very disjointed way that philanthropy occurs. While offering a 'rational' model, Frumkin suggests that values inherent in the donors' mind be kept foremost, while deciding what sort of philanthropy should be done and for how long.

As Amaney Jamal (2008) has shown, American Muslim institutions have been instrumental in increasing civic engagement among American Muslims – a key element in civil society formation. She has shown, through her empirical studies that greater participation in social institutions among American Muslims – at Mosques, for instance - is positively correlated with voting, volunteering and other forms of participation in the public sphere. At a time when scholars and politicians are lamenting the lack of civic and political engagement, with record low voting and general disenchantment with structures of society, I would argue that a close look at the role of American Muslim institutions is warranted, as they stand out as an outlier to this trend. Let's look at the role of *zakat* in community building in the U.S.

1. *Zakat* and American Muslim community formation: A background

The study of Islamic charity is at a nascent stage. While the practice of philanthropy is about 1400 years old, there is precious little, by way of scholarly treatment of this subject, in English. As Amy Singer argues in her book *Charity in Islamic Societies (2008),* there are several reasons for this discrepancy. She says that part of the reason for this lack of in-depth investigation is that scholars did not notice philanthropy, as a visible practice, in Muslim societies. Its ubiquitous nature made it invisible. Singer says that her intention in writing the book was to "introduce readers to the rich possibilities offered by reconsidering history through the prism of charity" (Singer, 2008, introduction). While the history of Islamic giving is rich, both in detail and breadth of practices, its relevance to current issues is what makes my investigation urgent. Foucault's observation that certain relations of power need to be present for an object of discourse to emerge is also relevant here. His idea of a 'discursive regime' that is created by certain power relations that governs statements is useful in understanding how capitalism, social welfare policies and media's framing of philanthropy has created the regime that governs what can be said about philanthropy and what is left out. In contemporary American society, one can see how the discourse of philanthropy has become mainstream and accepted, by all and sundry. As Foucault reminds us, it is not about what we know to be 'true', about an issue or its impact on us, but rather 'what external power imposes itself on science as of what effects of power circulate among scientific statements' (1972, p.114). Further to this, one can place the study of philanthropy in the realm of a study of 'power' relations between individuals and groups and arguably a Marxist reading of philanthropy attempts to do just that. I use this framework to substantiate my theoretical argument.

As the American Muslim community is becoming salient in the political landscape and the networks of collaboration and communities are growing, there is an increased attention on the factors that are making this possible. One of the key factors responsible for this spurt in activity is philanthropy. Karen Leonard has argued that there is a great resurgence of activism among American Muslims, seen in the form of growth of Islamic centers, national organizations such as Council on American Relations (CAIR), Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), in the last few decades (Leonard, 2013).

The discourse of Islamic philanthropy has emerged under a few conditions: 1. End of Cold war and end of Gulf War 2. Resurgence of Islamist movements around the world 3. Attacks on the World Trade Center twin towers in New York on September 11, 2001. 4. Rise of what Benthall and Jourdain have called 'Red Crescent Politics,' (i.e., emergence of transnational Muslim NGOs). By this, they mean the rise of the trans-national Muslim NGO sector, as a response and sometimes in competition with the secular and Christian trans-national humanitarian aid movement. As they say in their book *The Charitable Crescent* (2003), "Since the 19th century, charities in the Muslim world have often developed in a mixed relation of contention with and imitation of Western agencies. This is the case of the development of the Red Crescent societies within the Red Cross movement but also of international Islamic charities" (p.xii). This movement has earned notoriety and has attracted controversy, in a post 9/11 world they point out, suggesting that their existence and proliferation across the world poses an interesting question for us to understand.

While the discourse of charity among Muslims has shifted over time, arguably, it's guiding spirit remains. With the advent of newer ways of conceptualizing philanthropy, this may be in for a radical change. Ghaneabassiri says: "The use of *sadaqa* in Islamic sources dates back

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to the Qur'an where it is mentioned both as an obligatory (9:103) and voluntary (58:13) form of charity. In later Islamic discourse, sadaqa mainly refers to voluntary alms offered to people of one's own choosing the intent to please God or attain divine reward." (Ghaneabassiri, 2010, introduction). *Sadaqa* should be given, according to Islamic law, he further points out, for divine favor in the here and now, in the form of an answered prayer, the expiation of sin or general well-being of one's family etc. *Zakat,* or the obligatory alms are given as a means to 'cleanse one's wealth' and is conceptualized as a tool of wealth distribution and (arguably as) 'social justice' in Islam. This religious tradition of giving is followed by almost all practicing Muslims and is central to the Islamic faith.

Zakat refers to the act of giving the obligatory charity and is considered the 'third pillar' of Islam (*arkan ad-din*). It is obligatory only on those who have a certain amount of capital that can be disposed (in the form of savings, gold, land or other assets). As Jonathan Benthall reminds us, the primary purpose of *zakat* is purification of one's wealth (1999, p.29). The *Qur'an* has several verses that remind the faithful to give in charity[5]. Wealth is considered a trust from God and a believing Muslim is expected to part with it when someone asks for his/her help. Hoarding of wealth and usury are not only condemned, but are also considered sinful (Benthall, 2008; Tripp, 2006).

While the concept of *zakat* is more than 1400 years old, its practice is being re-shaped by modern capitalism. This can be seen in the context of how modern economies are structured, how people relate to wealth, and where they spend it. Charles Tripp offers a detailed analysis of the 'moral economy' of Islamic finance in his book *Islam and the Moral Economy- The*

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[5] A fairly elaborate list of verses from the Qur'an can be seen at - http://www.progressive-muslim.org/zakat-charity-quran.htm

Challenge of Capitalism (2006*).* He suggests that Islamic socialism, economics and rationale for Islamic banking have evolved in compromise and interaction with global capitalism in the 21st century. Similarly, Ghaneabassiri (2010) has argued that charitable practices among American Muslims, going back to the slaves in antebellum era, evolved in relation to similar practices around them and were a means of 'community' formation. He offers the example of *Saraka,* or a rice cake offered by women in Antebellum Georgia, as an example of a practice that was a syncretic evolution of *Sadaqa* in an all-American manner.

In contemporary American society, one can see that there is a re-interpretation at the level of both: a) who can offer *zakat* b) who can receive it. The Qur'an suggests the following eight categories of those eligible to receive, in *Surat* (chapter) *Tauba* (9:60)[6]:

1. The poor (*al-fuqara*)

2. *Al-masakin* – interpreted as the very poor or needy

3. The officials appointed over them – i.e., those who collect *zakat*

4. Those whose hearts are inclined to Islam (potential converts)

5. Captives

6. Debtors

7. Those in the way of God – i.e., teachers, or those fighting in God's way

8. Sons of the road – i.e., travelers

(Source: Benthall, 2008, p.10).

While these categories of eligible 'recipients' have been defined, several competing *Hadith* or instances of the prophet Muhammad's life (considered authoritative enough to pass legal

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[6] Surat Tauba – Retrieved from http://quran.com/9/60. For commentary, see Benthall (2008, p.11).

judgments) have shown the prophet and his companions helping or giving charity to those outside of these eight categories. Also, there is the question of whether non-Muslims are eligible to receive *zakat* money.

Ghaneabassiri offers a thorough investigation of how American Muslim communities developed in America and came to be recognized as a 'community' of people. His argument is that American Muslims have adopted various strategies, from assimilating into mainstream society to resisting such assimilation. In the early 19th century, when immigration laws –the Alien Land law of 1913 for instance- barred Asian and Middle Eastern men from holding or leasing land in their names, they circumvented this by marriage to local Hispanic women and buying land in their names. The early immigrants also established institutions for self-help, he contends, and among the first such institutions were "mosques, benevolent societies and a number of prophetic movements: the *Ahmadiyaa* missionary movement, founded by the Indian reformer Mirza Ghulam Ahmad; the Moorish Science Temple, founded by the African American religious leader Noble Drew Ali; and the Nation of Islam, founded by Fard Muhammad." (2010, p.165) As he argues, the early immigration in 1910-20s was not one of assimilation, but one of negotiation with the mainstream of American society, through "the establishment of mosques and Muslim organizations and through their political activities" (p.171) This process, one might argue, has gained traction in the last twenty years and the all-women's Mosque is but one example of this process of American Muslims negotiating their identity both within the Muslim community as well as the larger religious community in America. The presence of organizations such as ISNA, Islamic Relief, Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) among others is a testament to this development.

The over 2000 mosques in the U.S. spanning all schools of thought within Islam (both *Shii* and *Sunni*) are testament to the growth of *zakat* and its impact on building institutions (Bagby, 2011). While the mosque is incorporated as a tax-exempt entity in the U.S., it does not receive any direct support from the state. The proliferation of mosques in the U.S; can be considered a direct result of local support to the mosques, though there have been a few mosques that were constructed in the past, with donations from the Gulf countries.

What is an 'American Muslim' identity?

American Muslim identity is a complex construct that is being continually being constructed and de-constructed. How does one speak of such a unity when the American Muslim communities consist of Muslims from around the world? A recent Pew Research Center poll shows that the American Muslims are the most racially diverse religious community in America, with adherents from every possible race and ethnic background (Pew, 2011). A related concern also involves how we should conceptualize Islam in America. Are Muslims a 'nation' in the sense that it is 'imagined,' as Benedict Anderson has argued in his classic *Imagined Communities* (1983). Ideas of what a Muslim 'nation' is or how American Muslims conceptualize a community are complex questions that involve a detailed analysis of history, geopolitics, language and cultural changes, over centuries. Anderson's notion of a 'nation' is a group that has a common language, origin or imaginary of what constitutes a 'group' can be considered a 'nation' is key to our understanding.

The existence of groups such as Nation of Islam in America might validate this sense of 'nationhood' within the nation-state of the United States of America. But on closer examination, I contend that the notion of a 'community' is a better sociological construct to understand how

American Muslims understand their sense of belonging, rather than a 'nation'. There is certainly no 'common language' or shared destiny that all Muslims aspire towards. With the gradual increase in number of Muslims in the U.S. since 1965, the Muslim identity has become salient. Also, developments such as the Iranian Revolution, Gulf War and attacks on twin towers on 9/11 have increased the salience of Islam in American public consciousness (Siddiqui, 2014).

Stuart Hall's conception of identity as 'being,' i.e., belonging to a group by virtue of one's origins and identity as 'becoming,' or a process is important in the study of American Muslim identity (Hall, 1997). Through his examination of the Caribbean identity as being part of the second type, he says that we should not see identity as a complete project, but one that is a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation' (p.222). As an example of this process of 'becoming' and production of a Muslim identity, one needs to only look at the creative ways in which American Muslim youth are incorporating ideas of what it means to be both 'Muslim and American.' There is a constant negotiation going on, in terms of how American Muslim youth are claiming their 'Americaness,' as much as they are conscious of being 'Muslim.' Identification is a process, as Hall reminds us, of 'articulation, suturing and over-determination, not subsumption' (1997, p.3). This means, that it is not a complete project, one that is ready to be made 'total,' or complete. There is, as he further argues, always too much or too little of an 'identity.'

Hall's call is to re-examine our notions of identity and representation. This idea may hold true more for the American Muslim identity than any other group, as it is truly a work-in-progress. While 'American exceptionalism' dominated the thinking of American Muslims, as regards Islam and America, several scholars have pointed out that there has been a reverse trend

towards cultural assimilation and integration (Khan, 2008; Haddad and Harb, 2014). This development can be seen in light of Hall's notion of identity as 'becoming.'

To fully understand how immigration, slavery and related processes have shaped – and continue to shape American Muslim identity- one must understand the context, a bit more. In a Post 9/11 world, there is a great aversion to an 'Islamic' identity, among the average Americans, as several scholars have shown (Esposito, 2008; Safi, 2003). Islam is equated with despotism, backwardness and lack of democracy. Book titles such as *The Crisis of Islam* by Bernard Lewis (Lewis, 2003) and *What Went Wrong* (Lewis, 2002) show the general mood of scholarship. *The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of the World Order* by Samuel Huntington (1996) set the tone for much of political analysis and journalistic writing that occurred, post 9/11. Though Huntington's 'Clash of Civilization' thesis – that the conflicts of the future will be between civilizations, and not nation-states - has come under severe criticism in academic circles, his key arguments have become mainstream, and adopted by policy makers and politicians. This thesis has led to configuration of American foreign policy, that has led to wars in the Middle East and massive human rights abuses in the U.S. and abroad, as many scholars have pointed out (Esposito, 2008; Khan, 2008). This regime of representation of the 'Muslim' both domestically and internationally, should be seen for what it is – an exercise of power – in a couplet 'power/knowledge,' as Foucault originally formulated and Hall reminds us, in his work (Foucault, 1994; Hall, 1990).

This 'identity making' is occurring in the context of the general discourse of 'Crisis' in the Arab world. Surely, if one looks around, one would see a lot of 'crises' in the Middle East and the broader 'Muslim world.' But such analysis often conflates geopolitical troubles with

religious conflicts. The question that is often posed in Western scholarship is whether Islam is 'compatible with democracy' and whether Muslims are able to 'assimilate' within the West. The order of these questions is rather basic and one could even consider these questions as arising out of stereotypes of Islam and Muslims. This line of thinking also assumes that Muslims are out 'there,' while we are 'here.' The empirical reality of Muslims' shared history and current reality offers us a completely different picture, if we are willing to pay attention to how Muslims' lives have intersected and interacted with that of others, argues Ghaneabassiri in his essay *Writing Histories of Western Muslims* (2012). As he elaborates in this essay "The diversity found among Western Muslims coupled with their situated in-betweeness have often engendered institutions, concepts, and practices that are open to multiple meanings and thus could pragmatically mediate relations between diverse understandings of religious duty, cultural practices and political belonging" (p.46). He suggests here that diversity should not be seen as some problem to be solved, but rather as the 'grounds on which modern experiences, identities, institutions and concepts are formed'. Ghaneabassiri's call to examine American Muslim identity as a part of the continuity of the interactions between Islam and America, and Islam in America. His position is similar to that of Hall, who points out that, cultural identities, though emerge from the past, undergo a constant transformation and are subject to the 'continuous interplay of history, culture and power' (1990, p.225). In the case of American Muslims, it is a combination of forces that has shaped (and continues to shape) the 'American Muslim identity,' – race relations, immigration, slavery and more recently U.S. Foreign policy.

Historically, there have been attempts to address the question of American Muslim identity going as far back as Thomas Jefferson. As Denise Spellman has shown in her book *Thomas Jefferson's Qur'an* (2013), Islam was constructed as the 'other' in America and much of

this discourse was borrowed from Europe, where Islamophobia was deeply entrenched. Jefferson, the author of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, was also vilified as a 'Muslim' by his opponents. He was vilified for including Muslims in the American imaginary, when crafting laws and ideals; that would shape how future citizens would be treated. According to Spellman, Jefferson, along with the founding fathers used enlightenment ideals to include toleration towards Muslims (who were not present, at least visibly) in America, at that time. For this, he earned life-long vilification from his foes, as being too 'sympathetic' to the Muslims, who were the ultimate social outliers, at that time. As Spellberg points out "To many of his political opponents, Thomas Jefferson may have been our first Muslim president. He was attacked and vilified as a Muslim since 1791." The accusation that Jefferson was a Muslim placed him in the same category as his hero John Locke, who was charged with professing the "faith of a Turk," and even George Sale, the British translator of his Qur'an derided as "half a *Mussalman*" (p. 271). She suggests that the same charges made against Jefferson in the campaign of 1800 were used in the 21st century, against (then) Candidate Barack Hussein Obama, in 2008.

This was a strategic move to discredit legitimate candidates, either for Congress or for presidency by positioning them as "Un-American and even anti-American." She says, "Islam was thus for Christians of all denominations a weapon with which to vilify fellow believers, and it would prove effective, eventually to be appropriated for additional political and personal attacks on both sides of the Atlantic"(p. 17). Two centuries later, this may not have changed much, as we see similar discourses regarding Islam in America, and the most egregious instance of such xenophobia manifested itself during the presidential run by Barak Obama, son of an immigrant Kenyan Muslim. Despite repeated claims and demonstrations of his (Protestant) faith, Obama was attacked for (and continues to face allegations of) being a 'Muslim.' This

designation is used to denote the 'foreign,' 'other' and 'alien.' In fact, much of current activist and philanthropic efforts seem to be directly or indirectly aimed at reducing the salience of this rhetoric. Full inclusion of American Muslims in the public sphere is yet to be realized, as both small and big instances of exclusion show the limits of tolerance among average Americans. Though legally there are no provisions to discriminate among Muslims, groups such as Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) allege that there is ongoing systemic discrimination against Muslims by the state apparatus and law enforcement officials. The New York Police Department's spying on Muslim student groups following 9/11 is the most egregious example that is cited in support of this claim.

Identity and philanthropy – how are they linked?

Some of the key philanthropic initiatives that attract donations from the 'grass-roots' of American Muslims involve consolidating or affirming one's 'American Muslim identity.' Consider the fact that the largest grass-roots organization in the U.S. with a very strong support base among Americans is the Council on American Relations (C.A.I.R.). Their mission involves protecting and advancing human rights, civil liberties and the populations they serve include Muslims and other minorities. Increasingly, their work has become relevant to addressing issues of identity among Muslim youth, as Nihad Awad, Executive Director pointed out, in an interview.

How to address this dissonance between how (some) American Muslim youth understand their role in society and what role their parents/society expects them to play, is at the heart of many projects of American Muslim philanthropy. The Muslim Public Service Network, an NGO where I served as the Executive Director, organized a summer fellowship program – to

help American Muslim youth gain insights into how they could be 'fully American' and 'fully Muslim,' and contribute to mainstream American society[7]. At its height (in early 2000s), this NGO enjoyed tremendous support from the community, with hundreds and thousands of dollars of donations flowing toward it. Post 9/11, much of this philanthropy has dried up, related to various factors, including lack of confidence of donors in the leadership as well as other organizational and environmental factors.

I contend that philanthropy can address this dissonance and confusion about identity, by helping expand the notion of a 'community'[8] by breaking artificial barriers of nation, nation-state, race and ethnicity. Several identities (both within the broader 'Islamic' umbrella and also within the 'American' identities spectrum) are being brought together here and at the same time. Several norms are being questioned: There is inter-faith collaboration and collaboration across gender boundaries as well as expansion of the meaning of what it means to be a 'Muslim' in America. The global philanthropic movements, of which Islamic Relief and ISNA in part, are also a testament to the way that this process of discursive transformation of American Muslim philanthropy is occurring.

Some of these arguments are consistent with the findings of Paul Schervish, who has argued for an 'identification' model of philanthropy. His understanding and framing of 'giving and receiving as a spiritual exercise' is also helpful in understanding the dynamics of American Muslim philanthropy (Schervish, 2008). Schervish argues that philanthropy is an ontological

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[7] The organization's motto is clear in this statement: "MPSN focuses on developing a network of American-Muslims with a heightened awareness of Islamic perspectives on public policy making. The academic component of MPSN will reflect this approach and is designed to complement the practical experience gained in the field." Retrieved from http://www.muslimpublicservice.org/curriculum

[8] For a detailed analysis of just this argument, see my forthcoming paper Khan, S (In print). New Styles of Giving and community development among Arab-American Muslims, Voluntas.

reality that is often not talked about in many contexts. Amy Singer also suggests the same idea, when she says that perhaps one of the key reasons there is so little literature on Muslim philanthropy is that most Western scholars did not notice it – as it was so part of a daily life that went unnoticed – unlike in the case of *Waqfs[9]*, or endowments, that were established by the wealthy (Singer, 2008, introduction). Paul Schervish's identification model (1988) posits that it is self-identification with people and groups that motivates us to give, rather than any inherent sense of generosity. This theory, which is not altogether novel, is the result of a study of over 130 millionaires in the Boston Area. As Schervish and Herman argue, this 'identification with others develops and is applied primarily through networks of association that bring donors into contact with potential recipients' (p.6). As Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue, identity is formed by social processes and once formed, it 'is maintained, crystallized, modified or even reshaped by social relations.' (p.173). Their point that historical circumstances produce certain identities, under the influence of certain forces and choices, is relevant to our discussion of American Muslim identity. Taken together with the empirical findings of Princeton scholar Amaney Jamal (2013) that mosque attendees in the U.S. tend to give more of their time and money to causes that are close to their heart, we have the beginnings of a (tentative) hypothesis of how identity, social capital and philanthropy are linked.

Methodology and Methods used

While each paper follows a specific method, this short section outlines why I have chosen to use the methods, in the dissertation. I have used a combination of Grounded Theory and Discourse Analysis for the following reasons:

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[9] I have not treated awqaf (plural of waqf) or Islamic endowments in this paper, as there are several excellent studies on this topic. Amy Singer's Charity in Islamic Societies (2008) is an excellent start on this topic.

1. The Study of identity is best done through analyzing the discourses of how an identity has been 'constructed,' in a given time period. As Discourse Analysis is committed to a 'strong social constructivist view in the way it tries to explore the relationships between text, discourse and context,' it could be particularly useful to my project (Phillips and Hardy, 2002, p.6). Also, Phillips and Hardy argue that the reflexive nature of Discourse Analysis is helpful in deploying for social constructivist frameworks

2. Ethnographies (and related methods in Cultural Anthropology) lend themselves well to being complemented with Discourse Analysis, as Phillip and Hardy have argued (Phillips and Hardy, 2002).

3. Grounded theory is particularly useful for generating theories from data (Charmaz, 2014). Given that there is very little theorizing that has occurred about the link between philanthropy and identity, among American Muslims, I believe Grounded Theory is particularly helpful.

Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation compiles various papers that are centered on the theme of Islamic philanthropy and its evolution and re-interpretation in the American context. While placing the practices of giving in an American context, many organizations look to the authoritative texts of Islam for interpretation on how best to use charitable contributions. As Jane Pollard has suggested, this is a space that is often managed and defined by both the elites and subalterns (Pollard, 2012).

Chapter two deals with the creation of an 'American Muslim identity'. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) remind us, identity is 'formed by social processes,'and is not a static phenomenon. The way that American Muslims have socialized in America has continued to

shape their own subjective notions of what it means to be American and Muslim at the same time. The changing social relations among Muslim groups and other mainstream groups can be seen as having a significant impact on how American Muslim identity is 'created' and 'managed,' I argue that the state apparatus has a significant role to play in this process. This chapter also argues that there is a multiplicity of 'identities.' I use Stuart Hall's notion of identity creation as a 'process,' and argue that American Muslim identity is a work-in-progress, with multiple dimensions (1997). Though there is an effort to build a unitary 'American Muslim identity,' it contains multitudes that are being argued and debated. Stuart Hall's notion of cultural identity is twofold: one encompassing a 'shared culture, history and ancestry,' and another of Cultural Identity being a positionality. By 'positionality' Hall means a conscious choice to position one's identity as an un-fixed, evolving construct. It is in this manner that his notion of culture meshes with that of Alberto Melucci. Hall argues that. This idea also ties in with the call by Alberto Mellucci (1989) to focus on the 'social' dimensions of identity, rather than privileging the political dimensions of group identity.

Chapter three deals with the evolution of American Islamic philanthropy and I propose a 'discursive framework' to understand this process. I suggest, following a Foucaldian analysis, that we need to look at the gradual change in how philanthropy is understood by American Muslims, in terms of relations of power between American Muslim groups, the structures of government and non-profits. I suggest that by a close examination of how *zakat* and sadaqa have been interpreted by Muslim groups, one can see the ways in which these ethical ideas have been interpreted and re-interpreted in each context, using 'reason' and 'pragmatic considerations.' Using ISNA and the Black American Muslim groups, I show how each has navigated notions of

identity, power and philanthropy to maintain a coherent 'identity,' despite varying contestations of what it means to be both 'American' and 'Muslim.'

Chapter four suggests that among Arab American Muslims, religious, faith-based giving is being replaced by humanitarian giving, defined by the 'development' models used by development agencies as well as the NGO sector, generally. Many of the organizations I studied have incorporated the discourse of development and the language of 'sustainability' in their work, either in attempt to appeal to a broader donor base or to appear more 'modern' and sophisticated. I use qualitative interview data, with key leaders from the most well-known and reputed NGOs in the U.S. and propose a new model of giving, that seeks to show how philanthropy can shape identity. I argue in this paper that philanthropy has the potential to create and shape 'identity.'

Chapter five looks at what I call the 'New forms of giving,' among American Muslims. I argue that Islamic philanthropy is forming new 'moral geographies' by incorporating elements from market based notions of philanthropy, and is becoming more 'secular' and 'strategic' in its direction. This paper provides a typology of giving and maps the trajectory of giving towards Muslim Aid organizations. Looking at the messaging and marketing material of major American Muslim charities, I track the movement away from religious and altruistic giving. Preliminary findings suggest that American Muslim giving has been transformed by a move to secular motives for philanthropy and by the rise of more self-oriented, consumption-driven giving behavior. I conclude that Muslim nonprofit organizations are today contributing to the meaning of philanthropy, through the creative and pragmatic interpretation of religious principles and

cultural norms. I also suggest that this trend can also be considered a part of the 'practical spirituality' prevalent in America.

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II.   The Evolution of 'American Muslim' identity

Abstract: The question: Who is an 'American Muslim' is a rather complicated one. It does not yield a straight-forward answer, as one would expect. From a legal perspective, one can argue that yes, indeed, it is fairly simple: anyone with an American citizenship is an American and if they happen to be Muslim, they become American-Muslim or Muslim-American. But beyond this clarity lies much confusion, especially when one gets into the realm of one's 'identity' as an American Muslim. I argue in this paper that this identity is an evolution that has gained salience in a post 9/11 world. Several categories such as race, religion, and ethnicity have been subsumed in this creation and a closer examination shows that this identity is crucial for understanding how philanthropy occurs in the U.S. I build on Stuart Hall's notion of identity as a 'process' to argue that American Muslim identity is a work-in-progress. Finally, I offer a framework to understand the six forces that are shaping the formation of an 'American Muslim' identity.

Keywords: Religion, USA, Islam, identity, discourse

The Evolution of an 'American Muslim identity'

The exercise of defining 'American Muslims' is an exercise of power. With no central religious or political authority defining who or what an 'American Muslim' is, the definition of both 'American' and 'Muslim' has been variously interpreted and defined by various entities : the state, American Muslim groups, spiritual leaders and the media. This conflation of identities and communities and the resulting confusion has given rise to a discourse of 'American Muslims' and 'American Islam' that is often spoken about, as if it were a unity. But as several scholars have pointed out (Jackson, 2008; Curtis, 2009; Ghaneabassiri, 2010) this idea of an 'American Muslim identity' is an evolving idea and not a unified construct, as is often assumed. Where there is certainly a unity when it comes to agreeing on the 'essentializing factors,' – the so-called 'five pillars' of Islam- this unity begins and perhaps, ends there. This question of the emerging 'American Muslim identity,' is important, as it can help explain various sociological facts and also emerging phenomenon, including philanthropic behavior. As Muqtedar Khan, a scholar of American Islam has argued, while in the early part of 20th century American Muslims were fighting to retain their 'Muslimness' due to the cultural effects of living in a Western society, the Muslims of today seem to be fighting to retain their 'Americanness,' amidst the climate of hostility and suspicion that their identity attracts (Khan, 2003).

I make two related arguments in this paper 1) 'American Muslim' identity is by nature plural, but has been appropriated by various groups, including the state apparatus, in an effort to 'manage' the discourse related to Islam in the public domain and 2) This 'American Muslim identity,' is a work-in-progress and can be seen as a negotiation between people and institutions – in terms of relations of power.

This paper is organized in four parts : in the first section, I offer some demographic background

of the American Muslim community and argue that there is no singular 'community', but a plurality of 'communities', that are arguably the most diverse ethnic and racial group in the U.S. In the second section, I offer some insights into the way that the state apparatus has tried to define what an 'acceptable,' American Muslim identity would look like. In the third section, I outline the internal debates in the American Muslim community, and a look at how identity is shaped in America. Finally, in conclusion, I offer some perspectives on how to fully conceptualize this category we call 'American Muslims' as an organic identity.

1.   The American Muslim 'communities'

There are about 3.5 million Muslims in the U.S. While the definite number of American Muslims is not known (because U.S census does not collect data on religious affiliation), these estimates are cited by scholars and more widely claimed by Pew Research (Ghaneabassiri, 2010). Other estimates used by organizations such as the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) places this number between six to eight million. Amaney Jamal, a leading scholar of Arab American and Muslim communities puts this figure at about ten million (Jamal, 2013).

The difficulty in defining the exact number of American Muslims is also compounded by the fact that there is no universally agreed upon definition of a 'Muslim' in America. This is because there is no central 'Church' in *Sunni* Islam, which has a majority of the adherents of Islam (roughly 85% of all Muslims around the world are *Sunni*, while the rest are *Shii* or other smaller sects). While there is some religious authority in *Shii* Islam, it does not help address our problem. This ambiguity in who is a 'Muslim' springs from the fact that many sects in the Muslim majority world do fall outside of what is considered 'Muslim' by 'orthodox' Muslims. For instance, groups of Muslims such as *Ahmadiyyas*, who are followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, a religious leader in pre-independence India, are considered

heretical and hence, outside the domain of 'Orthodox' Islam. The plurality and diversity within Islam in the U.S. is very high, though it is not well understood by those outside the faith community (Mottahedeh, 1987).

Similarly, Druze from the Middle East are also in a similar situation of being ambiguously defined as 'Muslim.' The situation is complicated also by Blackamerican Islam, which had a lot of followers in the Nation of Islam (NOI), a movement started by Fard Muhammad in the early part of 20th century. Master Fard Muhammad claimed to be God himself and propounded views that would clearly fit into the *Weltanschauung* of Islam, as is understood by those who read the Qur'an and believe in the finality of Prophet Muhammad's message. While the movement of the Historically Black, African American Muslims (HSAAM) emerged out of the NOI to join 'orthodox' Islam, has reduced this dissonance, it still remains. There are several non-Orthodox beliefs among Blackamerican and this becomes a point of contention for mainstream Muslims, many of who have a background or ancestry from South Asia or the Middle East (Siddiqui, 2014).

Added to this confusion is the division between Shii and Sunni Muslims and the definition of what is 'authentic Islam.' Many Sunnis take beef with the Shii beliefs in the role of Caliph Ali, and also their religious practices. Some extremely orthodox interpretations in Sunni Islam consider Shii as 'non-Muslims.' And finally, let us not forget the Sufis, the ecumenical 'hippies' of Islam, who (in contemporary era) seem to privilege 'spirituality' rather than orthodox 'practice' of religion. While religious orthodoxy cannot settle these disputes, as America is the most diverse American Muslim society there is, many American Muslim organizations (at least the national membership organizations) have come up with a pragmatic definition of who is a 'Muslim.' By their logic, anyone who proclaims or self-identifies as a Muslim is a Muslim.

Traditional Sunni methodology for choosing a 'leader,' or deciding on religious authority has relied on 'ijma,' or group consensus. This has been a preferred methodology for deciding which individual or group should lead a society. In an American context, marked not only by ethnic and racial diversity among American Muslims, there is the question of diversity of religious beliefs and what they take to be 'Islamic' beliefs. Given this, I believe, a pragmatic understanding of Islam has emerged, which seeks to accommodate differences, rather than create boundaries and barriers to practice of Islam, among groups of people. This 'pragmatism' has been alluded to, by various religious leaders that I have interviewed, for the purposes of this study.

Muslims are spread across the length and breadth of the U.S., but have a large presence in the metropolitan areas – given that most jobs are located in and around big cities – New York has more than a million Muslims, so does the Washington D.C. area. There are a significant number of Muslims in California, Texas and Florida. The same goes for Chicago, which has a large South Asian and African American Muslim population. The American South does not have as many Muslims, but there are certainly a good number of Muslims in Virginia, Texas and other southern states.

As the Pew Research Center's report reminds us "Muslim Americans are a heavily immigrant population. Of those age 18 and older, more than six-in-ten (63%) were born abroad, and many are relative newcomers to the United States: Fully one-quarter of all U.S. Muslim adults (25%) have arrived in this country since 2000. The Muslim American population is also significantly younger and more racially diverse than the public as a whole. Muslim Americans are just as likely as other Americans to have a college degree, but fewer report having more than a high school education." (Pew Research, 2013). The report goes on to say that Pakistan is the largest country of origin for American Muslims, with a full 14% of first-generation immigrants or about 9% of all Muslims in America coming from

there. Regionally, the Arab countries account for over 41% of all foreign-born American Muslims, while the rest are 'from sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and elsewhere.' Racially too, there is immense diversity within the American Muslim communities. As the Pew Report points out "Muslim Americans are racially diverse. No single racial or ethnic group makes up more than 30% of the total. Overall, 30% describe themselves as white, 23% as black, 21% as Asian, 6% as Hispanic and 19% as other or mixed race." With mixed-race marriages, greater ethnic mixing, this diversity is only increasing.

Given that there is no religious authority such as the Catholic Church to adjudicate on these matters, the final word rests with the individual and the people involved. Authority is ultimately a sociological reality that is often negotiated – through political, economic or other struggles. While Islamic tradition allows for reasoning within its parameters and defining what is 'Islamic,' and who is 'Muslim,' the reality of managing multiple identities is often difficult. It seems that Islamic tradition may perhaps help us answer this question. As Talal Asad argues in *Formations of the Secular*, there is often a recourse to *ijtihad,* or reasoning among 'reformers' when they speak of 'reforming Islam' he says that this is premised on universal rationality, which is not entirely needed, when talking about Islam. The Islamic tradition provides 'a theological vocabulary, a set of problems derived from the Qur'an and *Sunna* (the prophet's tradition) and major jurists, who have commented on both,' (2003, p.220). This means that though there are examples in the Islamic tradition to accommodate various schools of thought, about who is 'Muslim,' or not; the definition in the American context seems to have been fluid and flexible, given the realities of American Islam being heavily influenced by BlackAmerican indigenous Islam and various other sects of Islam. As Sherman Jackson argues in *Islam and the BlackAmerican* (2005), BlackAmerican Muslims have been influenced by Black folk religion and came to Islam through its influence. Islamic Tradition, as we understand it, seems to have played a very small role, in this process.

As one can see from the data above, American Muslims are diverse, not only in their origins, but also their beliefs. These disparate groups have formed several 'communities' geographically, intellectually and spiritually. Mosques have played a key role in organizing community life, as both Siddiqui (2014) and Ghaneabassiri (2010) remind us. The mosques or Islamic centers have been places for people to gather, create communal lives, marry, conduct social events, etc. and have thus gone beyond the conventional role that is assigned to mosques in the rest of the world, where they are just places to pray.

Another way of organizing community has been through building institutions that serve American Muslims and the local communities. Organizations such as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), National Association of Arab-Americans (NAAA), Arab American Institute (AAI), Dearborn based ACCESS and other national organizations that emerged in the 1990s have sought to help American Muslims participate in the political sphere, protect their rights as well as further the rights of Muslims around the world. Another set of organizations, that have emerged are the humanitarian aid agencies. The most prominent of them are Islamic Relief, Helping Hands for Relief and Development, among others. These organizations can be seen as having created platforms for American Muslims to help organize and build a sense of community, both domestically and internationally.

Framing the discussion of 'identity' construction

There are several ways that identity can be understood in scholarship in Sociology. Broadly speaking, there are three perspectives of identity in the field of Sociology (Stets and Burke, 2000). The first view of identity is based on a group or collective beliefs, ideas and practices, Stets and Burke point

out. This could, for instance, involve occupational identity, religious identity. The second view of identity proposed by scholars such as Tajfel (1981) and Wetherall (1987) considers identity to be embedded in a group or collective. The third perspective of identity is the social interactionist perspective, which analyzes the subjective meanings that people give to objects, events and behaviors. In this view, society is a social construction, which occurs through human interpretation. My analysis of the 'American Muslim' identity will be through this third perspective.

I will use Stuart Hall's (2000) notion of identity as a 'process' one that is not fixed, to build my arguments. Hall's fundamental argument is that identity should not be seen as a 'fixed' or a permanent concept, that is formed by a shared culture, heritage or ancestry. The second notion, that he argues for is a framing of identity that is a work in progress. "If identity does not proceed, in a straight, unbroken line, from some fixed origin, how are we to understand its formation" he asks; before answering that we must look for this identity formation through the ruptures and differences (Hall, 2000, p.24). Hall examines these ruptures in the case of the Caribbean through ruptures such as slavery, colonization, forced labor etc. whereas in the U.S. it has been similarly slavery, trade and more recently, immigration.

Stuart Hall (2000) reminds us that of late, there has been an explosion in the discourse of identity and also an equal reaction to it, in terms of criticism. This criticism has come from various perspectives, which seeks to challenge the 'notion of an integral, originary and unified identity' (p.15). This sense of unified self, which is assumed to be present and continuous, is what is being criticized, Hall tells us. I find this idea directly relevant to discussion of a 'unified' 'American Muslim' identity that is being constructed, by various intersecting discourses. One must note that this 'unity' is an amalgam of various identities – that are often at odds with one another – the Blackamerican identity, the South Asian identity and the Arab identity, all jostling to find acceptance in the melting pot of America.

A similar call has been made by Alberto Melucci (1990) who says that in the social movements' literature, there is a need for a 'processual approach,' to collective identity. His argument is also based on a constructivist view of collective action. Hall's call is to focus on developing a 'theory of discursive practice,' rather than developing a theory of the 'knowing subject.' By this, he means understanding how practices of identification among groups occurs, rather than just focusing on the theoretical aspects of identity and its manifestation. The 'identification,' process is a construction, an ongoing negotiation between the agents involved. While Hall acknowledges, similar to Melucci that this process is an on-going one, that is never complete, in the case of American Muslim identity, I suggest that this process is managed and controlled by various groups, who would rather reach the destination of identity formation, rather than explore how the process is unfolding.

As Melucci argues, the term identity denotes the relationship between two actors that 'allows their mutual recognition.' His argument is that the notion of collective identity, that seems permanent, is in actuality, an ongoing process. This means that the process involves continuous investments in organizational forms, systems of rules and leadership relationships (1990, p.45). Where the self-reflective nature of group identity seems to face some resistance is in the recognition of this identity by others. In the case of American Muslims, this has been a dynamic process, historically. For instance, with the Nation of Islam (NOI), a very racist and outwardly hateful group self-identified as 'Muslim' and met with a lot of resistance both from mainstream American society as well as from other Sunni groups, both domestically and internationally. It was only with the recognition of leaders such as Malcolm X by world leaders did BlackAmerican leadership and NOI gain some recognition, as authentic 'Muslim' groups. This 'self-identification' changed over a period of time, with the NOI giving up its racist rhetoric and joining mainstream Sunni Islam.

I am using the notion of identity in the sense that Stuart Hall does, that is, not in an essentialist manner, but rather in a 'strategic and positional one.' By this, I mean, following Hall, that this identity is not just a semantic signifier, but an unfolding one, that is shaped by forces that are both internal and external to the individual and group. This definition of identity acknowledges that identities are never fixed or unified, but rather fragmented and fractured and are constructed over 'multiple levels of intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions' (2000, p.17). I will explore how this translates into practice, in the next section.

Conceptualizing American Muslims as a religious group

The history of American Muslims can be seen as either a series of waves of immigration or one of an emerging 'new' religious group. While scholars in the past have seen American Muslims as 'immigrants' who came here and established their traditions, a recent wave of scholarship has emerged that seeks to study American (and Western Muslims in general) and locates them in 'relation' to the mainstream of their societies. Reed College professor Kambiz Ghaneabassiri could be considered the leading proponent of this school of thought and he suggests that Islamic traditions and values have developed in relation to the dominant ideas and traditions around them, and a process of exchange, dialogue has occurred, which is often not acknowledged in existing scholarship of Islam in America (GhaneaBassiri, 2010). While the narrative of American Muslims was written with ethnicity as the primary focus, it is increasingly being written with religion as the front-and-center issue. This 'religification' of identity is an interesting phenomenon (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2009).

He further argues that the dichotomy of American Islam, the "West" is a false one and that it is not how history has been shaped. This false binary reeks of Orientalist assumptions that dominated the thinking of 18th century Europeans in their thinking of modernity and Islam. "In sum, determining

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whether or not a modern Islam or an American Islamic identity exists has been a stepping stone towards assessing the degree of conflict we may expect between a "modern west" and a "Muslim orient" between American society and the Muslims within in." (Ghaneabassiri, 2010, p.5) While there is no agreed upon definition of what 'modern Islam' looks like, nor what an 'American Islamic identity' should include, the consensus among community members seems to suggest that there is a growing trend for defining what this identity should look like. His observation makes sense, considering that there have been various ways in which American Muslims have made sense of their own lives and identities in their adopted county. This has ranged from adopting some non-Muslim practices – such as celebration of Thanksgiving, Christmas - to finding common ground in others. The range of improvisational practices has been quite impressive, argues Ghaneabassiri, pointing to the charitable practices of Muslims of Antebellum America, who preserved charitable practices of their Muslim ancestors, without knowing it.

Muqtedar Khan, Professor at University of Delaware argues that identity has two aspects: Who we are and what we aspire to be. This entails also a choice, in terms of choosing what to reveal about oneself[10]. Given that in a post 9/11 world, Muslims in America have been living under a microscope, with no privacy granted to them, the question of their identity has also become salient, he argues. "Everything that is visible and invisible is politicized. We don't know if the manifestation of identity is going to be enduring or not," he added. Khan argues that while in the 1970s the focus was on protecting the 'Muslimness,' of American Muslims, the focus, more recently has been to protect the 'Americanness,'meaning that there is a greater political activism, rather than purely identity politics.

Similarly, in his essay 'Constructing an American Muslim identity' Muqtedar Khan argues that

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[10] Khan, M (2012). Muslim American Identity with Muqtedar Khan. Retrieved from You Tube - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdzLFo0JTmE

the very forces that are shaping American society at large are also shaping the American Muslim community (Khan, 2003). Multiculturalism, growing activism among Muslim elite and finally, Islamic resurgence are three factors he outlines as being responsible for the increased salience of American Muslim identity in the U.S. To this, I would add a fourth element i.e., the greater self-awareness and self-conscious attitude of the young American Muslims. They seem to be a part of this important identity creation mix, as youth groups such as Muslim Student Associations (MSAs) are increasingly asserting their right to their identity in the public sphere.

Ghaneabassiri further argues that Muslim immigrants arrived in the 19th century to find a national ideal that was still very much white and Protestant. And as their numbers grew, they would continue to be branded as foreign and a threat to the government of the United States. Eventually, Jews and Catholics would win acceptance, but Muslims would be the 'last to struggle for inclusion from among the founding triad of non-Protestant outsiders' (2010, p.274). This struggle continues, and was exaggerated immediately following the attacks on September 11, 2001. The passage of the Patriot Act undid a lot of civil liberties that were allowed for Americans and put the spotlight on Muslims. This is also the turning point for the formation of a new 'American Muslim' identity. As Ghaneabassiri argues, the manner in which American Muslims are making sense of their own 'Muslimness,' is through improvisational practices, accommodation and in some cases, incorporating elements of mainstream culture into their religious practices – celebrating *iftars,* or the end of fasting meal during Ramadhan with non-Muslims, for example.

Improvisational practices and the American Muslim identity

Another example of this strategy, for example, is the discourse of 'inter-faith' relations that seems to have become an important development in the formation of an 'American Muslim' identity.

'This is a very recent development, one that is about twenty years old or so. When I was getting my Ph.D, inter-faith was an alien word,' said Dr. William Enright, former Director of the Lake Institute of Faith and giving. This seems to be echoed in many of the interviews I conducted including with Imam Hendi, Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University, who pointed out that Jews, Muslims and Christians could be seen as part of the '*Ummah,*' or a nominal brotherhood in Islam. This seems to be a phenomenon that is gaining traction. Indeed, there are several examples of such inter-faith collaboration. For instance, the Friday *Juma'ah* is held at the Episcopal Church in downtown Washington D.C., since there is no mosque in the area. Speaking of the inter-faith work that Islamic Relief does, Anwar Khan, CEO, Islamic Relief USA pointed out that they sometimes gather material/ tools and donate to Salvation Army. "Through inter-faith work, we are not only raising money, but also building bonds of love," he pointed out[11]. While inter-faith work is being seen as a way to bridge gaps between various religious groups, in some contexts, it has also come under criticism. An example is that of the Shalom Hartman Institute's (S.H.I) program on Jewish-Muslim dialogue. As the program is fully sponsored by the S.H.I., and involves taking a group of Muslim leaders to Israel, on a paid program, it has come under severe criticism, for not showcasing the Palestinian side of the narrative and it has been called 'faith-washing' for its alleged ignoring of the political dimensions of the activity (Bazian, 2015).

Is it likely that American Muslims are appropriating 'Civil Religion,' to find space in the public imagination, for their identity? Civil Religion in the sense that Bellah argues for is "an institutionalized collection of sacred beliefs about the American nation." Bellah has argued that most Americans share the civil religious beliefs, symbols and rituals that 'provide a religious dimension to the entirety of American life.' It seems that the manner in which American Islam is evolving is also an indication of how American Muslim groups are incorporating and tapping into this 'Civil Religion' while choosing

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[11] Interview with Anwar Khan, October 2013

the narrative of American exceptionalism, in some cases.

This way of interpreting and practicing 'Islamic values' of cooperation is also found in conceptions of *maslaha* (welfare) and *darura* (necessity) that often face communities. Talal Asad points out that this 'change of tradition,' is argued on the basis of the aforementioned concepts in Islamic tradition (Asad, 2013, p.221). Indeed, in Islamic history, there are many examples of the Prophet Muhammad praying in a Church and allowing Christians to pray in a mosque. The flexible and 'open' interpretation of what is 'Islamically' permissible seems to be rooted in such traditions of Islamic praxis. This is also tied to the radical 'individualism' prevalent in American society, a phenomenon well explored by scholars such as Robert Putnam (2001), Robert Bellah (1969), among others. Reza Aslan argues that this individualism is quite visible among American Muslims – both individually and collectively – as seen in the ways that Muslims here embrace their identity and flaunt it[12].

The 'administrative State' and the emergence of an American Muslim identity

'Administrative state' is a term coined by Dwight Waldo and is the title of his dissertation that he wrote at Yale, that later became a book. In it, he argues that the function of government bureaucracies should be public service, not efficient running or 'scientific management' of services. This gives rise to a natural tension between democracy and bureaucracy. While the assumption today is that public administration as a function is purely 'scientific' Waldo argued that it involves an element of political theory and 'values' of creating a democratic and just society (Waldo, 1948).

The increasing dominance of business thinking on public administration and working of the government is a unique phenomenon, one that has gone in reverse direction, argues Waldo. This is

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[12] Aslan, R (2015, April 15) Dr. Aslan on the Future of the Middle East. You Tube. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzhxSavDkP8

evident, when we see important decisions such as Citizens United, which effectively gave unlimited powers to the corporate entities to dominate the world of politics, through campaign financing. While the ideal of the 'Great society' was for bureaucrats to 'manage' or create conditions for good business to flourish, the opposite has happened in the U.S. The ensuing impact has been a drive towards 'greater efficiency' in government functioning and a greater focus on outsourcing – from social service provision to research to many other functions of the government (Cnaan, 2002). The 'New Public Management,' movement in Public Administration has had a profound impact in how social groups have been conceptualized and managed (du Gay, 1996). Du Gay makes the argument that the values that permeate this way of thinking are anti-thetical to those of 'service,' and a democratic way of governing.

Consider this: On October 22, 2011, President Obama addressed a gathering of American Muslim leaders and said " Here at the White House, we have a tradition of hosting *iftars* that goes back several years, just as we host Christmas parties and Seders and Diwali celebrations. And these events celebrate the role of faith in the lives of the American people. They remind us of the basic truth that we are all children of God, and we all draw strength and a sense of purpose from our beliefs. These events are also an affirmation of who we are as Americans." This act of communal sharing of food and participating in building a 'community' through celebrating the act of breaking fast is symbolic. Kambiz Ghaneabassiri argues in his essay *Religious Normativity and Praxis* that such adaptive practices have helped merge individual Muslims' relationship with the state with individual Muslims' relationship with the larger Muslim community and thus helped establish a 'distinct American Islam'. (Ghaneabassiri, 2013, p.225). While not without controversy, these measures have sought to create not just an identity, but also a space for the government to 'negotiate' it's terms of engagement with the chosen leaders of the community.

Similarly, in an *iftar* hosted in 2014, President Obama used the occasion to honor a member of the *Ahmadiyaa* community, address the ongoing tension in Gaza at that time and also the role of Egypt in acting as a mediating force for peace. These occasions can be seen as instances which are not just occasions for knowing whether one has 'arrived' in Washington D.C. circles, but also for knowing whether one's work as a Muslim group in the U.S. has been legitimized by the state apparatus. For sure, some prominent groups such as the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), one of the most prominent human rights and advocacy groups are not invited to these *iftars* and gatherings, as they have taken a critical position in the past and also continue to question many of the domestic and international policies of the U.S. administration. While they enjoy enormous legitimacy within the American Muslim community – most activists and Muslim leaders acknowledge that CAIR is the most popular American Muslim group- they continue to be shunned by the state apparatus.

These *iftar* dinners and engagement of American Muslim groups and individuals with the state apparatus has caused a lot of internal debate. The debate concerns whether these groups are doing a dis-service to 'Islam' and 'Muslims' in the U.S. and abroad by buying into the discourse of national security and not 'questioning' the state and holding the President up to higher standards of ethical behavior. This debate becomes loud and has led in the recent past to a variety of acrimonious exchanges in social media, articles in Islamic magazines and online journals about whether this constitutes a lack of integrity on part of Muslim groups, who are self-professed defenders of human rights and dignity. Islamic traditions do place a lot of emphasis on social justice, equality and fighting against oppression. The criticism of these initiatives is that by not questioning the established discourse on matters that impact Muslims around the world, these Muslims are groveling to those in power.

Assuming for a moment that this line of reasoning is valid, can we place this co-optation of

Muslim groups and an 'Islamic identity' as a 'subversion' of Islamic identity for political purposes? Is this realpolitik at its best or a genuine need to include the Muslims in a national conversation? I would like to examine this, in some depth.

I contend that by looking at the practices of the 'administrative state' one can learn a lot about how not only civil religion is being shaped in America, but also how American Muslim identity is being molded. I argue that this is occurring in a dialectical relationship, based on various forces – both domestic and international. The 'religification' of American Muslim identity as Ghaffar-Kucher has called it is a phenomenon that has been written about (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2009). By this, she means an over-emphasis on the religious identity of an individual or community, at the risk of ignoring the other identities involved. I build on this and offer a perspective of how this is occurring in the corridors of power and on the American street.

Philanthropy, identity and American Muslim communities.

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, mosque building as well as forming other 'community' based organizations has been crucial to the formation of an American Muslim identity. This process has occurred with philanthropic giving among Muslims. A lot of support has come in the past, from wealthy donors from around the world. But for the most part, the wealth donated by American Muslims has been used for building these institutions.

Let us examine how the discourse of American Muslim identity has evolved, over the past few decades. Shariq Siddiqui argues in his dissertation *Navigating Identity through Philanthropy*: *A History of the Islamic Society of North America* (2014) that ISNA accepted the idea of a 'single Muslim identity,' one that was culturally plural, but it came at a price. He traces the history of ISNA from its establishment in 1979 (officially in 1981) and places it in the contestation and negotiation that took

place between the Historically Sunni-African American Muslims (H.S.A.A.M.) who were former member of the Nation of Islam, the cultural pluralists(younger members who sought to reconcile with American democracy, values of pluralism etc.) and the 'activists', who were strongly affiliated with international movements such as the Muslim brotherhood or *Jamat-e-Islami* in the Indian subcontinent. In the struggle for power between these three groups, Siddiqui suggests that ultimately, the cultural pluralist narrative won over, and the national recognition of ISNA as the 'model' of American Muslims demonstrates this fact.

As a background to this development, one must note that the negotiation and bargaining with one's identity began much before the 1980s, as Ghaneabassiri suggests. While the early Muslims, the slaves who were brought to the U.S. in the 17th and 18th century could not preserve their authentic religion, it was only those who came in the 20th century - as free men (and women) - who could do so, and they also sought to establish community organizations and groups that would preserve their religion and way of life.

Between the two World Wars, American Muslims started to 'settle' permanently and to found their own institutions, argues Kambiz Ghaneabassiri in his book *A History of Islam in America* (2010). While the early pioneers, who came to the U.S. in the early part of the 20th century sought to gain material wealth and send it back home, the inter-war years changed this thinking and many started to think of America as their new home, he argues. He says that the new immigrants saw that the white Protestants claimed this country as theirs by virtue of a 'conflation of race, religion and progress' and hence there followed Muslims, from Asia, Eastern Europe, Levant and Anatolia' who began to claim America as their own, on the basis of their prosperity.

Ghaneabassiri makes a very important point about their integration into America. He claims that

often we tend to see their story through the lens of assimilation, but their actions suggest otherwise. "They did not assimilate into someone else's America, but rather were negotiating their own understanding of the relationship of Islam and America through the establishment of mosques and Muslim organizations and their political activities" (p.171). This sense of 'belonging,' to America, both as an imaginary homeland – refuge from persecution- which it was, for many; including refugees from the Levant, the Muslim brotherhood loyalists who fled political persecution in Egypt and Indian Nationalists, who came in the aftermath of India's independence also meant that they felt compelled to create the kind of 'home' they wanted to live in.

As regards the evolution of the pacifist, establishment-oriented, pluralistic identity that 'American Muslims' have adopted, Siddiqui argues that " ISNA's story is that of a newly established Muslim American identity, one that both "establishment" Muslim Americans and the United States government embraced. The latter's support came after September 11, 2001, when American national security interests required a Muslim American identity that could be a mediating force with Muslim Americans and the Muslim world. America's acceptance of ISNA as the single Muslim American identity over others came at a heavy price — racial, ethnic, and ideological segregation. Siddiqui places the emergence of this identity in the context of discourses of national security, the need for an American Islam that could be palatable to the entire American establishment (unlike the militant version of Nation of Islam in the past) and also one that could mediate with the rest of the Muslim majority countries, around the world.

Siddiqui includes 'establishment Muslims' i.e. Sunni Muslims in his definition but not *Shiis* and the Nation of Islam (N.O.I) and other groups. Other scholars such as Edward Curtis, include the N.O.I. and Sherman Jackson, two leading scholars of American Islam take a more ecumenical approach to

considering who is a 'mainstream' Muslim. As the largest membership organization of its kind in the U.S., ISNA is a paradigmatic organization of sorts, which has carved a niche for itself in the country and 'represents' American Muslims, symbolically and tries to speak for 'American Muslims'. Siddiqui argues that the presence of ISNA's president at the time, Dr. Ingrid Mattson at President Obama's inauguration signaled a level of acceptance of the organization and by proxy, of American Muslims, that has not occurred since Islam came to be recognized in the U.S.

Siddiqui's argument seems to go well with that made by Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher, whose study of Pakistani-American youth in New York City suggests that there is an ongoing 'religification' of their identity. By this, she means that in the case of these Pakistani-American youth, religion has emerged as the dominant identity both for them to identify with, and for media and mainstream American society to 'label' them. (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2009). Both Ghaffar-Kucher and Siddiqui seem to agree that this is an ongoing phenomenon, in which the actors are actively involved in creating their identity, in response to external events. While Ghaffar-Kucher places her analysis in the aftereffects of September 11, 2001; Siddiqui goes back in history and starts his analysis with the Iranian Revolution, which he argues is the defining moment, when American Muslim identity came to be defined. As Kucher reminds us, religion is being increasingly used as a 'marker of difference by mainstream in the U.S, and also the ethnic-religious groups themselves.' (2009, p.18). But the question that this brings up for me is: To what extent are the American Muslims themselves creating/ constructing these differences 'consciously,' and in response to external forces? I will explore this question and related concerns, in the next section.

The six forces shaping American Muslim identity

While the foregoing discussion has hinted at the external, environmental forces, I have not yet outlined

the combination of these external with the internal drivers – within the community – for constructing an American Muslim identity. In this section, I outline, what I see to be a combination of forces, political and otherwise, that have influenced the development of an American Muslim identity.

Internal		External
Cultural Pluralism		Global Islamic movements
Race/ ethnic relations		Global War on Terror
Youth Activism		Multi-culturalism in America
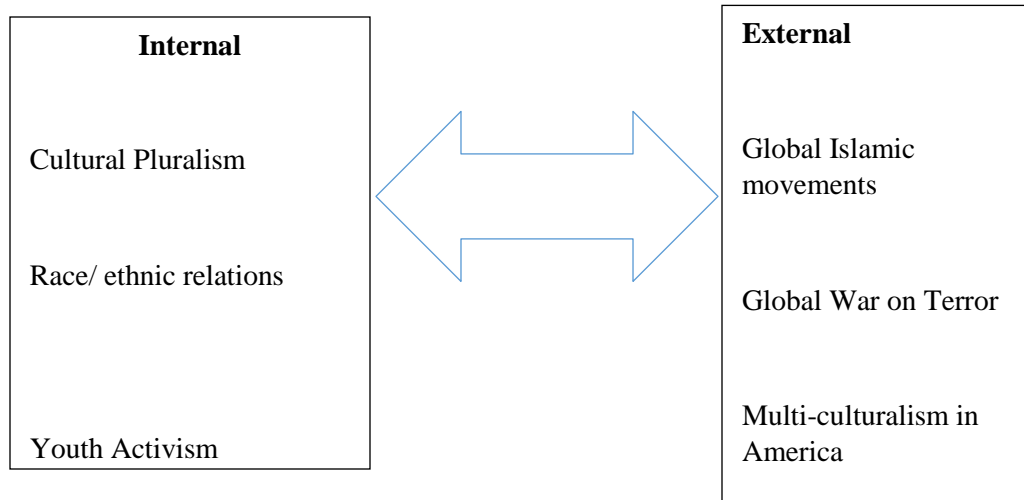
Fig 1: Forces shaping American Muslim identity

While the figure above is a heuristic and only indicative of what is possibly going on, in the various Muslim communities, the reality is far more complex than represented in this figure. A brief discussion of each follows and I will outline how I see each as shaping the formation of American Muslim identity.

Internal forces:

1. Cultural pluralism – As Siddiqui has argued, there has been an increasing trend in 'mainstreaming,' Islam among American Muslims (Siddiqui, 2014). This has meant that American Muslims have sought to make the public image of Islam acceptable, politically neutral.

This has meant encouraging greater pluralism within the idea of what it means to be an 'American Muslim.' This trend is best exemplified in the strategic decisions made by ISNA, to position itself as a mainstream, American organization that is open to influences, ideas and positions from all directions – both within the community as well as from the government.

2. Race/ ethnic relations – As several scholars have argued, the tensions between various ethnic groups in the U.S. – the South Asians, Arabs and African-Americans has shaped the identity formation of American Muslims. This continues to be one of the most important, yet under-studied aspects of American Islam.

3. Youth activism – As a predominantly young religious group, American Muslims are also witnessing youth activism – in all areas of religious and public life – whether it is the call for greater gender inclusion in community decision making, call for greater youth participation in mosque-level governance or international activism; the American Muslim youth are claiming greater right to participate in communal life. This is manifest through Muslim Students Associations, both on colleges campuses as well as local activism at the grass-roots level.

External forces:

1. Global Islamic movements – Most scholars acknowledge that the early Islamic activists in the U.S. were heavily influenced by activists from the Muslim Brotherhood, Jamat-e-Islami and other organizations (Jackson, 2005; Siddiqui, 2014). This influence continues, albeit to a smaller extent. While the priorities of these global Islamic movements are rooted in the context of the respective countries of their origin, the American Muslim groups seem to have accepted only part of the solutions offered by these global Islamic movements – towards building a 'just'

society, where they can practice Islam.

2. Global War on Terror (GWOT)– More than any other force, the GWOT created both a political rhetoric as well as policy changes that pitted ' Good Muslim' with a 'Bad Muslim' as African Academic Mahmud Mamdani has argued (Mamdani, 2004). This level of labeling and positioning of various 'Islams,' has arguably had a great impact on not only the growth of Islamic activism, but also human rights activism, with the proliferation of organizations such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), Muslim Legal Fund etc.

3. Multi-culturalism in America – As one of the most multi-cultural and multi-ethnic nations in the world, the broader cultural impact on 'American Islam,' cannot be ignored. Whether it is operating in the realm of a Capitalist framework or dealing with the challenge of maintaining an 'Islamic ethical' framework in doing business, or getting educated; American Muslims continue to be continuously faced with choices, that are arising from living in a multi-cultural society. While 'Islamic norms' by themselves are plural and encompass a global outlook, the particularities of operating in America make this choice quite daunting.

Conclusion:

I have argued in this article that American Muslim identity is a social construct and that it has been variously shaped and formed by various forces, including but not limited to the American state, American Muslim groups, individuals, ruling elite as well as the media. Further, I have suggested that we must view the 'American Muslim' identity as an ongoing negotiation, and not a static one, that is formed and clearly defined.

Further to this, I have also suggested that American Muslim practices offer us a glimpse of how

this identity is being formed and shaped. Ghaneabassiri in his essay *Normativity and American Muslim practices* (2013) says that there are various approaches to understand and frame the American Muslim experience. Whether the practices of American Muslims are to be understood through the lens of *Fiqh aqliyaat*, or the *fiqh* for Muslims in a 'foreign' country – assuming that Islam in the U.S. is but an expansion of global Islam or whether we will understand Islam in America as a 'native' or local religion and use categories of race, ethnicity etc. – are a matter of choice.

Others, such as Muqtedar Khan, another prominent scholar of American Islam suggest that American Muslim exceptionalism should be seen from the perspective of many of the immigrants, who value the freedoms that the U.S. provides. He says "They hope that in America's society, where both freedom of religion and freedom of thought are protected, a genuinely authentic Islamic revivalist and reformist movement will emerge that will not only prove that Islamic principles are truly divine, but that will also establish a path for the Muslim community worldwide to negotiate the challenges of modernity Muqtedar khan. (2012, p. 63). His argument is that this 'exceptional identity' is based on ideals of equality, fraternity and freedom of speech and religion. But as we have seen earlier, this is an ideal that is often never realized, in full. There are contestations and fights that take place, to uphold these very ideals, and there is always a relation of power – a differential in power – that can make these realizations of equality and pluralism hard, if not impossible.

Finally, it is important to remember that identity and identity politics are always complicated matters that require nuance and perspective. To look at these issues in binaries of us vs. them or in terms of set epistemologies is to miss the point, entirely. Ghaneabassiri reminds us that Western Muslims, being both Islamic and Western 'occupy a conceptual space in modern discourses between these binary categories.' This means that their lives challenges notions of 'European indigeneity and Islamic

authenticity.' Further, he points out " They also complicate the notion of diaspora because many of them are converts at home in their own lands, and others are third- and fourth-generation Western Muslims, who self-identify with no land other than where they were born and now live" (2012, p.172). This in-between space can help us re-examine our assumptions about Islam and Muslims. In particular, this unique situatedness of American Muslims can help us understand the way that America has evolved as a nation of sanctuary for persecuted populations and also how Muslims have come to evolve into their own in this country. Whether they are tenth generation African Americans in Alabama or recent immigrants to Detroit, American Muslims are supposed to belong to a new category called 'American Muslims.'

As Melucci reminds us, the identity of collectives, in cultural contexts should be seen as the product of conscious action and the 'outcome of self-reflection more than a set of given or structural characteristics' (2000, p.51). This means that the collective actor tends to construct itself within the limits of the environment and also other social relations. Melucci suggests that we need to make a conceptual leap in terms of our understanding of identity, in groups and this is true in the case of American Muslims.

I have tried to problematize the 'American Muslim identity' and looked at the vast diversity as well as internal debates, using examples of prominent debates about leadership, moral vision for the community etc. While these are specific instances of problems involving the 'administrative state', questions of identity, citizenship, ethnicity and religion have become conflated, as they often do. How these bigger tensions will be ultimately resolved remains to be seen, as this is an ongoing negotiation between and among American Muslims.

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III.   Islamic Philanthropy as a 'discursive tradition'

 Abstract

This paper seeks to offer a theoretical framework for contextualizing Islamic philanthropy during 'crisis' in the U.S. and argues that philanthropy in this context should be seen as a gradually evolving 'discursive tradition,' and not an unchanging one. Given the discourse of Islam in America being one framed in the rubric of 'crisis' and the attempts by American Muslim organizations to garner philanthropic support using this framework; it is important to understand how certain crisis situations impacted discourses of philanthropy towards this sector. I offer a Foucaldian analysis of how American Muslims negotiate this discursive tension in the realm of giving. I propose that a discursive approach could also offer us new insights into how philanthropy is being transformed, under certain institutional constraints and relations of power. This analysis will help us move beyond the binaries of an 'essentialist' Islam and a formless and shapeless religion.

Introduction

Speaking at the founding rally of the Organization for African American Unity in 1964, Malcolm X said: "The Organization of Afro-American Unity believes that the Afro American community must endeavor to do the major part of all charity work from within the community. Charity, however, does not mean that to which we are legally entitled in the form of government benefits. The Afro-American veteran must be made aware of all the benefits due to him and the procedure for obtaining them" (Malcolm X, 1964). His remarks came at a time when he had broken off from the Nation of Islam (NOI), a group that was central to his formation as a national leader, and joined mainstream Sunni Islam. With this move, he sought to build a self-reliant Black American Muslim community that was proud of its black identity, as well as being fully Muslim – i.e., integrated in the practices and discourses of global Islam. This speech is also remarkable because is marks a shift in Malcolm X's discourse of Islam, self-identity and role of Islam in the lives of American Muslims. On another level, this attribution of self-reliance towards the community meant also a growing integration with the discourses of global Islam, which he sought, following his split with the NOI. Was Malcolm X dealing specifically with the issue of charity or was there an attempt to address a bigger issue of Muslim identity and community development in this instance? Which 'tradition' did he seek to incorporate – the global Islamic one or the Black American tradition that he had grown up with?

In this paper, I seek to trace the evolution of discourses of Islamic philanthropy (I.P) among American Muslims –using the discourses of philanthropy among Black American Muslims and mainstream Sunni Muslims as two paradigmatic examples[13]. I submit that by a close critical examination of the discourses of philanthropy during crisis situations, we can understand the

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[13] I build on the analysis of Siddiqui (2014) who has proposed the linkage between identity and philanthropy as being crucial, and also the role of crisis situations in shaping philanthropy among American Muslims.

phenomenon of how these groups seek to legitimize their work, gain followers, as well as, shape their identity. I hope to show that the discourses of philanthropy have become more inclusive over a period of time and are influenced as much by cultural dimensions and institutional constraints – governmental as well as religious practices among American Muslims. These changes in the discourse of I.P. have occurred in the context of a 'crisis' mode, with the American Muslim community responding to challenges – both external and internal. Crisis can be understood as one of the 'techniques' that have been used to frame discourses of American Islamic Philanthropy. This discourse about 'Islam' and 'Philanthropy' are not based on any permanence of the categories of Islam or philanthropy, but have involved a constant process of interpretation and re-interpretation by several groups of people.

For example, the notion of philanthropy used by Antebellum slaves, to build community around themselves, as a matter of survival is distinct from the manner in which philanthropy is being positioned as a tool for 'community building' by ISNA and similar organizations in the U.S. (Ghaneabassiri, 2010). While there are similarities in the function of philanthropy, as a sociological reality, there are distinct formulations, in terms of how each discourse refers to symbols and ideas, from a particular tradition.

I will use a Foucaldian approach to 'problematize' the discourse of AIP, in conjunction with a critical perspective advocated by James Gee (2011). Problematization may be understood as that "which is concerned with how and why, at specific times and under particular circumstances, certain phenomena are questioned, analyzed, classified, and regulated, while others are not" (Deacon, 2000, p.27). I contend that my approach is genealogical in that I seek to examine how and under what conditions, did the American Muslim communities decide to create understandings of religious philanthropy in the ways that they did.

The ever- changing discourses of philanthropy among the two groups I study here have been

influenced by mainstream philanthropy, race, ethics, international affairs, 'crisis' and community building efforts. Primarily, my interest is to look at how crisis situations have caused a shift or discontinuity in these discourses. Foucault's advice is to look for 'ruptures' or 'discontinuities' in discourses as points that yield interesting insights into the transformation of discourses. By appealing to global *Ummah*[14] and a trans-national community, Malcolm X, like other Muslim leaders of his time, sought to legitimize his work among an international audience. Additionally, by appealing to Black identity and consciousness – through his speeches- he sought legitimacy internally in the U.S. A similar trend is evident in the discourses of philanthropy and community building among the most prominent Sunni Muslim group today – Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). Foucault further reminds us that discursive practices systematically "can define the objects of which they speak" (1972, p.49). The very definition of what it means to be 'Muslim,' has varied and as we will see in this paper, this has been related to the legitimacy of the institutions that were the torchbearers of 'Islamic' legitimacy in America.

What is 'Islam' and a 'discursive tradition'?

Is there one 'Islam' or various 'Islams'? This question has been investigated by scholars in many different ways. While those who focus on the 'essentials,' of the religion focus on the 'five pillars,' of Islam and reject almost everything else – tradition, history, culture and all artefacts that come with it could be the first group (Ghaneabassiri, 2010). The second group is composed of people who consider 'Islam,' to be located in the local practices, traditions and values of a geography and culture. In this view, there isn't just one 'Islam,' but rather several 'Islams,' that are present throughout the world, in varying shapes and forms. So, there is no need, this second group would argue, for one 'standardized'

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[14] Ummah refers to a global Islamic community, as understood as an 'Islamic brotherhood,' rather than a 'nation,' as we understand it today. For more, see Ernst and Martin (2010) and Euben, R (2013)

Islam – for instance, coming out of Saudi Arabia or other spiritual centers. They make allowance for the learning, wisdom and traditional components of Islam.

Between these two extreme ways of looking at 'Islam,' can we learn everything there is, or explain all the manifestations of Islamic practices? Is it possible to suggest a third and possibly better way to think of 'Islam' this is to look at it as a gradually evolving tradition? Talal Asad has made this argument, calling for looking at both the 'embodied' and 'discursive tradition,' in Islam, as a way to examine its evolution (Asad, 1986). For this purpose, Asad argues that tradition is an important component of our analysis. His suggestion is to look at how discourses of tradition change over time and how these impact practices.

Before we undertake an analysis of the discourse of philanthropy among American Muslims, it is imperative to understand what is a 'discursive tradition.' Talal Asad, a scholar who has worked in the Foucaldian tradition says: "An Islamic discursive tradition is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present. Clearly, not everything that Muslims say and do belongs to an Islamic discursive tradition. Nor is an Islamic tradition in this sense necessarily imitative of what was done in the past" (1986, p.14). My analysis of the texts, discourses of these two large groups is based on the assumption of there being a constant evolution of discourses and practices of Islam and not an 'essentialist' understanding of Islam or Muslim societies. I seek to also understand the role of tradition and reason within these discourses, and whether reason plays a public role in mediating between these discourses, as this is central to the analysis of a changing discursive tradition. Preliminary survey of the discourses of major organizations suggests that tradition is being reworked and reimagined among American Muslims, in a very reflexive and deliberative manner. I will discuss this in later sections.

This discursive positioning of I.P. is following the argument of Talal Asad, who has called for an anthropology of Islam that treats it as a 'discursive tradition', and not an unchanging analytical concept. Asad suggests that in their representation of "Islamic tradition" Orientalists and Anthropologists have ignored the role of reasoning and argument surrounding traditional practices. It is only recently that scholars have started examining the role of tradition and traditional leaders, *Ulama*, in the process of adjudicating the process of interpreting between competing discourses and using their reason in this process (Zaman, 2002). Asad points to the distinction made by Abdallah Laroui, who has differentiated 'tradition as structure' from 'tradition as ideology'. Asad further contends that the process of winning someone over to follow your traditional process involves reasoning and not just force, and it is a part of Islamic discursive tradition. He says "Power and resistance, are thus intrinsic to the development and exercise of any traditional practice" (1986, p.77). This follows from the fact that different styles of reasoning have followed different historical eras and each has fought its own battles, to survive. The idea that traditions are essentially homogenous is a wrong idea, he points out.

This approach of treating Islam as a practice oriented religion is crucial for my argument, as it enables us to place philanthropy in the context of how American Muslims themselves have used philanthropy for various purposes – community building, preserving their religion and culture as well as political activism. By tracing the changes of these discourses genealogically, we can understand how American Muslim organizations have understood the role of philanthropy as well as their own place in the American landscape. This is not to undermine the role of theology or interpretive practices. Orthodoxy is as relevant in this process as is Orthopraxy. In the case of Islam, one can argue that one informs the other, in a dialectical process. Following Foucault's suggestion of not relying on 'cultural totalities,' of world-view, or ideal types, I have sought to work through the problem before me, using practices of philanthropy and the discourses that form them, as my starting point (Foucault, 1969).

Ghaneabassiri (2010) has argued for understanding this development in his book *A History of Islam in America*, where he contends that the descendants of African slaves- who were often Muslims- had preserved the early Islamic traditions, which their forebears had practiced, in a form that had amalgamated both Islamic and non-Muslim traditions. He gives the example of *Saraka* or rice cakes given by women in Georgia as one such example. The syncretic evolution of practices and at times, paradigmatic shift in understandings of philanthropy can unpack much for us. This facet of I.P. may offer us new perspectives of looking at Islam in America too.

Further, I contend that since philanthropy is spoken of as one of the most 'American' virtues that there is, its study in the context of American Muslim NGOs can give us insights into how American Muslim identity is being shaped and also how American Muslim organizations are conceptualizing their role in American society. By 'virtue' I am referring to a commonly understood standard of 'good.' Given the proliferation of voluntary action, philanthropy in all sectors of public life, a critical examination of the discourse of philanthropy is crucial, to examine whether these claims are, in fact, actually true.

I am using the definition of religion as proposed by Clifford Geertz. He defines religion as a 1) "Set of symbols which acts to 2) Establish powerful, persuasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by 3) formulating concepts of a general order of existence and 4)Clothing these concepts with such an aura of factuality that 5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." (Geertz, 1973, p.90). This definition is broad enough for our purposes and also narrow enough to leave out certain formulations and practices that may not be considered 'religion.'

I use the changing discourses of philanthropy as articulated by: 1. Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and 2. Black American Muslim groups such as Nation of Islam (NOI) and Imam

Warith Deen (WD) as examples to illustrate the transformation of this discourse. The production of

discourses and knowledge about Islamic Philanthropy are bound by various structures of power, as Asad

reminds us. And these do not differ according to the essential character of any particular religion, but

according to the "historically changing systems of discipline" (1986, p.5).

Aim of study

I seek to contextualize the changing discourse of Islamic philanthropy (I.P.) in America and

show that it continues to evolve as a 'discursive tradition.' How philanthropy is practiced and how

discourses about it are created and managed tells us a lot about the changing dynamics within the

community of practice. I argue that a close examination of American Islamic Philanthropic discourses

during crisis situations can shed light on broader dimensions of how American Muslims make sense of

aspects of belonging and community development. This analysis of Islamic philanthropy in the U.S. also

offers us a close perspective of how American Islam is evolving, in all its plurality. Finally, this exercise

will also help us re-examine the categories that are often used to describe and classify American

Muslims. As Foucault suggests, this can help us "question those divisions or groupings with which we

have become so familiar" (1969, p.22). The unities of categories such as religion, race, ethnicity and

their conflation in the case of the discourse of 'American Islam,' can be viewed through an examination

of Islamic philanthropy. For a comparison of how I propose to analyze traditional discourse and

discursive tradition, see Fig.1, below.

Traditional discourses of Islamic philanthropy	Discursive traditions of Islamic philanthro
1. *Zakat* as a religious obligation, towards othe Muslims 2. Charity for local individuals and family 3. Purely religious motifs and symbolism	1. *Zakat* as a 'choice' 2. Global humanitarianism 3. Non-religious and cultural positionin *zakat*

Fig 1: The transition from traditional to a more 'discursive' formation of traditional Islamic philanthropy

Methods and sampling strategy

I am using Discourse Analysis as a method and Qualitative research methodology as my guiding framework. As Taylor and Bogdan suggest, this refers in the broadest sense to "research that produces descriptive data – people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior" (1998, p.7). This means focusing on how people attach meanings to things in their lives. As my research questions revolve around how forces in mainstream American society impact American Muslims' understanding and practices of charity and philanthropy[15], this approach seems appropriate. As Denzin and Lincoln further suggest, "Qualitative research also involves a range of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, cultural texts, historical and visual texts" (2008, p.2).

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[15] I will use the word 'philanthropy' to refer to charity and philanthropy in Islam (*zakat*), henceforth. While charity refers to short-term emotion driven giving, philanthropy is considered more 'strategic' and 'scientific' in approach to solving social problems.

In this paper, I compare the changing discourse of philanthropy towards culture/ educational institutions among two large groups of American Muslims – the Black American Muslims represented by Imam WD and 'Cultural pluralists' represented by Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the largest membership based group of Muslims in North America. The Black Muslims comprise over one-third of the American Muslim population, by some estimates (Ghaneabassiri, 2010). As such, I argue that between these two large groups, they can form a representative sample of the racial/ethnic groups that comprise the dominant group – Asian and Arab Muslims and African American Muslims, respectively.

Data Collection methods

I use a variety of existing primary and secondary resources that will help me map the changing discourses of philanthropy in the organizations under study. Some of the sample documents I use include:

- Historical data including speeches.

- Websites of organizations

- Dissertations or books about the organizations and key personalities

- Biographical information about key personalities

Findings and discussion:

Crises are key to understanding how philanthropic discourses in the American Muslim community transformed. I argue that with each of these crises offer us what Hermann et al (2001) have called Occasions for Decision (OFD), during which, the American Muslim community responded in different ways. I will trace the changing discourses of philanthropy among the Black Muslims and the mainstream

Sunni Muslims – as two paradigmatic groups, to map the changing discourses.

I will briefly describe how each event was perceived by the Black Americans and the mainstream Sunni Muslims and examine the change of discourses in each group separately in the following section. My attempt goes beyond a purely 'dramatic narrative' of events and actors, and looks at the analytical import of what occurred. This strategy is key, if we are to avoid 'essentializing' about groups or communities, as Asad has argued (Asad, 1986). This also implies that historical and other forces acting on the events are of equal import, besides the belief system of these groups. The political economy, history of internal discourses, power relations with the government and other social groups all become important, in this perspective.

The key events that are of interest to my research are:

1. The First Gulf War of 1990

2. The attacks of September 11, 2001

I chose these two events as they represent moments of deep concern, anxiety, as well as, a lack of internal cohesion within the Muslim community. The reactions of each group was varied; and within the groups, there were various interpretations of how best to react to the situations. They were no doubt very significant events, both in terms of the scale itself and also the import they had for how Muslims were perceived in the U.S. after these events occurred. They could be considered 'crises' by the definition of Boin et al., (2010), as situations where the fundamental values, organization structure, or its existence is threatened.

Further, these two events represent a deep involvement of American Muslims in political activism in the U.S. as Ghaneabassiri (2010) has argued. He suggests that post-Iranian Revolution,

American Muslims had started to get increasingly involved in the political life in America, hoping to influence the ethical framework of American political and social life. Siddiqui (2014) argues that this was a result of the choices placed before the community, at large – whether to be isolationists or to get actively involved in the public and political life of the U.S. Most American organizations chose the latter, he contends.

Ghaneabassiri suggests that many leaders such as Abdul Rauf saw Islam as offering an ethical tradition and an alternative to the capitalist model in place. Ghaneabassiri suggests that despite calls for unity during the 1950s and 1960s, there was no great urgency to 'unite' in America, as the disunity did not threaten their existence. But these events, as we will see, challenged this assumption.

Let us look at each in turn and briefly examine how discourses of Islamic philanthropy changed, as a result of the crisis.

1. **First Gulf War of 1990** :

The First Gulf War was a key moment for American Muslims, as it was a moment when American Muslims were able to assert their voice. Though there were differing interpretations of how the U.S. and American Muslims should react to this aggression by Saddam Hussein against Kuwait, the reaction by each of the groups examined here was quite different.

The grassroots Muslim sentiment did not support American intervention in the Middle East, as these interventions were seen as being politically driven and not in the best interest of the people in those countries. ISNA decided to side with the broader grassroots sentiment among American Muslims that opposed any intervention, in effect earning the wrath of its Gulf donors, who wanted the American Muslims to lobby their government for intervention, argues Siddiqui (2014). He further says: "At a time

when ISNA desperately needed funding, it had to choose between endorsing American intervention in the war, as supported by its Gulf donors, and siding with Muslim Americans' opposition to such intervention. In so doing, ISNA had to choose between pragmatism and idealism. ISNA stayed true to its values and its Muslim American constituents by opposing American military involvement in this conflict. In the short run, this decision further devastated the organization's financial situation" (2014, p.105). One can also see how ISNA invoked Islamic tradition, of opposing injustice, while opposing this war.

Interestingly, both ISNA and Imam WD, despite diametrically opposing actions and arguments invoked Islamic traditions, to justify their actions. This is an interesting analytical point for us to consider. If 'tradition,' is considered unchanging and an inviolable construct, how is it that both these parties managed to take their position, with the concomitant arguments; while invoking their followers to follow them? One possible explanation is that there is enough breadth and depth in the Islamic tradition for the followers of each tradition to invoke instances where a particular incident or moral precedent exists, to justify current actions.

Related to the diversity of opinion within the Islamic tradition for following divergent actions. In the case of American Muslims, improvisational practices in acts of prayer – such as making Wudu, or the ablution – before prayers are instances of how various traditions have been 'improvised,' depending on the needs of the practitioners (Ghaneabassiri, 2012).

However, in the long run, this long-term support of the grassroots is what made the organization the leading voice for American Muslims, argues Siddiqui. Similarly, Ghaneabassiri (2010) points to the historical background for why Muslims reacted negatively to American intervention in the war. While they appreciated Saddam's support of Palestine, there was awareness about the hypocrisy of Saddam's

effort to Islamize Iraq, he says. Further, groups such as ISNA saw through the efforts of the US to reinforce its hegemony in the Middle East through this war, calling for the US to re-evaluate its policies in the region. This debate is still ongoing, with most 'grass-roots' Muslims opposing any American intervention in the Middle East, for ethical reasons.

The reaction by the Black Muslims, as represented by Imam Warith Deen (WD) was quite the opposite, as he sought to support the war efforts. Siddiqui quotes him as saying:

" We have Islamic interest first, and then other interests come second, not before Islamic interests. . . . I am comfortable with *the decision which Saudi Arabia has taken to defend its borders and to accept the support of its friends — not only America but other friends, Muslim nations and non-Muslim friendly nations." (Imam WD, 2011).*

What did Imam WD mean by 'Islamic interests'? Was he referring to a global Islamic identity or one specific to his group? Putting his quote in context, one can see that he was using a global framing of Islam and Muslims. While doing so, he also asserted the rights of Saudi Arabia to align with its regional allies, in an effort to garner support to do what was right in its best interests. Also, by making the discourse about 'Islam', and not specific nation-states, he seems to have consciously framed the debate about higher moral principles, rather than national interests.

It seems like he also invoked the Muslim tradition of standing up for other Muslims, in times of crisis, as a motif. For example, according to Imam Nawawi, there is a prophetic tradition that "Whosoever removes a worldly grief from a believer, Allah will remove from him one of the griefs of the Day of Judgment (Book of Nawawi, nd)". This Hadith (prophetic tradition) is often invoked by religious scholars as well as lay people, when they seek to garner support for their cause. In the case of Imam WD, his positioning of the crisis in the Gulf as a 'Muslim,' crisis is an interesting framing to

analyze.

One should also further note that Saudi Arabia houses the holiest places of Islam – Mecca and Medina, and hence this framing could potentially have been made to appeal to the religious authority of Saudi Arabia, to gain legitimacy for its actions. Ghaneabassiri quotes Yvonne Haddad as saying that Imam WD was the only Muslim leader of significance who endorsed the American war in Iraq. This is significant in itself and occurred, according to Haddad, as Imam WD wanted to assure the Saudis and Kuwaitis that the U.S. is not at a war against Islam (Ghaneabassiri, 2010).

If one analyzes it from a purely instrumental or power lens, this position of Imam WD resonated with his need to gain legitimacy internationally, as he was coming out of the shadows of the Nation of Islam and into his own. Further, speaking of the role of Islam and knowledge in the lives of Arabs, Imam WD said: "Arabs, our esteemed models in Islamic history, before you were saved and raised up to glory by your religion, by Islam which is also my religion, you had your lands and you had your governments. Remember what occurred to transform your life and caused the eyes of other nations to look up to you was not your past glory, but it was your transformed lives. It was your religion, your Islam" (Imam WD, 1981). This quote reflects not only the vision of continuity in his discourse, but also the central role of Islam in teaching contemporary American Muslims the path to glory.

Siddiqui contends that there was a differing interpretation of how philanthropy and philanthropic support towards their organizations would be affected by this public position. While ISNA paid a heavy (though short-term) price for opposing the war, Imam WD sought to gain legitimacy as well as philanthropic support for his causes through this public support of the First Gulf War. While this could be seen as a purely pragmatic attempt to gain legitimacy, Imam WD's earlier position on American foreign policy and Muslims' participation in wars seems to be a more moral stand. In response to a

question from a Muslim about whether Muslims should participate in wars to defend America's foreign policy, he is reported to have said: "I think a citizen, a good citizen, would feel himself threatened by any attacks from outside or from inside. It's nothing but common sense for us to lend our support to our nation against those things that seek to weaken, undermine or destroy it" (Imam WD, 1981). But he also goes on to say that this decision should be made by each individual and it is not right for any organization to tell them what to do.

The shift from this earlier position in 1981 to a more hardline one, supporting America's active intervention can be seen as a change in discourse of the Black American movement, especially that of Imam WD to gain a wider legitimacy within the Muslim world. While other groups such as the Nation of Islam (NOI) remained on the fringes of the American Muslim movements, Imam WD sought to actively integrate Black American Muslims both with the American mainstream as well as the wider Muslim world, around the world. Shariq Siddiqui also makes this argument, in analyzing the 'mainstreaming' of American Muslim organizations (Siddiqui, 2014).

The key shift in the Black American community has been the move from radical Black Nationalism towards a softer, mainstream or Orthodox Muslim identity. Ghaneabassiri argues that as the African Americans' lot gradually improved, their separatist, nationalist ideology of the NOI toned down and finally eliminated when Warith Deen Mohammed turned it into a Sunni Organization in 1975-76. While this was not an entirely easy process, since giving up the NOI's racist rhetoric also meant giving up its core identity, the process seems to have been all but completed. While the Black Muslims sought legitimacy and philanthropic support from international organizations, ISNA sought legitimacy and financial support from the local American Muslim community. We will examine how their respective discourses sought to accomplish this.

2. September 11, 2001 and its aftermath:

Several scholars have written thoughtfully about the attacks of September 11, 2001 and its impact on American Muslims (Ghaneabassiri, 2010; Esposito, 2011; Safi, 2005; Ernst, 2008). While there is widespread agreement that this act, in effect brought about a great amount of Islamophobia and greater misrepresentation about Islam in the public sphere, it is not often seen as the event that also altered how Islamic philanthropy is perceived in the U.S. Post 9./11 the PATRIOT ACT was passed, which gave sweeping powers to various agencies of the U.S. to crack down on any activities that were deemed harmful to the American national interests. This included clamping down on organizations that provided 'material support' to terrorist groups or individuals, anywhere in the world. This led, these scholars suggest, to not only a curtailment of civil liberties, but also clamping down on several Muslim NGOs that functioned for several years, carrying out work both domestically and internationally (Harb and Haddad, 2014; Singer, 2008; Alterman, 2008).

While ISNA and its member organizations sought to control the damage done to the image of Islam and Muslims in general, they also released certain *fatwas* (religious rulings). One such example drew parallels between the *Qur'anic* injunctions about the sanctity of life and how the terrorists who attacked the twin towers had violated it. This *fatwa* also reminded Muslims that any attack on a civilian can be considered unlawful and should not receive any support from righteous Muslims. This fatwas was signed by many prominent leaders who were part of ISNA. More than 145 Muslim organizations endorsed this fatwa. The government of the U.S. sought to limit the damage to U.S. national security, through the passage of the PATRIOT ACT, many scholars and thinkers have pointed out that this had serious effects on how philanthropy towards Muslim institutions was perceived (Jamal, 2009).

President Obama chose this occasion to remind his audience in Cairo that the U.S. government

would take all steps to ensure that American Muslims can pay their *zakat*, with ease. He said "Freedom of religion is central to the ability of peoples to live together. We must always examine the ways in which we protect it. For instance, in the United States, rules on charitable giving have made it harder for Muslims to fulfill their religious obligation. That's why I'm committed to working with American Muslims to ensure that they can fulfill *zakat*" (Obama, 2009). One could analyze this speech in much depth, as it was pegged as a 'new beginning' with the Middle East. Why did he have to do this, in a foreign country, to an audience who were not voting for him? One can see that this was partly to win the Public Relations battle, post-George W Bush's era, where Mr. Bush had been seen as a 'crusader' against Islam. Further, one can perhaps see the logic of his remarks in trying to address domestic concerns of Muslims in America – who were fearful that the administration is against them. This was a discursive strategy, which was aimed at both domestic as well as foreign audiences.

While American Muslims were reeling from the shock of the attacks of 9/11 and trying to make sense of what had occurred, this shift in the establishment discourse towards Islam did help, at least momentarily. But as we see, immediately following the passage of the PATRIOT Act and Executive Order 13224 and anti-terrorist funding guidelines from the Treasury Department, there was a strong reaction towards Muslim philanthropic sector. Zahra Jamal, in her policy report titled *Ten Years after 9/11* for the Washington D.C. think tank ISPU, suggests that there was up to a 50 percent drop in donations to Muslim humanitarian relief organizations post 9/11 (Jamal, 2011). The discourse around I.P. became couched in the 'war on terror' and was primarily influenced by a 'securitization discourse.' American Muslim organizations sought to distance themselves from those entities and militant ideologies that had brought about these violent acts, but the aftereffects of this violent act lingers, as the Treasury Department has come up with new guidelines for those wanting to support organizations and individuals in 'troubled spots', from an ethical or humanitarian perspective. The discourse of I.P. that

the Treasury Department has used since 911 has not changed much and one can see how public policies made with this framing have had a deleterious impact on how I.P. is perceived in policy circles.

Islamic Society of North America's turn from parochialism to 'cultural pluralism'

Shariq Siddiqui argues in his dissertation that President Obama's opening statement during his inaugural address on January 20, 2009 that the U.S. today is "nation of Christians and Muslims, Hindus and Jews" with the president of Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) Ingrid Mattson present as a significant landmark in the American Muslim community's history. Shariq contends that ISNA has had to embrace a broad identity, of being 'cultural pluralists' as it had to gain legitimacy within the American Muslim community, which is incredibly diverse. "Because of the incredible diversity within the Muslim American community, ISNA needed to embrace a broad identity for internal legitimacy. This internal legitimacy was vital in order to counter the Islamophobia that impeded external legitimacy" he adds (2014, p.4). This move towards embracing cultural pluralism could be seen as both a pragmatic move, as well as an effort to consciously reinterpret notions of diversity within Islam, which seek to honor diversity of opinion.

One can also see how the moves by ISNA leaders to try to win their intellectual freedom during crisis points such as the First Gulf War and subsequent incidents helped win a strong base of support. This positioning of the organization is key for understanding how ISNA navigated differences. ISNA used a combination of both religious as well as practical, organizational discourses to justify its stand, in this instance. The original positioning of ISNA in the 1950s and 60s was of an organization that was ambiguous about the concept of an 'American Muslim' identity. One can argue that this identity possibly did not exist, as many of the students and young professionals who were part of the Muslim Student Association (MSA) – the precursor to ISNA- were of immigrant origin and imagined going back

to their home countries after their education in the U.S. was complete. Many of these itinerant travelers who stayed back and found jobs in the U.S. did not imagine living here, for a long time. It took several decades for an 'American Muslim consciousness' to emerge among this group and ISNA was among the first to make a progressive shift towards integration, if not assimilation into the American social fabric.

Following the successful annual convention in 1997, when more than twenty one thousand American Muslims showed up, Siddiqui said: "The fact that the organization did not represent all of the Muslim American community, particularly a large number of African-American Muslims, did not deter the leaders of ISNA to declare success" (p.135). This was possible because of the moral and practical legitimacy that ISNA enjoys, argues Siddiqui. The fact that African American Muslims have sought to form their own organizations indicates that there are unresolved tensions with the new immigrant communities and also an element of power-sharing that needs to be addressed, at the highest level. While symbolically, ISNA has done much to address this – with the appointment of a woman as the President – and also by having various debates and discussions about race and ethnicity at the ISNA conferences, there is an understanding that much more needs to be done.

Black Muslims: From Isolationism to integration

The Nation of Islam (NOI) was one of the most prominent and powerful American Muslim groups in the 1950s and 60s. NOI sought to create a uniquely black identity, and also co-opted notions of 'mainstream' Islam i.e., Sunni Islam for its own legitimacy. While several of its core beliefs were contradictory to mainstream 'authentic' Sunni or Shii Islam, its leaders sought to gain legitimacy for the organization and its message by aligning with other Muslim groups internationally and by also how they positioned organizational discourse regarding race, self-reliance and philanthropy.

Race, ethnicity, religion and philanthropy have come together historically in the discourse of

American Islam. As Sherman Jackson reminds us, though some scholars and activists argue that Islam does not 'do race' Islam does 'do reality.' In dealing with the practical realities of race relations in the U.S., American Muslims come face to face with their own deeply held misconceptions and prejudices, he argues (Jackson, 2008). Further, Jackson challenges the dominant discourse of Islam among immigrant Muslims, who assume that the mental frameworks and models that they bring – that are rooted in the realities of Muslim lands – are treated as primary object of Muslim religious contemplation, while ignoring the Blackamerican contexts. As he further argues, the role of Sunni Islam would be offer the Blackamerican Sunni Islam a mirror to look at, in terms of models of discourse and intellectual framing of concepts. "The point, in other words, is not to go back in search of cut-and-dried solutions but to benefit from tradition's authority and intellectual capital, while heightening the likelihood that one's own deliberations are not derailed by the allure of undisciplined compromise or crass, "religionized pragmatism" (2008, p.4).

The Prophet's last sermon is often cited as an authoritative text for claiming that Islam does not 'do race', but Jackson argues that even if in principle this is true, practical realities in America and other parts of the world dictate that we be sensitive to the idea of racial hatred and its ugly manifestation. The following passage from the Prophet's last sermon is illustrative of this idea:

> *"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor does a black have any superiority over white except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves."*

While this passage and its meaning have been used to create this race neutral discourse, at various points in American Muslim history, Muslims themselves have sought to create counter-discourses that have sought to legitimate their position in the U.S. based on their race. As Ghaneabassiri shows in his book *A History of Islam in America* (2010), one of the most egregious forms of discrimination against Muslims or "Oriental" immigrants in the early 18th century was in the area of naturalization. These groups were not allowed to purchase land and The Naturalization Act of 1790 granted citizenship only to "aliens being free white persons". This further changed to 'aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent' in 1870 and it took more than a century for Muslims to get full rights to citizenship. Ghaneabassiri says "In response to legal challenges to their eligibility for American citizenship, both Syrians and Indians relied on contemporary ethnological classifications of race to define themselves as white" (2010, p.153). There were various attempts to claim this proximity between the immigrants' racial identity with those of the dominant white race in America. Religion played a part in this process contends Ghaneabassiri, since Syrians and others presented themselves as a racial category and not necessarily a religious category. The 'Muslim' identity of many of these people was played down or altogether kept a secret. He points to a key text Origin of the Modern Syrian (1914) written by Kalil A Bishara, a Syrian Christian, who argued that because of the Caucasian origins of the Syrians, they are eligible for American citizenship and share many of the values that America stands for. Ghaneabassiri further argues that in this phase, ethnicity played a far greater role than did religion in how American Muslims articulated their demands for inclusion at the national stage. They also formed self-help associations to organize their efforts and counter the government's challenges to their rights as U.S. citizens.

The gradual shift from isolationism to integration with mainstream 'Sunni Islam' can be seen as a confluence of various forces –both domestic and international. Ghaneabassiri suggests that this move occurred as the American state started to downgrade the importance with which it saw the NOI. But I would suggest that perhaps a combination of factors such as the death of Malcolm X, efforts by Imam WD to join mainstream Islam and his message to his followers to break from the racist ideologies of the Nation, and also growing internationalization of American Islam contributed to the Black American Muslim leaders recognizing that there is a need for greater collaboration and integration with discourses at the international level. The growing influence of petro-dollars as a source of revenue for American Muslim groups should also not be discounted. As the Saudis and Kuwaitis started to send missionaries and started to fund mosques and other institutions in the U.S., they sought allies, who would stand by their messaging, Ghaneabassiri seems to suggest.

As Siddiqui argues "Another important overture was to reach out to Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. Many within ISNA considered believers of the Nation of Islam to be heretical and non-Muslims. By the late 1990s, Farrakhan started making overtures to ISNA. He hired a Sunni Imam, Shaikh Tijani, as an advisor. Ahmed ElHattab was assigned to serve as liaison between Farrakhan and ISNA" (2014, p.157). Despite Farrakhan's conversion to Sunni Islam in 2000, there was not much progress towards reconciling the differences between ISNA and Nation of Islam. Siddiqui also suggests that the efforts on part of ISNA to help Warith D Muhammad to set up an organization, as he was just a spiritual leader without an organizational structure, failed.

The five discontinuities in American Muslim philanthropy:

The manner in which philanthropy has been understood and practiced among American Muslims

has gone through various stages of evolution. These can be considered 'discontinuities,' that emerged during each time period. These rules of formation form the 'archive' Foucault referenced in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969). The archive in this sense means the "discursive mechanism which limit what can be said, in what form and what is counted as worth knowing and remembering" (Mills, 1997, p. 57). In the case of American Muslim communities, various factors such as slavery, changes in immigration laws, community in-fighting between various groups for domination and gradual emergence of some sense of cohesion – in terms of identity – can be counted as being part of this 'archive.'

I have outlined five major periods of discontinuities in the table below (Fig. 2). Each one corresponds roughly to five periods that are briefly explained here:

1. Antebellum America – this was an era, when Islam was 'lost' in America. Ghaneabassiri in his book *A History of Islam in America* (2010) argues that during this phase, the predominantly Muslim slaves who were brought from West Africa could not practice their religion and were either forced to practice it in secret or give it up, altogether; adopting the faith of their masters. However, he has shown that certain practices, in particular, charitable practices survived in a very different form.

2. Early 20th century – This phase saw the emergence of groups of people and communities that sought to establish themselves in the U.S. and the 'sojourner' mindset was dropped. As Ghaneabassiri (2010) has shown, this phase was crucial for the formation of Islamic Centers, community organizations etc.

3. The 1960s era – This phase saw the most powerful movements among American Muslims including the Nation of Islam and the establishment of the Muslim Students Association etc.

These came about as a reaction to various movements and ideas present at that time, including the Civil Rights movement.

4. 2001 – This phase, starting in 2001 was largely shaped by an assimilationist attitude, with ISNA leading the way in promoting 'cultural pluralism.'

5. 2014 – The gradual evolution of cultural pluralism among American Muslim groups has made it 'mainstream' and the dominant mode of organizing social and political life. This has led to calls for 'strategic' philanthropy and participation in greater civic initiatives, among American Muslim communities.

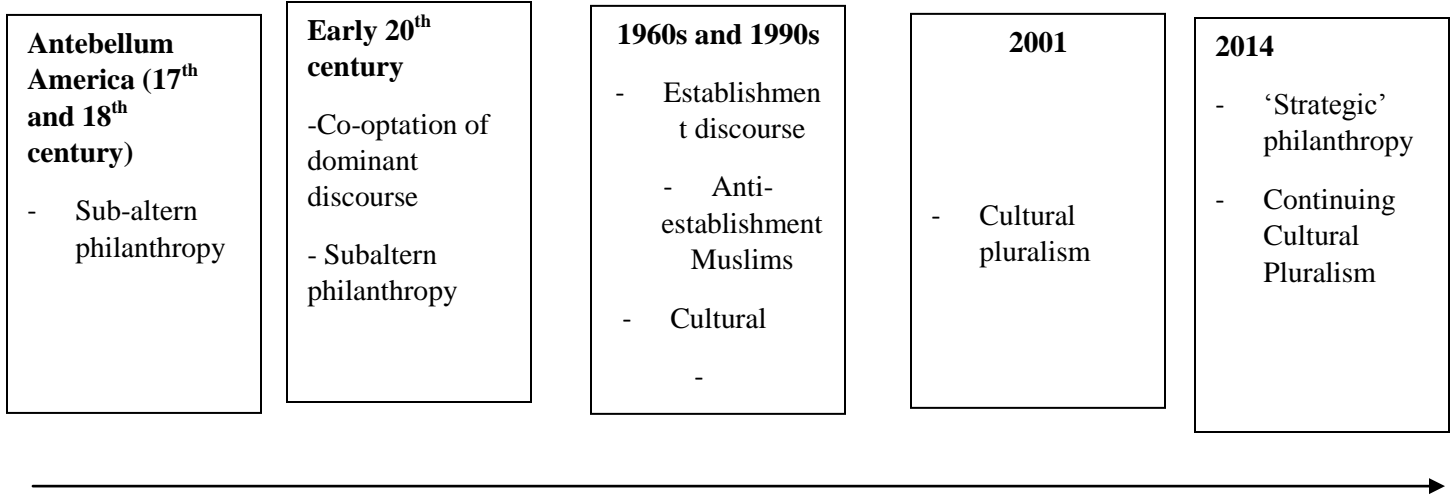| **Antebellum America (17th and 18th century)** - Sub-altern philanthropy	**Early 20th century** -Co-optation of dominant discourse - Subaltern philanthropy	**1960s and 1990s** - Establishment discourse - Anti-establishment Muslims - Cultural -	**2001** - Cultural pluralism	**2014** - 'Strategic' philanthropy - Continuing Cultural Pluralism

Fig 2: Change in Dominant discourses of philanthropy among American Muslims

Three formulations of philanthropic tradition among American Muslims

From the empirical examples examined above, it appears that tradition has been applied by American Muslim groups in many different formulations. While the *Ulema* or religious leaders, following their respective legal traditions have sought to ground Islamic practices in the U.S. in their own way, the leaders of social movements, NGOs, and those described above have tradition that has been interpretive. Asifa Quraishi, a legal expert and professor at University of Wisconsin, Madison has argued that Islamic law in the U.S. has evolved in a manner, similar to that of U.S. Constitutional Law (Quraishi, 2007). This interpretive character of Islamic practices is what lends the practice of Islamic philanthropy to varying interpretations, by various groups of people.

While tradition is often seen as the mindless repetition of rituals that lead to incompetence, Talal Asad argues that this could be quite the opposite. In the case of traditional Islamic learning or socializing, for instance, he says that 'repetition of the same can often lead to competence, in the case of learning how to 'behave,' in the proper manner, for instance' (Asad, 2014).Similarly, Alasdair MacIntyre argues that tradition is always part of any 'system' of thought, even if it is liberalism, which focuses its attention on critiquing tradition. MacIntyre argues in *After Virtue* that: "We are apt to be misled here by the ideological uses to which the concept of a tradition has been put by conservative political theorists. Characteristically such theorists have followed Burke in contrasting tradition with reason and the stability of tradition with conflict. Both contrasts obfuscate" (1981, p. 221). He goes on to point out that all new thinking occurs in a 'tradition,' whether it is physics or medieval logic. His formulation of tradition challenges conventional understanding of the term, which is meant to be unchanging or timeless. There is very little that it timeless or eternal, MacIntyre would argue, following his logic.

Further, as MacIntyre argues, there needs to be an awareness of whether a tradition is 'alive' or 'dead' and this distinction makes all the difference: "Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict. Indeed when a tradition becomes Burkean, it is always dying or dead" (p.221). I contend that Islamic tradition is very much alive and thriving, with its internal tensions, arguments and often public spats –with other variations of traditions within the broad umbrella of what we know as 'Islam.'

Here are three key ways in which I argue tradition is being re-interpreted among American Muslim groups, in the realm of philanthropy. Each one points to a permutation of what it means to be 'Islamically' philanthropic:

1. **Islamic philanthropy as a 'negotiated reality'** - Sarah Mills points out in her book *Discourse* (1997) that groups of individuals can negotiate their position in society and garner power through one's 'interactional power,' i.e., how one can negotiate one's position through the use of linguistic power and this may well be in conflict with one's ascribed status within a group (p.84). As in the case of ISNA and the Black American groups, one can see this negotiation occurring. While ISNA was, in its formative years, opposed to aligning with the government policies – both domestic and foreign- it has, over the years, evolved into an organization that stands to garner greater legitimacy and philanthropic support, through aligning with the US government policies and positions, on many issues. This is part of the 'negotiated reality,' and can be seen as emerging out of the organization's 'interactional power.' ISNA has done this, not just as a regular non-government organization or a lobby, but as an 'Islamic' organization, whose mission is informed by its commitment to Islam and American traditions, at the same time.

2. **Tradition helping to define what is 'Islamic'** – What about current day Islamic philanthropic

practices is 'Islamic?' As the ongoing debate about the 'Islamicness' of *Daesh* (Islamic State) suggests, this is not a settled question. While a vast majority of scholars around the world have come out and denounced ISIS as nothing but an aberration and a political outcome of failed states (Iraq and Syria) (Markowe, 2014). One of the first points made in the letter issued by the Muslim scholars is "It is forbidden in Islam to issue *fatwas* without all the necessary learning requirements. Even then fatwas must follow Islamic legal theory as defined in the Classical texts" this harks back to the value of 'Islamic tradition,' in terms of defining what is 'Islamic.' On the other hand, a public intellectual and scholar such as Dr.Reza Aslan has argued that *Daesh* are indeed 'Islamic,' agreeing with the assessment of several journalists and writers such as Bob Woodard, whose Atlantic article went viral and sparked much debate[16]. 'A Muslim is anyone who claims he is one,' is Aslan's argument and this is also part of the Muslim tradition, as there is no orthodoxy, like the Catholic Church to determine what is indeed 'Islamic.' This argument goes against Talal Asad's formulation of a *discursive tradition*, since he suggests that 'not everything that Muslims say or do it Islamic.' How then is one to determine what is 'Islamic'?

Is charity towards the Red Cross by a Muslim 'Islamic' charity, in that it fulfills the obligation of religious charity, or it is something else? I contend that there are no ready-made answers to these questions. However, I would point to Islamic traditions of *ijma* or consensus and related ideas that suggest that if a group of scholars agree on an idea, then the decision is valid, from a normative and legal perspective. Keeping this in mind, we can argue that an action that is deemed 'Islamic' can be considered 'Islamic' if a group of people or scholars think it is

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[16] Kaufmann, S (2015, April 4). Reza Aslan perfectly explains what Islamophobes are getting wrong about ISIS. Salon. Retrieved from http://www.salon.com/2015/04/06/reza_aslan_isis_is_technically_islamic_but_thats_still_no_excuse_for_islamophobia/

so. If they agree that forms of charitable giving to an NGO counts as legitimate '*zakat*,' then it could be considered as such.

3.   **Re-interpretation of virtue ethics and challenge to the individualistic notions of morality** – One of the fundamental ways that Islamic ethics in general and philanthropic practices in particular have played out in American history have been in the realm of the conception of ethics. As MacIntyre has argued, enlightenment ideals posited a very individualistic morality for society, a notion that has informed 'liberal' traditions in the U.S. (MacIntyre, 1981). While religious morality in the U.S. has been based on communitarian and societal norms, one can argue that the individualistic morality has been ascendant and has been one of the fundamental bedrocks of the 'American way of life,' as scholars such as Robert Bellah have argued. Islamic ideals of virtue, community and solidarity, as seen through the efforts to 'reform' society or contribute to the social and communal life have been predicated in efforts to reinterpret Islamic norms in the American context. MacIntyre's notion that morality and virtues should be located and made sense of in the community from where they originate and not in the individuals' lives is particularly helpful in the case of American Muslims.

Conclusion

I have attempted, in this short paper, to show that Islamic Philanthropy is being interpreted as a 'discursive tradition' in the U.S.   Muslim organizations and leaders are providing new interpretive models, while working in various traditional systems. These models offer new ways of making sense of *zakat* and *sadaqa*, which go beyond the traditional ways of understanding these practices and offer avenues such as humanitarian aid, community development – for the practice of *zakat* and *sadaqa.* Discourses of giving around specific crisis events, I have argued, give us clues about how this process occurs.

The central mediating factor seems to be 'reason' and the re-interpretation of religious tradition. While traditionally, there has been a tension in how much to interpret and how much to follow 'as is', the norms of I.P., there has been a constant refrain of accommodation, interpretive practices in normative Islam.

Using two crisis situations – The First Gulf War of 1990 and the attacks of September 11, 2001 - I have also argued that the framing of I.P. among Muslims in America by Muslim leaders has been carried out in a pragmatic, yet 'traditional' manner, thus making sure that while traditional practices are respected, there is an awareness of the need for 'innovation' in this sector. While the organizational discourses from the Muslim NGOs have clashed or not resonated with other institutional or governmental discourses, there has often been a recourse to accommodation, innovation in methodologies or at times, radical re-thinking of the ethical norms in Islam, that would justify a certain course of action. The discourse of 'social justice,' has been a recurring one in Islamic philanthropy and one that both the groups under examination – ISNA and the Black Muslims have adopted, in varying degrees to justify their work and gain legitimacy.

By using the discourses of community development, Muslim cosmopolitanism and ethnic ties, both organizations and leaders have gained legitimacy among the grassroots American Muslim communities and channeled religious giving towards causes such as education, community development etc. This can be seen as a manifestation of discursive strategies deployed by the leaders and opinion makers in these groups. Their creative use of symbols, motifs and religious ideas to shape philanthropic support towards them tells us a lot about how these groups have evolved. Further, I have also argued that their strategies can tell us how American Islam is evolving.

As Haddad and Harb argue, "American Muslims are increasingly choosing to integrate into

American society through participation in and production of American culture in both civil engagement and in new, innovative ways such as political involvement, scholarship and interfaith engagement." (2014, p. 478). While there are a tiny minority of Muslims, who are very rigid in their interpretation of how they view their theology, most major American Muslim organizations – both religious and nonreligious- are open to collaborating, and working with those with whom they do not necessarily share the same theological/ epistemic lens.

As Siddiqui argues "Due to their incredible diversity, Muslim Americans are largely cultural pluralists. They draw from each other and our national culture to develop their religious identity and values. Religious identity does remain constant or uniform. Instead it is shaped by the interactions between the diverse groups that comprise Muslim America" (2014, p. 215). This interaction is key to the development of the American Muslim identity, which is taking shape, slowly (Siddiqui, 2014). In the competing and at times conflicting discourses of how Islam should be practiced, American Muslim organizations are not only contributing to the debate of the role of religion in America, but also defining their own place in the American social fabric. This debate may further our understanding of how religion, religious authority and the power to shape discourses in the public sphere occurs in contemporary America.

While the American government's efforts at regulating and managing the fall out of the militant NOI were seen as a necessity by many, the current surveillance of Muslims by NYPD and other measures to curb the civil liberties of Muslim nonprofit groups are seen as violating the basic rights of American Muslims (Harb and Haddad, 2014). One can see in these measures, a conflation of various discourses with that of philanthropy. These include discourses of: national security, identity, poverty and international affairs.

The two groups under examination in this article – the Black Muslims and ISNA responded very differently to similar situations and their internal dynamics of power were also quite distinct. While I have shown, the Black Muslims sought global legitimacy from the Muslim world, ISNA sought local legitimacy through both alliances with the American government as well as local inter-faith groups. Their respective narratives have also been towards establishing this dialogue with groups that have been instrumental in helping these groups survive and remain meaningful.

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IV.   New Styles of Community Building and Philanthropy by Arab-American Muslims

Abstract

Among Arab American Muslims, secular ethnic and humanitarian giving focused on 'results' and 'measurable impact' is displacing religiously inspired giving that is driven by 'charity' and 'love of mankind'. This trend is supported by evidence of the way donors position themselves and philanthropic organizations appeal to their donor base. The case is supported by qualitative data drawn from interviews with key informants and from trend data on giving. I propose a new model of giving based on identity and giving, using Grounded Theory methods. This model challenges our understanding about the connection between community and philanthropy and proposes that philanthropy can create 'community.'

Introduction

I seek to answer the following question in this paper: How does giving (philanthropy) create community? While the relationship between belonging to a community and how that leads to philanthropy has been well researched, the question I have posed has not received much attention. While the literature on religiously driven philanthropy is quite extensive (Schervish, 2008; Giving USA, 2013; Siddiqui, 2014, Schnable, 2013; Wiepking, P., & Bekkers, R. (2011a, 2011b; Wuthnow, 1991; Wuthnow 2004), the linkage between giving to ethnic groups and the identity factors that play into this philanthropy – especially during crisis situations- have not been explored in as much depth. I seek to fill this gap in literature, especially as it relates to American Muslims. There are some studies that attempt to do this for particular ethnic groups (Osili, 2006; Weber, 1930, Brikenhoff . J, 2008, Clark, 2004). Using Paul Schervish and Susan Ostrander's notion of philanthropy as a 'social relation' I offer a model of identity-based giving, using Grounded Theory methods, involving interviews with 10 leaders of nongovernment organizations (all U.S. based), that have a predominantly Arab-American donor base. This paper attempts a synthesis of ideas in social capital, ethnic philanthropy and community development and offers my insights grounded in research. While there is some literature on Arab and Arab-American giving (Jamal, 2005; Najam, 2006; Ibrahim and Sherif, 2008), it has not been sufficiently theorized. This paper aims to address this gap in literature.

What is the context for this discussion, one might ask? The most recent context for this debate is the concern, raised by many civil liberties activists and scholars on the perceived difficulty of many ethnic groups and minorities – of Arab origins – in fully participating in the public sphere in the U.S. A related concern is the growing 'administrative' control over charitable giving that is occurring as a result of these developments. In an important report called

Charitable Giving Among American Muslims: Ten Years after 911, by ISPU, a Washington D.C. think-tank, the lead author Dr. Zahra Jamal argues that there has been a politicization of the process of charitable giving among American Muslims and Arab-Americans.

As she suggests in the report, while American mainstream has generally accepted people of all faiths, ethnic backgrounds, there has been a gradual trend of 'othering' American Muslim participation in public life. This, she argues, has been due to several factors – including the securitization discourse, post 911 politics that often conflate religion and violence etc.

Added to this, issues of race, ethnicity and religion seem to have been conflated – yet again – post 911 and this process has had a detrimental impact on charitable giving among Arabs in America, this report suggests. "Their deeper and broader civic engagement has been met with a range of sentiments from cooperation and collaboration to suspicion of hypocrisy or terrorist leanings," she suggests. This process has impeded processes of Arab-American participation in mainstream political life, she suggests (Jamal, 2005).

On a related note, as Dr. Una Osili reminds us, the linkages between philanthropy and social capital are well understood and have been theorized by some scholars (Osili, 2008). But this process can be further developed, as Bruce Sievers has argued (Sievers, 2010). Sievers has called for looking at philanthropy as one of the key seven pillars of civil society – and one that is indispensable for its formation and sustainability. He argues, using the example of the 17th century Dutch Republic that the early formations of civil society showed a remarkable degree of philanthropy and social cohesion that continues in modern day Netherlands. Similarly, Osili tells us that "Charitable giving and other forms of civic engagement have been shown to affect norms of trust, connectedness, and the ability of individuals and communities to enhance their economic and social well-being through cooperative behavior (Putnam, 1993, 2000)" (p.89). She

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further argues that looking at the giving behavior of immigrant ethnic groups can give us insights into how they 'interact with America'. All these scholars seem to agree that there is a need for greater philanthropy and also understanding of the norms of giving, to address global problems of 'common good', though in varying degrees. They could be also seen as arguing for looking at the 'social construction' of philanthropy in America (Berger, P., & Luckmann, 1989).

While this is one perspective of looking at ethnic groups, other scholars such as Ghaneabassiri (2010) have called for a 'relational understanding' of how ethnic and religious groups have evolved and continue to evolve in the U.S., rather than setting up a binary of Americans vs. foreigners. Ghaneabassiri's argument is that this relational development of institutions, practices (including philanthropy) can inform us about the way that these communities grow, assimilate and adapt or do not adapt to American ways of life. This is a different methodological approach than the one taken by scholars such as Osili, Ostrander and Schervish. I build on the methodological approach that Ghaneabassiri offers, to locate the practices of giving among American Muslims, contextualizing its analysis in the day-to-day practices, rather than in the 'philanthropic ideals' or 'thought' that is embodied in the founding texts of Islam or other religious texts. I contend that this approach is more useful to existing problems, as there is immense plurality of thought in Islam in America, and most groups and communities have sought to interpret Islamic teachings in a 'pragmatic' manner, rather than a purely ideological way (Ghaneabassiri, 2010).

Aims of the Study

This paper seeks to understand the relationship between giving and identity and proposes a model of how giving might be occurring in crisis situations. By a close examination of the giving patterns towards 10 Arab American NGOs, I offer a theory of how giving occurs in crisis

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situations and the various responses that can occur from different types of donors, as described by the leaders of these NGOs. While this is a small, qualitative study and the results are not statistically generalizable, I believe that they are analytically generalizable across the types of organizations studied. The findings can offer us a theoretical perspective, grounded in empirical data on some of the key aspects of giving towards these types of ethnic organizations, and also help us re-examine our ideas of 'community building' and 'identity based philanthropy'.

Literature Review

Is identity the primary factor determining charitable giving? By identity I mean how someone affiliates oneself, with a group – either a religious or ethnic group. This is different from 'culture', in that identity can be self-defined and socially constructed. As Ghaneabassiri reminds us in *A History of Islam in America* (2010), early Asian immigrants to California and the Western coast in the 19th and 20th centuries defined themselves as 'white' to circumvent the radically discriminative practices that existed in the U.S. Thus, they defined their identity, in spite of their race and nationality. Further, one must admit that while identity is socially constructed, it is also border-crossing and fluid, especially in a country such as the U.S., that has immigration from almost all parts of the world. The nature of 'identities' in the U.S. also challenges ideas and notions of racial purity and identity politics that is set in stone, as Homi Bhabha reminds us when he says "the syncretic, adaptive politics and culture of hybridity questions the imperialist and colonialist notions of purity as much as it questions the nationalist notions" (1989, p.64).

Speaking of the importance of identity and identification in philanthropy, Schervish and Havens (1998) have argued that "charitable giving comes from identification and identification

comes from contact and contact comes from relationships"(p.2) This seems to suggest that social capital is key, as they argue that associational capital is indeed important for philanthropy. But how does one understand the changing contours of these relationships in a dynamic environment – where immigration, changing social and political priorities are constantly changing the needs of a society. This model assumes that identity and relationships are static and unchanging. In a similarly constructed argument, Schervish and Ostrander (1990) have argued that philanthropy can be seen as a 'social relation,' one that involves both giving and receiving, and the one-sided view of looking at it purely as a donor driven activity should not be overemphasized. Philanthropy occurs mostly in the local community, they remind us, and it seems that this fact may guide us to better understand the motivations for giving and also the role of certain organizations, in this mix.

I will cover two aspects of literature in this brief literature review: 1. Changing conceptions of 'community' 2. Mechanisms driving giving behavior. Each aspect illuminates in a specific way how ethnic and religious giving is related to notions of community. While this review is by no means exhaustive, I hope to provide a framework of ideas that will be helpful in understanding the arguments made in this paper.

1. **Different notions of 'community' and social capital among Arab-Americans**

In *Habits of the Heart (1985)*, Robert Bellah and his co-authors argue that despite the individualistic traits in most Americans, they find ways to contribute to the common good and one's community – defined in a geographic sense – and find meaning through this process. They say " We are less concerned with whether they are average than they represent

the ways in which Americans use private and public life to make sense of their lives. This is the central issue with which our book is concerned" (p.21). Further, they argue that how Americans think of community, individualism, success and happiness is often rooted in tradition and for us to understand how they are reacting to rapid changes, then closely examining these traditions is crucial. Related to these changes in individualism and communitarianism are other factors such as changing demographics, the broader political economy and how people find and sustain relationships, a fact well investigated by Robert Putnam in his classic *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2002). These changes have occurred across the board, impacting all groups, including Arab-Americans, who traditionally are said to have greater communitarian ethos. While community is being seen as receding into the background, there is a greater focus on the role of the individual and state to fix problems in the public domain. Philanthropy's role in 'fixing' problems such as security, human rights, employment and related concerns is manifest in both the increase in nonprofits and also the increased efforts of the governments to 'outsource' many of the functions to these agencies, the most famous example of this being the faith-based initiatives undertaken by the George W Bush administration (Wineburg, 2007).

In another study in Detroit, titled *Citizenship and Crisis in Detroit (2009),* the Detroit Arab American Study groups argues that there is lesser bridging (social capital outside the group members) and bonding social capital (social capital among homogenous group members) among Arab-Americans, as compared to the general population. However, they suggest that the global social capital of Arabs is higher, due to identity factors. Though immigration from the 'Arab world' is seen in monolithic terms, it comprises of over 20 countries, each with their own culture, dialect etc. so in this sense, a unified 'Arab identity' is seen as a bonding social capital, rather than the diverging cultures. This is an interesting finding for the discussion that follows, in

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terms of identifying how this social capital impacts philanthropy. How might this be changing in the context of broader changes in social capital formation in American society needs further investigation.

Other scholars have explored notions of community and its changing importance in America. Amitai Etzioni has become one of the most important proponent of communitarian ways of thinking and living. He argues for balancing the role of 'autonomy' and 'true needs' of all community members by building multiple layers of loyalty to different communities. He has argued for the development of an overarching 'community of communities' to respond to the needs of constituent communities, as those who are responsive to the needs of their members (Etzioni, 1995). Responsiveness is key to the relevance of the 'community' to its members, argues Etzioni. While there can be no perfectly responsive community, at least the contradictions can be reduced, he says. When we look at organizations such as ACCESS and National Network of Arab Americans, these come across as examples of what Etzioni was perhaps referring to.

The question of how to approach the study or examination of community is rather multi-faceted[17]. For instance, Athney et al (2013) have investigated the importance of loyalty as a factor of community formation and argued that it is key. On the other hand Frazer (1999) argues that community can also be approached as a descriptive category or set of variables, or rather as a value. What we hold as important can form a 'community.' This could be a group such as the Anti-Abortion activists or Alcoholics Anonymous. Further, Anthony P. Cohen's (1982; 1985) also offers us another perspective, saying that 'communities are best approached as

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[17] For a detailed description and other definitions of 'community' see - http://infed.org/mobi/community/

'communities of meaning'. In other words, "community" plays a crucial symbolic role in generating people's sense of belonging' (Crow and Allan 1994, p. 6).

I contend that in the case of Arab American Muslims, this construct is multi-faceted and multi-layered for various reasons, and it can best be conceptualized as a 'self-defining' construct. The self-definition of an Arab American Muslim as an 'Arab' and 'American' and 'Muslim' is crucial for their identity formation and development. In the absence of this, no matter how others define it, their role in the 'community' of 'Arab American Muslims' will be limited. I am interested in philanthropic practices of this group of people, and hence arguing that how people themselves define their reality is critical to understanding how they behave, following a social constructivist approach (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). They also remind us that to be part of a society or 'community' is to participate in its dialectic process.

This is not to say that the idea of 'community' has not been criticized. Scholars such as Stacey (1969) have given up on the notion of community as a 'non-concept' and instead sought to explore local social systems. Stacey suggests that it is networks that are of more importance, networks that offer meaning to one's life, rather than any abstract notion of 'community'. This may well be worth keeping in mind, since diaspora groups, ethnic groups that are too far away from their home 'community', may actually behave in ways that are similar to that of Stacey's conceptualization (Ionescu, 2006). But no matter how one conceptualizes 'community' and whether one believes it or not, there is no denying that groups of people, networks do operate on 'common good' problems in the public sphere – and this phenomenon is worth investigating.

Finally, we must note that ethnicity and religion – i.e., Islam in particular have been conflated in the case of Arabs. While the majority of Arabs in the U.S. are Christian, owing to

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earlier migration from the Levant, there is a mis-perception of the number of Arab-Americans in the U.S., and this has led to varying degrees of hysteria as well as Islamophobia (Haddad and Harb, 2014). Similarly, Ghaffar-Kucher reminds us that there is a 'religification of identity' among certain segments of Americans, and she uses the example of Pakistani American youth to illustrate this point. By 'religification', she means that religion is becoming the primary marker of one's identity, both by mainstream American society, as well as by the groups themselves. (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2009). She tells us that these youth imagine themselves as part of the 'Muslim community,' even though this group is increasingly ostracized by the mainstream. She seems to be suggesting that religion is becoming a signifier of attitudes and frames of reference for how people act and behave. "It softens their 'outsider' identity by giving them a place where they belong even within an inhospitable environment" (p.18). She has argued in her work that religious identity trumps other forms of identification such as race and ethnicity and this hypothesis could possibly be true, given claims made by other scholars such as Yvonne Haddad and Nazir Harb (2014).

2. Mechanisms driving giving behavior.

Robert Wuthnow (1991) has argued that religious giving is motivated by 'conviction' and 'community' similarly, Paul Schervish (1998, 2007) has called for looking at philanthropy through a 'moral biography' lens, and he is famous for his 'identification' theory of philanthropy, that claims that 'identification is the mother of all philanthropy'. He mentions five factors as being responsible for why people give: Communities of participation, frameworks of consciousness, models form youth, requests to give and discretionary resources. 'Community of

participation' ranks as the most critical one. Schervish argues that philanthropy occurs because people feel obliged in many cases to give, as an 'obligation'. Schervish has further argued that the problem of our times is not a shortage of wealth, but rather one of managing the surplus – at least in the industrialized West – and this will lead to questions of 'meaning' and related substantive aspects of philanthropy. Rather than asking how wealth can be created, Schervish has argued that many millions of people will be on the lookout for 'ideal' ways to spend, so as to create meaning for their lives.

While these scholars have explained how identity shapes philanthropy, their models and theories assume identity to be a static, unchanging construct. I seek to challenge this notion of identity and argue that in a crisis situation, the very idea of identity can undergo a shift and there can be a radical rethinking of how people think of what their 'community' is. This perspective and insights can offer us new ways of looking at identity and philanthropy and question the many taken for granted assumptions of philanthropy and identity.

Similarly, in trying to draw out the motivation of giving among different faith-based groups in Netherlands, Carabain and Bekkers (2011) have argued in their paper *Explaining Philanthropic behavior among Hindus, Muslims and Christians in Netherlands* that among Muslims, 'faith is built through community and community is built through faith'(p.4). Further, they argue that Muslims in Netherlands exhibit more religious philanthropic behavior than Hindus. Bekkers and Carabain point to work by earlier scholars such as Wuthnow (1991) who has shown that religious giving is motivated by 'conviction' and 'community'.

Bekkers and Weipking have similarly outlined eight factors that drive philanthropy. Their claim is based on research and literature review of over 500 articles, all based on empirical

research. They suggest that the eight factors are: Needs, Solicitation, Costs and benefits, Altruism, Benefits, Reputation, Values and efficacy.
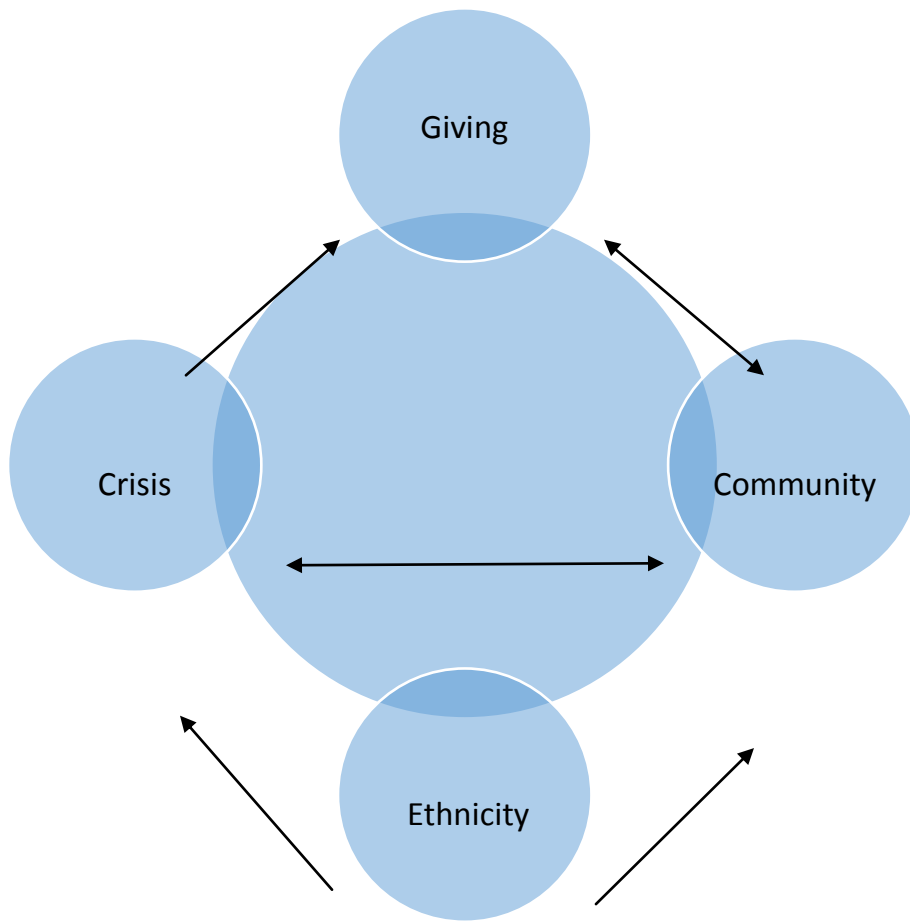

Fig 3 : Giving and its relation with 'Community'

The diagram (Fig 1) above illustrates the relationship between the variables involved, as existing literature characterizes it. While the existing literature argues that philanthropy is a social relation and that giving occurs to one's 'community', however that is defined, my preliminary research has led me to the tentative conclusion that giving can form 'communities.

Towards a new theory of ethnic philanthropy?

Paul Schervish's identification theory (1998) posits that communities of participation can motivate people to give. This has been accepted as the standard, conventional wisdom and for good reason. But, in our global, connected world, where identity and 'community' are fluid and there is a greater awareness of need, on a global scale; I ask: can giving form 'community'? Can philanthropy inverse the relation that we have taken for granted?

1. Identification theory : Community   ⟶   Giving

OR

2. My proposition :   Giving ⟶ Community

Fig 4: Community leads to giving or can Giving form communities?

The hypothesis that I have proposed is that 'giving can form communities.' While the interviews I have conducted seem to reinforce this hypothesis, there needs to be further research to validate

my findings. Schervish's model of "identification theory," assumes that 'community' remains static. My argument pushes the boundaries of this theory and suggests that community is evolving and changing, as a result of various factors – technological, sociological as well as personal. The theoretical concept of 'fluid and situational philanthropy,' can be helpful in thinking about philanthropy among Arab Americans. My initial findings through Grounded Theory approach have also led me to conceptualize the idea of 'communities of conscience', i.e., groups or networks of individuals who come together to solve problems, often through existing organizational structures, as the interviewees suggested. These, I argue, are the beginnings of a possible theory of community formation through philanthropic giving.

Scope and methodology

The sample chosen here is a theoretical sample, chosen to help develop a theory of giving among ethnic NGOs. There are a growing number of Arab-American run NGOs' in the U.S., though there is no known data-base or exact number of such organizations.

I chose NGOs that are active in the Washington D.C. area, to represent Arab-American giving in a large metropolitan area and those in rural communities like Blacksburg, VA and Syracuse, NY that have a smaller (largely student) population. Many of the NGOs in the sample are spread throughout the U.S., representing the diversity of the Arab American population and its vast geographic spread, across the country. As this is a study based on Grounded Theory methods, theoretical sampling is used, which means that I am not seeking representation but rather understanding and theoretical saturation of concepts.

Data Collection methods

As this research has largely focused on qualitative data, the following is a brief description of the methods used in conceptualizing this study and implementing it. To gather data and start putting the 'pieces together' I conducted semi-structured interviews with ten leaders of Arab-American NGOs'. The purpose of these interviews was to get the respondent perspectives on the motivations for why donors (to their organizations) give money, the key issues that attract the most donations, and the framing of issues in their marketing activities.

The sample for the interviews consisted local NGOs' as well as two trans-national NGOs and I followed a 'theoretical sampling' methodology. As Charmaz suggests "Theoretical sampling is done by sampling to develop the properties of your categories until no new properties emerge." (Charmaz, 2014, p.193). Given my previous professional association with NGOs in the Washington D.C. area, it was quite convenient for me to connect with Arab-American led organizations that catered to and had donors who were (predominantly) from the Arab world (and were Muslim). The most well-known ones were selected and a letter to request participation was sent (after IRB approvals of protocol, consent form and letters, etc.). A set of questions was prepared in advance of the semi-structured interview and shared with the participants. Some of the questions were along the lines of: a) What are the key issues your organization focuses on (and raises funds for)? b) What do you think the key priority areas for your donors are? c) What are your learnings in the field of fund-raising for short-term emergency funds vs. long-term development needs? d) How do you frame the issues, and causes that you raise money for? e) Which issues receive the most support, and why? While these were 'guiding

questions' I did improvise on the questions, as the interviews went by and I sought more clarity on the emerging concepts that became important for my study.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed and later coded to identify common themes, with close-coding. What emerges is a picture of discourses surrounding giving in some of the Arab-American NGOs and a 'mid-range' theory of how ethnic based NGOs in the U.S. are impacting and being impacted by philanthropy.

Data Analysis: Grounded Theory methods

As Charmaz suggests, the number of interviews needed to reach 'saturation' depends on the depth of information gathered as well as the analytical clarity that we seek to have (Charmaz, 2014). In the case of the present study, I was able to reach this with about ten interviews, though I conducted a few more (a total of 15), but the remaining data was not analyzed, as it did not address the 'emergent' categories that came from these ten interviews.

Charmaz suggests two levels of coding: initial coding to analyze data for its analytic import and then focused coding for better and precise analytical conceptualizing that could bring together the most frequent codes to sort, synthesize and organize large amounts of data, that could lead to a 'mid-range' theory of what is going on, in the process under study or among participants (p.113). A mid-range theory is one that arises from empirical data and is not generalizable, like a 'grand-theory' (Merton, 1969). The coding process proceeds by comparing data by data and asking questions of it, to make sense of what the data is saying and what all of this means. I used the sensitizing concept of 'social capital' to spur my analysis and thinking about the codes and data, in general.

This followed looking for relationships between the categories that emerged during the focused coding stage.

Findings and discussion: Formation of 'Communities of Conscience' through 'Fluid and situational philanthropy'

From analysis of the interviews and related material, there are two key emergent concepts that could help us formulate a 'mid-range' theory of giving among ethnic based NGOs. The first of these is the notion of 'Fluid and situational philanthropy.' This idea or code emerged more than a few times, in my interviews with ISNRV, ACCESS, Islamic Relief and others. They all suggested that their donors, while predictable for the most part – do have surprising behavior at times – especially, when certain situations of identity or 'social capital' come up. For instance, during the fundraising efforts for the Arab-American Museum in Dearborn, MI; the central idea that was used to pitch this towards the Arab community in the Michigan and broader area was of providing a 'voice' to the Arabs in the U.S. This story worked well with the donors, pointed out Maha Freij, the Deputy Executive Director of ACCESS. She said that given the negative stereotyping of Arabs in the media as well as lack of awareness of how many Arabs there are in the U.S. and how many of them are Christian and how many are Muslim, there is a lot of conflation of ethnicity and religion. She seemed to suggest that most Americans are not nuanced about these issues, and it is the job of organizations such as ACCESS to address these gaps. "We consciously try to stay away from positioning ourselves along any religious lines, as our work is secular and we cater to people of all races, religions and ethnicities." Indeed, during my visit to ACCESS in summer 2013, I noticed a large number of Hispanic and African Americans who were present at the health clinic of ACCESS. This center serves as the nucleus of programming

for ACCESS, with job counseling, health clinic and other basic services provided to those who need it. The idea of 'telling the Arab story' in America seems to be a dominant motif among the donors to ACCESS. This followed the perception that being civically engaged is key for Arab Americans, nationally.

Aisha, a youth volunteer with 'Muslims without Borders' pointed out that her organization believes in doing development work, without a 'political' or 'religious' agenda. This comment, coming from a young, socially committed Muslim, using the language of development and not religion is indicative of some of the discourses about aid and development among American Muslim NGOs'. Coming from another perspective were insights from Imam Hendi of Georgetown University who added "People give because they know the chaplain or the University, and also been positively impacted by the program. The campus or Imam supported them, things like that. Because it impacted their upbringing, they feel they should help their community. Some feel that they should help Muslim causes. At the end of the day, I am a Muslim and I want to help a cause and what is better than helping a Muslim cause." This identification model that he proposed, as a theory to explain conforms closely with what Paul Schervish has proposed, his identification model where identification with the donor's community may be a key factor in determining contributions(Schervish,1998).

I did look for variation in the philanthropic motives among donors of these organizations and did find substantial variation. But the variation or negative proof of the theory hypothesized did not amount to substantial variation. For instance, those who stopped being donors of the organization in question did so either because: a) They moved geographically from the location

b) They did not relate to the needs of the organization anymore c) They did not benefit from the organization's services.

Telling their story

Ecumenical approach

Belief in civic engagement

Creating Communities of conscience

Fluid and Situational Giving

Educating community about philanthropy

American Muslim exceptionalism

Emotional giving

Fig. 5 : Theory of giving during crisis situations, based on my GT analysis.

ACCESS – A paradigmatic case of a 'community of conscience'?

One interesting example of ethnic mobilization that goes beyond religious lines is that of ACCESS, based in Michigan, with Maha Freij as its Deputy Executive Director and CFO. ACCESS is an umbrella organization which has the Arab-American national museum, Center for Arab-American Philanthropy and the National Network of Arab American Communities as its constituent parts (ACCESS. Web). ACCESS may be considered a community foundation, with assets of over $55 million. It works primarily with Arab-Americans in the state and across the country. During the interview, she pointed out the dynamics of how the donors of ACCESS prioritize giving. She pointed out that: "The longer the Arab-Americans have been here, the more they support local causes. If I am dealing with a 6th generation Arab, they support causes that affect America and their local community though they may do something on and off internationally, from a humanitarian perspective. They are progressive enough. For example, if there is an earthquake in Japan, they will support it. But, with the recent immigrants, we get support for international and religious causes more. This is understandable as they come from countries where they are not required to build institutions, and it is the prerogative of the state. So, many of our donors don't know that they should support [local] civil society." This reflects some of the tensions and understandings of philanthropy among Arab Americans in the U.S.

I hypothesize that as a major humanitarian disaster or crisis strikes, there is a greater awareness of need and a consequent drive to generate support for the cause – both financial and material- resulting in enhanced fundraising efforts. Bekkers and Weipking (2011) have argued for this 'awareness of need' to be a critical component of the success of a philanthropic effort.

With greater awareness of need, through media campaigns, online and social media outreach, a greater number of people are being mobilized for activism and fund-raising. Among the organizations studied here, there seems to be a growing sense of 'correcting the narrative' of Arabs in the U.S., and hence any story or initiative that furthers a positive image of Arabs and Arab-Americans is supported. This fact was mentioned by both representatives of Islamic Relief, ACCESS and ISNRV among others.

As I have theorized, this is the moment when there could be a move from ethnocentrism to ethno relative ism; that would correspond to a move from having a very narrow definition of one's own 'community' to a much broader and expanded version. A very 'identity based' philanthropic model gives way to a more pragmatic 'fluid-situational philanthropy', that I have posited, based on the data and interviews. Communities of singular identity can and often do become 'Communities of conscience'. To use an example from mainstream American society, this phenomenon was evident in the case of attacks of September 11, 2001 – when there was a mass outpouring of sympathy and support for victims of these attacks. This patterns seem to have occurred in the case of many of the organizations under investigation in this study. CAIR, ACCESS both went through a phase of intense soul-searching and internal dialogue, immediately following the attacks of 911. While there are some differences in the way that the leaders of these organizations reacted, with ACCESS seeking to build on a more broad-based non-Arab identity, and CAIR are both deploying the language of pluralism in their communications. This was evident during the interviews as well as is plainly visible in their marketing material.

While the leaders of ACCESS talked about giving a 'voice to the Arabs' in the American public sphere, CAIR seeks to 'capitalize on the diversity in America and promote pluralism'. This, I argue can be seen as an example where philanthropy formed a 'community' of donors, who came together to address problems of the common good, that faced a local community.

Theoretical import of what the data is telling us

My search for an explanation of 'what is going on', in the case of these ten organizations led me to follow initial coding of the phenomenon and processes of giving. While this involved coding the transcripts of the interviews, it also involved looking at the annual reports and revenue figures of some of the organizations. While this was possible for some organizations, it was not for others –especially those that did not have publicly available annual reports.

The relationships between the secondary level coding – or the focused coding is what lead me to start the process of theorizing. While I subsumed categories to form slightly more abstract theoretical concepts such as 'Creating greater civic engagement' and 'Telling the story' some of these were 'invivo codes' as the interviewees themselves used these categories to describe what was going on. I followed closely the memos that I had written during this phase of my research to look for emergent concepts and theoretical ideas that I could use, to construct an emergent theory.

A further step in reaching abstraction was to create 'theory', which can be defined as 'defining the relationship between abstract concepts and may aim for either explanation or understanding." (Thorberg and Charmaz, 2012, p.41). The explanatory theory that I offer, which

suggests that philanthropy among these organizations is 'fluid and situational' and is often linked to or rather leads to 'creating communities of conscience', is based on a pragmatic understanding and interpretation of the dynamics in which Arab-Americans find themselves. This form of giving is informed by both the political as well as social conditions that Arab Americans find themselves.

Comparing the data available about these emergent categories leads us to put things in perspective. The theory seems 'valid' from the perspective of the organizations (validity can be checked with member-checking), since Arab Americans are facing a 'hostile' environment in the U.S. since 1979. Despite constitutional protections in the U.S. and the First Amendment protections available to all Americans, there is a growing awareness among scholars that there is a growing trend of Xenophobia in the U.S. against minorities, especially those of Arab world. The attacks of 911 just made it worse, as Nazir Harb and Yvonne Haddad have argued (2014).

Conclusion

I have argued for a view of ethnic philanthropy that takes us beyond the 'melting pot[i]' hypothesis in America. I have suggested above that philanthropy can actually form 'communities', and have proposed a concept of 'fluid-situational philanthropy', as an analytical category to theorize about the philanthropy occurring in organizations such as Dearborn based ACCESS and others, studied here. Similar patterns of giving are found in organizations such as Islamic Relief, which attracts donors who are not only Muslim but also non-Muslims and atheists, thus challenging our understandings of who gives to these organizations and their motivations.

Further, I have offered a tentative hypothesis that ethnicity, 'community' and other markers of identity vary in their importance when it comes to giving behavior, in times of crisis; philanthropy can actually form 'communities of conscience' across various boundaries to address concerns that are common to all Americans.

As Bekkers and Wiepking (2011) remind us, one must be careful before proposing any model of philanthropic giving, as there are several factors that go into what motivates giving. They say: "Philanthropic acts are commonly the result of multiple mechanisms working at once. However, formal models of philanthropy (e.g., Ribar & Wilhelm, 2002) have focused on only one or sometimes two motives. More than 10 years ago, Brown (1997, p. 183) described the state of affairs with regard to theory as follows: "No single model captures all the motivations that underlie charitable action." Although it is probably impossible to capture all mechanisms in one elegant formal model, Brown's assessment still holds and provides a challenge for model builders" (p.945). Bekkers and Wiepking have called for greater critical examination of any model proposed and for cross-examining hypothesis that are part of any model. I have tried to do the same in this model, by comparing existing

literature with an existing model of identity formation and proposing a possible model of philanthropy, grounded in data. While their approach has been positivistic, my approach is grounded in a pragmatic orientation, drawing from Constuctivist Grounded Theory paradigms.

As Frumkin (2006) argues, "giving back to one's 'community' can be a powerful motive and that it can be linked to dreams and realizations about what institutions and forms of assistance might have been helpful along life's way, rather than on what help was actually received by the donor"(p.366). With the ethnic and religious communities studied in this paper, there is definitely an element of this form of 'giving back' to the community, where one comes from, no matter how one defines it – either religiously or in terms of ethnicity. Following this, I would also argue that giving to religious institutions or religiously motivated giving can be what Paul Schervish (2010) has called 'religious discernment', referring to a more motivated, personally meaningful and financially magnanimous and culturally formative philanthropy; which in other words could be considered 'expressive philanthropy,' while ethnic giving could be considered 'instrumental philanthropy'. While there are elements of both in religious and ethnic giving, the interview data shows that there is a greater instrumental reasoning in ethnic giving.

The plurality of giving within the Arab American communities is manifest in the data shown in this paper. This plurality of giving is manifest not only in the projects to which people give, but also in the choices that donors make. These choices are, as I argue, becoming more and more directed by the needs of the community for assimilation, better infrastructure in the form of schools, institutions for grooming and political advocacy – such as the Arab American Institute etc.- or in social service programs for the poor. There is also an increasing awareness of the

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political rights and opportunities to participate in more public issues, among the communities examined. While Peter Weber argues, using his case-study of a German cultural organization in Indianapolis, operating during WWI that it survived the battle for survival, but lost the battle for pluralism – given the hysteria around 'Germans taking over America' (Weber, 2014). Weber suggests that similar hysteria surrounds Arab-American and Muslim organizations in the U.S. and this phenomenon has had a deleterious impact on the philanthropy of these organizations as well as their ambitions of promoting and contributing to pluralism in America.

My research suggests that apart from bringing disparate people together – across ethnic, religious and racial lines- crisis situations have helped build new 'communities of conscience'. Two examples of this sort of philanthropy follow: 1. The past president of the ISNRV in Blacksburg mentioned that the local community of Muslims (majority of them being Arab donors) contributed to the rebuilding of a local community member's home – after it was burnt down, accidentally by fire. Even though the person impacted was a non-Muslim, the community members decided that she was deserving of help and they sought her out, to help her with money. 2. The fund-raising director of Islamic Relief suggested that many of their donors are in fact non-practicing Muslims. While this may sound counter-intuitive, he suggested that this could be because they see practicing in philanthropy as a way of being connected with the issues and concerns of the broader Muslim world, given that Islamic relief operates in the most disadvantaged parts of the world.

My findings also challenge the notion of 'assimilation' of immigrant communities. While some communities do assimilate and their philanthropy is grounded more in a non-identity based framework, the organizations studied in this sample seem to have created communities through

their giving. This complicates our understanding of philanthropy and as I suggest, this can be a new way of theorizing about philanthropy among ethnic groups in the U.S. The data offered in this paper is a preliminary beginning to what can be a more thorough investigation.

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V.Practical Spirituality and religious giving: Pluralism and New forms of American Muslim giving

Abstract

Islam and the concept of charitable giving, *Zakat*, is over 1400 years old. Yet in pluralistic America this concept is under constant reinterpretation as new generations of American Muslim seek to find meaning and relevance. I argue that Islamic philanthropy is forming new 'moral geographies' by incorporating elements from market based notions of philanthropy, and is becoming more 'secular' and 'strategic' in its direction. This paper provides a typology of giving and maps the trajectory of giving towards Muslim Aid organizations. Looking at the messaging and marketing material of major American Muslim charities, I track the movement away from religious and altruistic giving. Preliminary findings suggest that American Muslim giving has been transformed by a move to secular motives for philanthropy and by the rise of more self-oriented, consumption-driven giving behavior. I conclude that Muslim nonprofit organizations are today contributing to the meaning of philanthropy, through the creative and pragmatic interpretation of religious principles and cultural norms. I also suggest that this trend can also be considered a part of the 'practical spirituality' prevalent in America.

Introduction

Are religious organizations becoming 'strategic' in their philanthropic activities? How are American Muslim NGOs positioning religious giving in a 'secular' American context? What strategies are they using to make this happen and how are they using the language of 'strategic management' to frame *zakat* and *sadaqa* in a largely non-Muslim society? I will seek to investigate these questions in this article, based on textual analysis of the messaging strategies of the three largest American Muslim NGOs, in their category. I argue that the 'other-oriented' charitable norms of *zakat* and sadaqa are giving way to a 'self-oriented' norms of marketized philanthropy. While trans-national humanitarian Muslim organizations and local mosques have been studied, not much attention has been paid to how these local and trans-national organizations straddle the religious-secular space and the strategies they use in their fund-raising/communications, to create a space that is palatable to both the believer and the non-believer (Juul-Petersen, 2011). I hope to fill this gap in literature through this article. I believe that an examination of how they are framing the discourse of giving has implications of how we understand aspects of strategic management that these NGOs use. Broadly, these questions have an implication on how we understand Islam, American Muslims and also more broadly the role of religion in our society. Further, this investigation can also help us delve into how traditional religious practices are being re-imagined in the form of a 'practical spirituality' in America. Practical Spirituality in this sense can be understood as a way of self and social actualization and dialogue, in a way that reconstitutes these categories (Giri, 2014). As I demonstrate in this article, the very definitions of religious and secular are being re-articulated in the practices of these organizations and thus, the notion of practical spirituality can be useful for our discussion.

By 'religious' I mean scripturally derived understanding of what *zakat*/sadaqa are supposed to be and similarly, I use the term 'secular' to refer to any interpretation or understanding of this institution outside of the traditionally 'religious' framing of *zakat/sadaqa*. In this framework, any framing of *zakat*/ sadaqa for humanitarian aid/ 'development' would be outside the 'religious' realm, as many scholars do not agree on whether this is a valid use of *zakat/ sadaqa* money (Benthall, 2008).

Before delving into the organizations themselves, let us briefly look at the 'lay of the land.' There are about 2106 mosques in the U.S., as of 2011, and this number has gone up from 1,209 in the year 2000 – a 74 percent increase (Bagby, 2011). Also, one of the significant findings from this survey is that there are roughly seven million Muslims in the U.S. While this survey points to the composition of mosques and how the leaders interpret Islamic law and resulting practices that they endorse of prohibit at the local community level, there is little data on how other American Muslim faith-based organizations operate and manage their relationship – of acting as a bridge between religion and society – an often delicate balancing act.

Some of the key findings of the 2011 survey that are of interest to our discussion are:

1. The leaders of the mosques largely adopt a flexible approach to religion, choosing more practical and pragmatic approaches to interpreting *Qur'an* and *Shari'ah* (Prophet Muhammad's normative practices). About 56% of the Imams adopt the flexible approach, while 11% are more traditionally grounded in the traditional schools of thought or *madhabs*.

2. Over 98% of mosque leaders endorse greater civic engagement in American society, while 91% endorse engaging in politics

3. There is great diversity at the mosque level. Only 3 % of the mosques have people of only one ethnicity attending the services, while the vast majority has people from all ethnicities, races participating in the services.

While these findings point to an increased interest in civic engagement in the American Muslim community and offer us a 'big-picture' perspective, they do not offer us a detailed picture of how and why these organizations are adopting the strategies that they are, to attract and retain donors. Other organizational constraints are also not explored in much depth in this survey.

Syncretism and evolution of a new 'strategic' dimension to religious giving

'The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed.' -- Carl Jung

Carl Jung, the Swiss psychoanalyst's perceptive comment about two personalities can perhaps be extrapolated to that of two cultures too. Consider the case of American Muslim philanthropy, the topic of discussion in this paper. The evolution of the practices of philanthropy in the American context have been part of a long 'syncretic' give-and-take between the dominant American norms of giving as well as the traditional Islamic norms. How these both systems have interacted, borrowed from each other and evolved as a result is a fascinating question. While examining the history is beyond the scope of this paper, I seek to look at some of the current practices of philanthropy among American Muslim NGOs and seek to investigate the points of 'intersection' or 'syncretic evolution' in how NGOs are framing religious giving in a 'secular'

market led context. In particular, I am interested in examining how Islamic norms of giving are changing and evolving in the American context.

Islamic giving i.e., *zakat* (and sadaqa) is important for two reasons: the scale of giving that occurs globally and secondly, because the topic itself is gaining salience. The total annual giving by Muslims around the world is pegged to be in the range of $200 billion to $1 trillion. This estimate, according to a recent IRIN Newswire report is a staggering amount of money, which is about 15 times that of the total combined global humanitarian aid (IRIN, 2012). Further, philanthropy is a central part of Islamic belief system, one that translates directly into action. One can see the manifestation of Islamic charity in monuments, schools, universities built using the Islamic foundation or *Waqf,* that exist around the world, including some in the U.S. The most prominent examples of such foundations exist in Turkey, India, and Egypt, some of which are almost 1000 years old. Giving practices continue to gain importance in our times, as well, given that global humanitarian action is becoming a prominent way for pious Muslims to engage in doing 'good deeds' and practicing their faith, while engaging in solving some problems in this world; while earning rewards for the 'hereafter'.

The study of Islamic charity is at a nascent stage. While the practice of philanthropy is about 1400 years old, there is precious little, by way of scholarly treatment of this subject, in English. As Amy Singer in her book *Charity in Islamic Societies* (2008) has argued that there are several reasons for this discrepancy. She says that part of the reason for this lack of in-depth investigation is that scholars did not notice philanthropy, as a visible practice, in Muslim societies. Its ubiquitous nature made it invisible. Perhaps, given its salience in the U.S., due to the cultural prevalence of philanthropy and its study, the practice is beginning to be noticed.

Singer says that her intention in writing the book was to "introduce readers to the rich possibilities offered by reconsidering history through the prism of charity." (p.4). While the history of Islamic giving is rich, both in detail and breadth of practices, its relevance to current issues is what interests my investigation urgent. Further, the surplus, disposable wealth available to many of the middle-class and wealthy philanthropists in the West has caused many to search for meaningful ways to use their wealth. As Paul Schervish (1998) has argued, this process is often-times led by a 'religious' motives, broadly defined.

While the discourse of charity among Muslims has shifted over time, arguably, the guiding spirit behind it has not. With the advent of newer ways of conceptualizing philanthropy, this may be in for a radical change. Ghaneabassiri says: "The use of Sadaqa in Islamic sources dates back to the Qur'an where it is mentioned both as an obligatory (9:103) and voluntary (58:13) form of charity. *Zakat* is considered one of the 'five pillars' of the religion of Islam. Given the centrality of charity and giving in Islam, this paper investigates the changing norms of giving among American Muslim NGOs, and through a discourse analysis, seeks to find out how these organizations are redefining the meaning of philanthropy. This is occurring through a combination of 'syncretic merging' as well as borrowing from the mainstream norms of giving.

What they however, do not investigate in much depth, is the meaning making processes for the donors themselves, or the strategic positioning of these charitable activities. This is a major weakness of all the major studies that exist – including those of Singer (2008), Benthall (2003). While Ghaneabassiri (2010) offers a historical narrative and background of how these 'relational practices' took place, his work does not focus on contemporary challenges, in the context of a Neoliberal economy, with its specific challenges. I hope to address this gap in

literature, by focusing on the messaging of how American Muslim NGOs in America frame their narrative of philanthropy and hope to bring to light the ways in which the norms of giving are being *remade* among American Muslims. This framing is occurring at the level of organizations, led by non-religious leaders, who are interpreting the Qur'anic injunctions to donate money. I suggest that this trend could have enormous implications on how American Muslims are interpreting Islamic practices. The *Sola Scriptura* approach of reading and interpreting the Qur'an and Hadith can have a big impact on how Islam is practiced in the U.S.

This investigation into the changing and *evolving* positioning of American Muslim giving is at the intersection of social policy, religious norms, public policy and general ethical and moral imaginings in the U.S., given the salience of volunteering and charitable giving in American culture[18]. While the practice of *zakat* is guided by *Shariah,* or Islamic law, the ways in which it is imagined and practiced is varied in a pluralistic society such as the U.S, given the presence of almost all school of Islamic jurisprudence and various secular norms of giving, and is very ecumenical and pragmatic.

My argument is as follows: while we assume that Islamic giving norms are informed only by religious precepts and *fatwas* or religious edits from scholars, there is a growing body of evidence that faith-based organizations such as those engaged in education, humanitarian aid and related concerns are acting as sites for actively re-interpreting and re-formulating how *zakat* and sadaqa are positioned and practiced. Through this process of re-interpretation of these forms of giving, these NGOs are forming a new understanding of giving, synthesizing 'secular' forms of

giving and practices such as consumer marketing and in a sense, pushing 'religious' giving in the direction of more 'secular' or 'market' oriented giving.

An analysis of the giving practices and the way they frame religious giving can help us understand how the very concept of philanthropy is being re-imagined. This pattern could also fit in the 'practical spirituality' model proposed earlier. Ananta Giri offers to define it as "Practical spirituality seeks to transform religion in the direction of creative practice, everyday life and the struggle for justice and dignity" (2010, p.251). To understand this notion of practical spirituality, Giri contends that this notion of 'practice' is different from that of our conventional notions of practice – that of the American pragmatic notion or the anthropological notions – as we understand them. He says "But practice in practical spirituality is simultaneously immanent and transcendent, and the actor here is simultaneously a "techno-practitioner" and a "transcendentally real self" (p.251). But how does one know which practice is practical spirituality and which one is not? This is something that we need to clarify. The key differentiator in Giri's understanding seems to be one where there is a realization of self or a social transformation, in such a project. While the transformative aspects of the self and society are slow and the under-currents for such transformations can come from various sources, what we are witnessing in the U.S, are occurring through a series of changes related to re-imagination of Islam in a Western context, re-aligning of individual and community boundaries and also economic forces.

These aspects of practical spirituality can be understood through looking at how these organizations are framing their discourse of giving. By carrying out a discourse analysis of the messaging of Islamic Relief, the largest American Muslim NGO and Helping Hands Relief Foundation a Gulen Movement organization and Mercy USA, I investigate how the organizations are interpreting the traditional norms of Islamic giving (that are usually inspired by

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the Qur'an and Hadith[19]) into American settings. I point out how Muslim nonprofit organizations are *contributing to the various meanings of philanthropy,* and forming a new 'moral geography' through a creative and pragmatic interpretation of religious and cultural norms. Given the central role of charity in Islam, I further argue that these changes are part of the 'syncretic evolution of Islam' in America. This study is relevant in the context of the broader discussions of individualism and community, in a society dominated by neoliberal ideologies; and also the public role of Islam in the West.

The central principle that embodies practical spirituality is the move towards self and social actualization and a transformation that is born of reflection and self-analysis. As Giri points out, projects such as Habitat for Humanity and others that are borne out of faith-based efforts still demand that their participants take part in dialogue and mutual learning and sharing. The same practices seem to be taking place among American Muslims as well. While philanthropy among Muslims globally is informed by deeply held religious and cultural traditions, the same are being transformed and re-imagined in a very different way; in a market-led, neoliberal context.

Charitable practices of Western Muslims

While the giving practices of (practicing) Muslims are dictated by the Qur'an, Hadith and family traditions, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests that Muslims of all kinds are partaking in humanitarian aid and related activities, as Jonathan Benthall has demonstrated. As the pioneer of study of Islamic charity, Benthall argues that the academic study of Islamic charity is at a nascent stage and offers us a fascinating view into the Muslim ethical values and traditions. Further, he argues, this can offer us perspectives on how Muslims are negotiating their faith in contexts that are not of their own making.

Similarly, Marie Juul Petersen in her dissertation *For Humanity or for the Ummah* (2011) has shown, through empirical case studies of four organizations the ideological meaning making systems in transnational Muslim NGOs. As she says: "Asking questions as to how transnational Muslim NGOs present themselves, their aid and their religion, this study has explored the ways in which meanings associated with aid and Islam are produced, expressed, contested and reworked in certain ways, how historical processes have led to those particular meaning constructions, and how they are redefined in the light of changing social, economic and political contexts" (p.221). She has sought to complicate the narrative of trans-national Muslim NGOs by re-looking at how they create their ideologies. She argues that this is a nuanced perspective that goes beyond looking at these organizations as purely political or faith-based organizations. She says "For one, this study has approached transnational Muslim NGOs first and foremost as NGOs engaged in aid provision rather than as tools in political struggles for the Islamisation of society. As such, I have sought to challenge not only conventional analyses of transnational Muslim NGOs, but also broader tendencies to view all things Muslim or Islamic through the

lenses of the political. We must, in the words of Alberto Melucci (1989), put aside old habits of viewing social processes through the lenses of the political, reducing the social to matters of the political" (p.222). While her predecessor and the widely considered the pioneer of study of Islamic charities Jonathan Benthall(2008) may disagree, saying that ultimately charity is about politics, it may well be a matter of paying close attention to one or the other aspect. What are the boundaries of the 'political' and where does the 'social' end are questions that are certainly important in this discussion, but not central. I would prefer taking the position of Petersen when analyzing donor behavior, but also not ignore the political ramifications of these actions in larger trans-national issues. For instance, when it comes to analyzing the impact of financial clamp-down of Muslim NGOs working in conflict zones, it would certainly be naive to ignore the dominant narrative, even if it is biased – as Benthall has argued- and propose only a sociological reading of the phenomenon at hand. While scholarly exigencies force us to investigate areas that are under-examined, political realities may dictate otherwise. This way of looking at Muslim NGOs in the U.S. is also more useful as it offers us a 'real' look at how the transformations of the concept of philanthropy are taking place – in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society- instead of looking at this from the lens of preconceived notions of 'religious' and 'secular'. Giri's notion that this form of practice involves both a struggle for justice and carries with it transformative potential is abundantly clear.

Similarly, Bruno De Cordier has argued that there is a need for the gradual expansion of the role of Muslim NGOs in conflict zones, given their ability to deal with the local populations, with cultural and religious affinity working in their favor. Cordier says that religion has not been seen as an important factor in development studies, but this is changing. In the context of the argument made by Benthall that there is a gradual 'Returning to Religion' in scholarship of

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religion and development studies and that developing economies in the Muslim world are not necessarily becoming secular, as was posited in the 'secularization hypothesis', this complicates the discourse of development and Muslim world. He further says that the growth in trans-national aid movement among Muslim NGOs has been greatly aided by the growth of global media and the internet, creating or rather reviving the sense of 'Ummah', or the global Muslim community, bound by faith.

Research Methods and Sampling

Given that this study seeks to understand phenomenon that is unknown and there is a theory-building component involved, I used a qualitative approach to answer the research questions. This seems to be more appropriate, given the nature of the questions.

I carry out a textual analysis of the campaigns carried out by the four NGOs, towards understand the underlying themes/ concepts that are linked to the concept under investigation.

b. Data Collection Strategy

I chose three of the largest Muslim NGOs in the U.S. –as purposive samples- as they represent the largest NGOs of their kind. As Miles and Huberman[ii] say, "Qualitative studies tend to be purposive, rather than random. That tendency is because the initial definition of the universe is more limited and partly because social processes have a logic and coherence that random sampling can reduce to uninterpretable sawdust" (p.27). As they further argue, sampling in qualitative studies needs to create boundaries as well as a frame to help one uncover the phenomenon and constructs that undergird the study.

Based on revenues, Islamic Relief and Helping Hands for Relief and Development (HHRD) are the two largest and most well- known of the outfits. United Muslim Relief is the largest grass-roots organization of its kind, having an extensive student network around the country.

Islamic Relief	$ 65 Million
HHRD	$ 19 Million
UMR	n/a

Table 2: Revenue figures of the three largest American Muslim NGOs, in the year 2011

To get maximum variation in data collected, I gathered the following items from the websites of these organizations:

1. Ten most recent newsletters

2. Marketing material regarding their fund-raising campaigns (posters and email alerts)

3. Website material to cover as much material as exists on the webpages.

Data Analysis and Coding:

My analysis of the strategic messaging emanating from the organization is categorized into four broad categories: Self orientation, other orientation, religious messaging and Secular messaging.

I analyze the texts produced by the organizations (newsletters, marketing campaigns for specific fund-raising issues) and emails to map the messaging 'positioning' of each campaign, and aggregating this, I extrapolate this for the entire organization.

Self-oriented	Other-oriented	Secular	Religious
Career benefits	Responsibility	Human rights discourse	Appeal to morality
Tax deduction	Justice for others	health	Appeal to religious
Satisfaction		Education	texts

Table 3 : A model for organizing messaging- some preliminary codes

With this conceptual framework, I coded the material in hand (downloaded from the respective websites) identifying the key themes and patterns that emerged as outlined above. Further, I mapped them on four criterion, on a grid, outlined below – mapping them and classifying each of the codes for: self-orientation, other-orientation, religious as well as secular orientation. I mapped them, based on how further along the axis each factor was, when it came to each of the factors under examination.
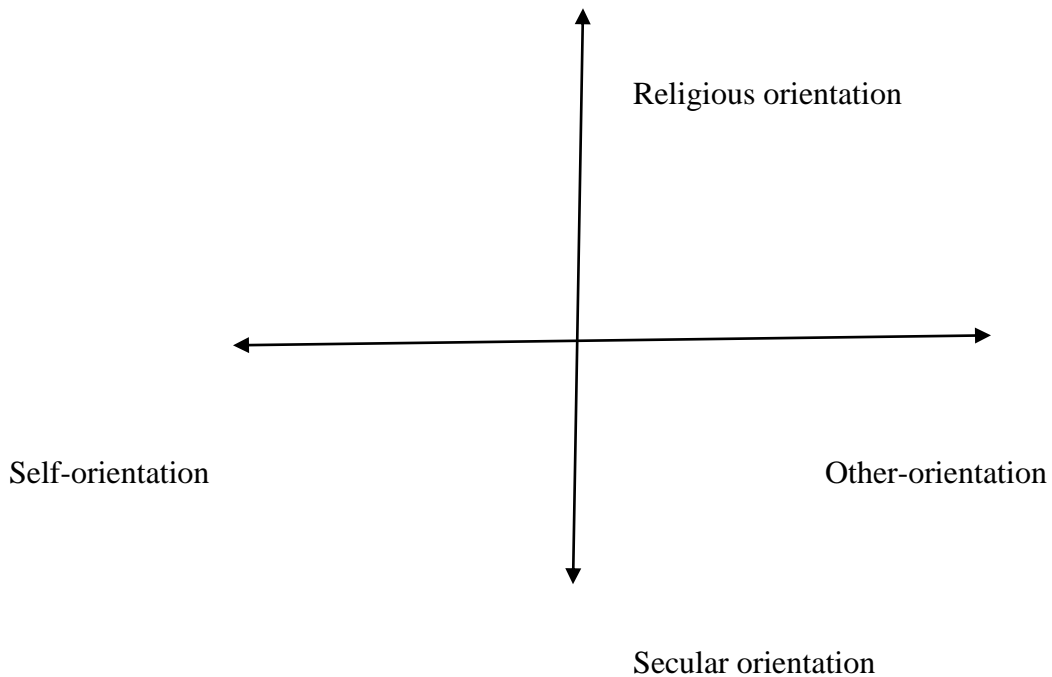
Religious orientation

Self-orientation

Other-orientation

Secular orientation

Fig 6: Mapping the orientation to give.

Definition of the 'buckets' or categories used in coding:

1. Self- oriented – philanthropy that is defined as benefiting the donor, in some way – either in terms of psychic satisfaction or increasing career prospects, through volunteering or 'leadership' development

2. Other- oriented – More benign form of giving, that is interested in others' welfare more than that of the donor

3. Secular giving – philanthropy that does not have an explicit religious messaging/ positioning attached to it

4. Religious giving – Giving that has a more outwardly religious messaging/ positioning attached to it

c. Analysis and discussion

What follows is a brief analysis of the various discursive strategies adopted by Helping Hands for Relief and Development (HHRD), United Muslim Relief (UMR) and Islamic Relief USA.(IRUSA). I carried out the analysis looking for the research question in mind: How are these organizations incorporating 'Islamic' messaging in an American context and further, how this syncretism that arises, in the realm of *strategic* messaging of *philanthropy* across the four dimensions of self, other, religion and secular in the humanitarian development aid space.

I will examine the texts for intertextuality in the messaging used. This can give us insights about the changing norms or *syncretic evolution* of Muslim charity. I define intertextuality as how spiritual/ Islamic injunctions towards piety are being incorporated to meet demands of modern marketing and branding. Both deductive and inductive methods of analysis will be used to code, following Lofland's approach for coding, who suggested that codes in any study can deal with action, activities, meanings, relationships as well as settings. The codes and patterns that emerge are to be treated as only preliminary ones, as these are bound to evolve, as I study these organizations in more depth and a much richer understanding evolves. Lincoln and

Guba suggest that over time and greater exposure to the natural settings and daily routines in the organizations, a much clearer understanding of the field develops (Lofland, 1971).

Helping Hands Relief and Development (HHRD)

One can analyze the text/other material for various elements. One of the key elements I will focus on is Intertextuality. Wodak defines it as: "Intertextuality refers to the fact that all texts are linked to other texts, both in the past and in the present. Such links can be established in different ways: through continued reference to a topic or main actors; through reference to the same events; or by the transfer of main arguments from one text into the next. The latter process is also labelled recontextualization. By taking an argument and restating it in a new context, we first observe the process of decontextualization, and then, when the respective element is implemented in a new context, of recontextualization. The element then acquires a new meaning because meanings are formed in use (Wodak, 1999, p. 4).

One of the fund-raising campaigns involves a comedy show titled "Comedy Show for a Cause" with the title "Empowering women of our Ummah" at the top. The visual and textual elements of this power (and the accompanying text) are quite intriguing to notice. While the campaign itself is styled as a regular fund-raiser that any 'secular' nonprofit would carry out, the motive is clearly more than mere 'entertainment'. The fundraiser is clearly for helping the 'women of our *Ummah*', referring to the women of the 'Muslim *Ummah*', where *Ummah* is the Arabic word for community. It is a polysemic word and has been used in various ways, but the most commonly used meaning refers to the global Muslim community (Petersen, 10). The images that go together show (visibly) poor and disadvantaged women and children, who are

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working. The combination of images and text invites the reader (or potential donor) to enter this space and participate, by making sense and connecting with the various motifs offered. Islamic, developmental and 'social justice' oriented.

Secondly, there is clearly an appropriation of fund-raising techniques, borrowed from mainstream NGOs that have following the turn towards a Neoliberal framework and started to use aggressive fund-raisers, appeal for funds and celebrity endorsements. The use of comedians such as Azhar Usman and Preacher Moss as their signature 'brand ambassadors' is also quite an interesting discursive strategy.

Further, the newsletters begin with verses from the Qur'an, such as "The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Allah will not be merciful to those who are not merciful to the people" (Source: Sahih Bukhari 6941). While the stated Mission of the organization is "HHRD is committed to serve humanity by integrating resources for people in need. We strive to provide immediate response in disasters, and effective Programs in places of suffering, for the pleasure of Allah," the organization is trying to position itself as both a 'religious entity', through its messaging- which is infused with religious language – while at the same time, utilizing capitalist and (arguably) wasteful means of raising money[iii]. As Charles Tripp has argued in his book *Islam and the Moral Economy (2006),* while some Muslim scholars have chosen the path of confrontation with Capitalism, most have chosen the path of compromise. The work is framed around the development of Islamic socialism, Islamic economics and the rationale for Islamic banking.

Humanitarian development aid provision for HHRD seems to be one of the key ways that Muslims can participate in the global economy, while staying true to their faith. The intended

audience for their messaging seem to be quite obviously practicing Muslims, given the consistent use of Qur'anic messaging as well as visuals that communicate observant, pious Muslims. The attraction for participating in their form of development would be to be part of a movement that works to help others, through the message of Islam. It is interesting to also see that while the language is infused with Islamic messaging, it is also at the same time inclusive. For instance, the organization is sensitive to women's issues as well as other non-Muslims. There are campaigns that are run by the organization for women and Philippines (a Christian majority country). This should also be interesting from a discourse perspective, as some traditional Muslim scholars argue that *zakat* money should only go towards Muslims. This is a contested idea, as most Muslim organizations in the West have adopted an ecumenical conception of where this money can be used. In fact, the *Zakat* Council of North America and other organizations have brought out fatwas (legal rulings) arguing for the use of *zakat* money for any humanitarian purpose[iv]. There seems to be an incorporation of some elements of the feminist discourse too, with empowerment of women coming to the foreground. As Leila Ahmed has argued, the reformist discourse regarding women's rights etc. is emerging from the politically engaged Islamist women, i.e., those who practice Islam and believe that it has an active role to play in the public sphere. This is another instance where traditional categorizations of 'feminism', 'Islamism' do not hold and such instances and examples complicate the narrative of Islam that we are used to.

While there are certainly elements of consumption philanthropy in the messaging of HHRD, one can argue that many of the campaigns are for 'genuine needs', of victims who are struck by natural disasters or those stuck in hopeless situations – Pakistan, Haiti, Philippines etc. While there is a call for participating in entertaining events – which carries with it the element of

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consumption philanthropy – the underlying message is definitely to do what is right, to 'help the servants of Allah', in other words, to fulfill one's obligation as a pious Muslim. There is a healthy tension between aspects of consumption philanthropy and needs based model in the messaging of this organization.

Islamic Relief USA

Islamic Relief (IR-USA) mission statement is: "Islamic Relief USA strives to alleviate suffering, hunger, illiteracy, and diseases worldwide regardless of color, race, religion, or creed, and to provide aid in a compassionate and dignified manner. Islamic Relief USA aims to provide rapid relief in the event of human and natural disasters and to establish sustainable local development projects allowing communities to better help themselves[20]."

As in the case of HHRD, one can see that their mission statement is ecumenical and broad-based, going beyond just the Muslim community. This is a discursive strategy that re-imagines the boundaries of who is eligible for *zakat* etc. as I have pointed out in the previous section. This is similar to the practices of African American Muslims, who re-imagined community through their charitable practices.

One of the most recent and successful campaigns that IR-USA has run is the # WithSyria campaign, that garnered massive support on the Twitter, reaching quarter of a billion people, in over 111 countries. As part of the press release that was sent out, the Public Affairs manager is quoted as saying "Islamic Relief is providing lifesaving humanitarian assistance inside Syria, but

this campaign reminds us that we can also be a voice for positive change. We aim to continue the momentum to demand humanitarian access into challenging areas and raise more dollars that will save and improve the lives that have been forever changed by war" (IR Website). While this meets the criterion of fulfilling their Mission statement, what is lacking, one could argue is a lack of any long-term orientation towards addressing the conflict or an engagement to garner this massive support to press the American political establishment for any political action. As Eickenberry and Nickel argue, this discourse could be seen as mollifying the donors and lulling them into thinking that their donations have made a difference and that they have done their bit. This could be seen as co-optation of philanthropy for a short-term gain (provision of aid) but not really addressing the root cause of the problem – i.e., the continued violence and injustice in Syria.

Further, the promotional video of IRUSA claims "Because of you we are building roads, bridges, even homes. Together we are building entire villages." The discourse of 'sustainability' is also co-opted in their messaging. As the voice-over says " We call them intelligent solutions" referring to the sustainable practices that IRUSA practices. There is a very strong emphasis on 'long-term solutions' for the communities concerned.

United Muslim Relief (UMR)

This organization grew out of 'Muslims without borders,' a national student led body that focuses on 'development through service', as their organizing motto. Their mission statement reads: "UMR integrates our global partners' services to provide comprehensive relief and development aid to underserved communities around the world. UMR accomplishes this humanitarian mission by blending advocacy, youth mobilization, disaster response, aid delivery, and empowerment through education." Given their history as one that arose from the Muslim Student groups on campuses, this is quite striking. Perhaps this messaging strategy could be a result of their target audience, who are mostly American, young and looking for opportunities in the development sector and are finding a voice in this space.

The 'self' and 'other' dimensions across the 'secular' orientation seem to be the strongest in UMR's strategic messaging, as seen through the various marketing material. This should not be surprising, given their target audience and fundamental vision, of incorporating development discourse.

Intertextuality

As Strunken and Cartwright (1999) argue, "One of the fundamental aspects of intertextuality is its presumption that the viewer knows the text that is being referenced. Intertextuality is not a new aspect of popular culture or aspect of modern culture or specific to postmodernism. After all, the use of celebrities to sell products can be seen as an intertextual tactic – the stars bring to the ad the meaning of their fame and the roles they have played. However, contemporary intertextuality operates on a level that is much more ironic and complex" (p.265).While the advertisements used by both IR and HHRD do contain imagery and

words that refer back to themes and ideas that are familiar to their audience (Eg. Words such as Ummah, *Zakat* or *Sadaqa* and certain verses from the Qur'an or Hadith) there is an appeal to either religious symbolism or that of 'development'. Islamic Relief falls under the latter spectrum, while HHRD tends to use more of the religious discourse, to make their appeals more emotive. With IRUSA, there is also a conscious effort on part of all the communication devices used to appropriate 'sustainability', as a paradigm.

Creating a new 'moral geography'?

American Muslim philanthropy lies at the intersection of religious, ethnic and trans-national boundaries. While it is certainly a 'border-crossing' phenomenon, and one that has and continues to evolve in America, as Ghaneabassiri (2010) has demonstrated, the implications of this change are not clear. While discourses of identity and religion embrace polysemous meaning, the same flexibility has not been accorded to Islamic philanthropy in the U.S. While both the NGOs discussed above are using the discourse of social justice, sustainability and religion in their messaging, the discourse of Islamic philanthropy has not received sufficient investigation, apart from certain narrow, policy analysis.

As Caroline Nagel argues, the discourse of multiculturalism could be problematic for the minorities (she uses the example of Muslims in Britain) since it assumes unity and homogeneity that does not exist (p.134). As she further argues, this creates false categories and individual power brokers are often struggling to maintain monopoly over representing the 'interests' of their groups. Both supporters and critics of multiculturalism are in a bind, given the complexity of the phenomenon, she argues. The growth of a 'Muslim identity' has also created a sense of

alienation among certain segments of society, and critics point that projects such as separate Islamic schools can create further divisiveness in society.

While philanthropy, in many cases, is tied to identity politics and in the example of IRUSA and HHRD, there is certainly an element of this, there is a greater emphasis on social justice issues. One can argue that both these organizations are addressing the central notions of social justice that Islamic philanthropy is trying to address. While the discourse of Islamic philanthropy has co-opted various discourses – development, sustainability and environmentalism – to name a few, the central concern remains that of social justice. And this is one of the key reasons why several government agencies across the world have signed up to partner with several projects of both the NGOs. In fact, USAID and the Office of Faith-based Initiatives at the White House have very strong relationships with Islamic Relief, on several initiatives.

As Nagel further says, there has been quite a lot of theoretical work in the area of social justice and distributive justice that can help us understand the dimensions related to trans-border issues. The work of David Harvey, in particular *Social Justice and the City* (1973) is useful in framing issues related to injustice and redistribution of wealth. Harvey argues that the problem facing distributive justice is not one of individual selfishness, but one of the mode of production – I.e., Capitalism. She says " While Harvey's work inspired countless geographers and brought Marxism into mainstream of geographic thought, Marxist views on social justice have come under fire by feminists and others since the 1980s" (p.139). While this is a structuralist perspective of looking at wealth redistribution, much of the rhetoric of both the NGOs does not go to this level of analysis, preferring to stay at the level of 'doing what you can' to help the

members of 'Ummah' around the world. Both the NGOs examined, while certainly promoting activism, remain silent in their messaging about the need to question why things are the way they are. They are also silent about the political dimensions of the conflicts.

Zareena Grewal in her book *Islam is a Foreign Country* (2014) argues that transnational communities produces ties that pull at the seams of national demands for complete and total submission of one's attachments. She uses the example of American Muslim student travelers, who traverse across the Middle East in search of knowledge to illustrate how this shifting 'moral geography' occurs and how best to understand it. She uses the examples of Omar, a young American student, who is inspired by Malcolm X, the charismatic Black leader, who defined his identity in trans-national terms – of being an African in America, until perhaps the end of his life. This 'protest' mindset has been part of how American Muslims have in the past imagined their identities and this could perhaps explain some of the tensions in discourses pertaining to Islamic philanthropy. While there is a definite tendency among American Muslim NGOs to focus on 'domestic' projects and build communities 'here', there is an overwhelming focus on Muslim communities and projects globally, alluding to the needs of the global 'Ummah'. She argues that the "Islamic East has become an archive for the transnational moral geography in the American mosques" (p.83). This process, one can argue, continues in the form of discourses created by American Muslim NGOs, as we see in the examples in this paper.

Indeed, much of the backlash against Islamic charities that came about post 9/11 was largely due to the alleged connections of some of the NGOs with 'terrorist networks', in the Middle East and Africa. While many of these allegations turned out to be false, there have been some convictions in these cases, with the ACLU and other civil liberty groups calling these

judgments as politically motivated and not having received due process. (ACLU, 2009). This has been further corroborated by research from Benthall, who wrote his famous article Overreaction against Islamic Charities, arguing for looking at the positive role that they can play and for not exaggerating the threat from a few organizations or individuals that had dubious links with terrorist links.

As Grewal further argues " Muslim Americans' transnational moral geographies challenge the primacy of national affiliation through devotional practices, calls for racial equality and global religious communion. As we see, the transnational moral geographies of the American Muslims are not only in competition with those of the nation, but also with one another" (p.85). While this seems to be true, what Grewal misses out on, or rather does not focus on, is the level of co-optation that is undergoing. The borrowing, lending and merging of norms, discourses of giving between the various Islamic discourses of giving and those of the 'mainstream' American ones, as we have seen, are too many to be ignored. To simply put these in competition with one another would be simplifying the argument. Perhaps Ghaneabassiri would agree with this perspective.

The level of merging of norms of consumer philanthropy, marketing principles, use of 'commonalities' between Islam, Christianity and Judaism to call for serving 'mankind' and the various 'inter-faith' programs that seek to bridge barriers between 'Abrahamic faiths', are all further examples of this shifting moral geography. One that is often seen but not observed carefully for what it is – a reconfiguration of relations between how philanthropy, community boundaries are constantly being reimagined in America.
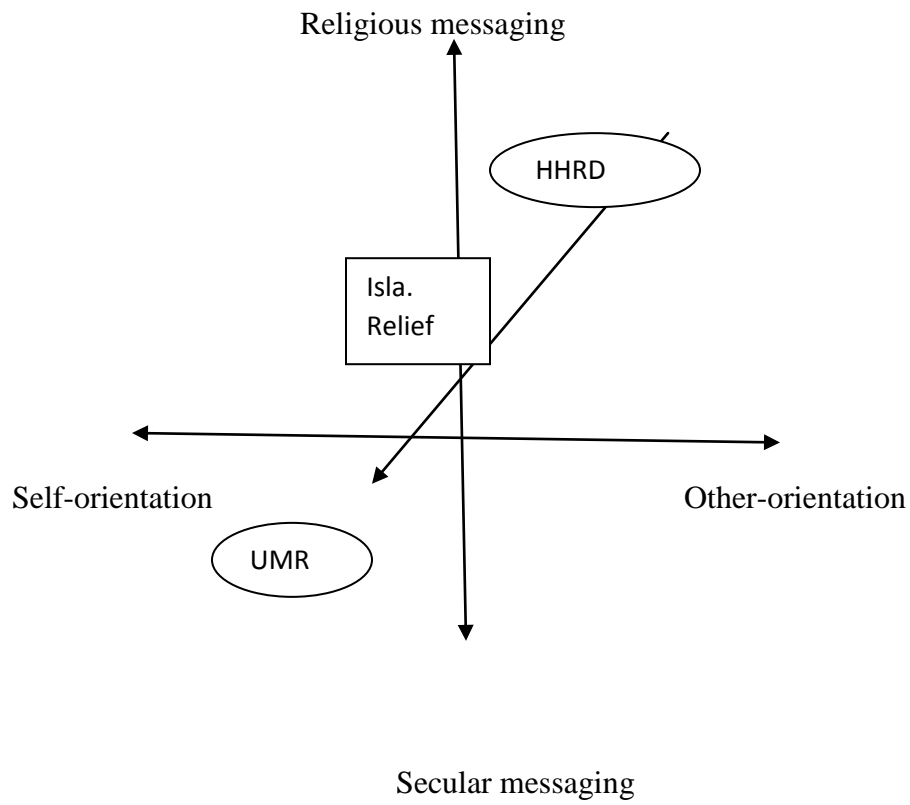
Religious messaging

HHRD

Isla.
Relief

Self-orientation

Other-orientation

UMR

Secular messaging

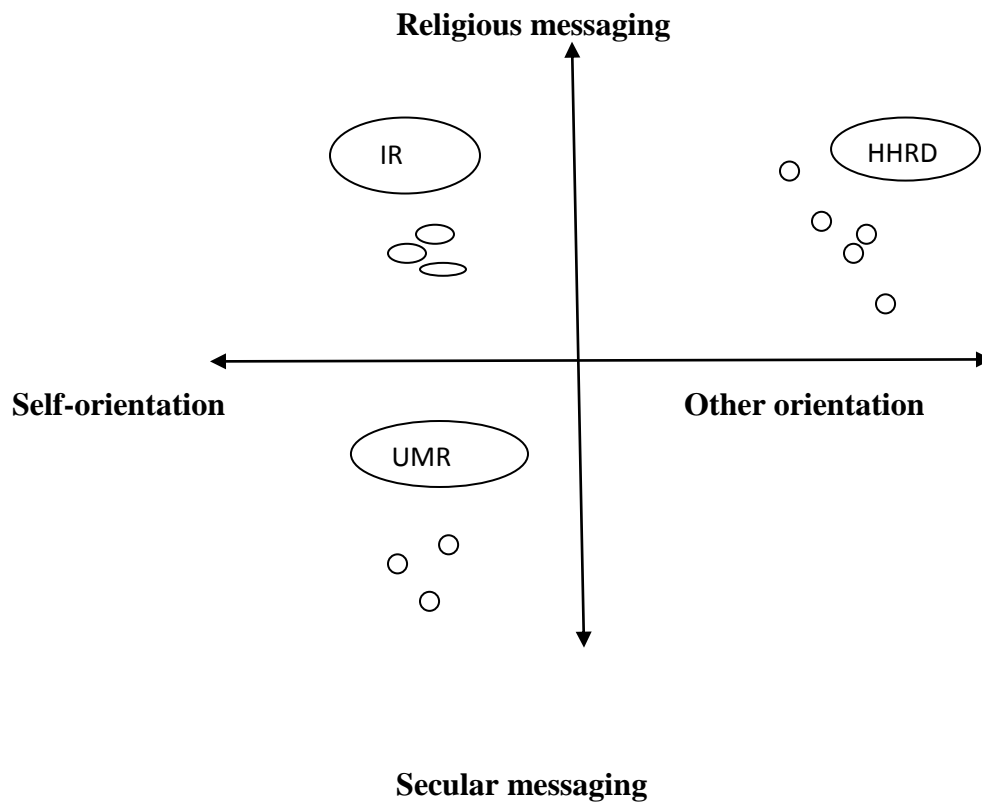**Fig 7: Strategic shift in Messaging**

Fig 8: Messaging across the three organizations – The most dominant features of their strategic marketing campaigns

While some organizations are definitely more 'religious' in their messaging, focusing on an 'other' orientation in their philanthropy, some of the newer ones, such as United Muslim Relief, that is run by student groups, around the country are decidedly more 'self' driven and can be considered more 'secular' in their messaging strategy.

As Giri (2013) has argued in his essay *The Calling of Practical Spirituality: Transformations in Science and Religion and New Dialogues on Self, Transcendence and Society,* in his book

Knowledge and Human Liberation, that practical spirituality is the way to address many issues of self-transformation and transformation of society. Giri adds "I wish to submit that it is practical spirituality which can contribute to the realization of a new *purusartha* of our times, involving transformations in science and religion and embodying a simultaneous multi-dimensional engagement with beauty, dignity and dialogue" (p.250). Practical spirituality in this sense embodies practice as well as experience of it. The practice of *zakat* and Sadaqa are good examples to examine, as they are deeply rooted in the Muslim theology and psyche, as well as the daily practice of ordinary Muslims, who may not know much of the theoretical or theological significance behind its practice. It is like music or art, in that it could transcend the conventional boundaries and dichotomies of 'theory' or 'practice'.

While this is not to say that those who are more 'secular' do not use religious messaging, the proportion of messaging that they predominantly use seems to fit their categorization, as I have made above. The limitations of the above model seems to be to the extent that these organizations have shifted or moved away from their earlier positioning. This data is not captured in my analysis, as I have sought to undertake analysis based on current data and there is no historical analysis included.

Conclusion and further research

This short paper is a preliminary investigation into the how *zakat* and sadaqa are being positioned by the NGOs that are strategizing its use. While it is not very exhaustive, focusing on the messaging used in a few of the campaigns, and also a purely qualitative approach, these results are certainly indicative of the trend, within these types of organizations.

While not exhaustive, this investigation has shown that the norms of giving among American Muslims are being impacted by broader socio-cultural and economic understandings of what is considered 'mainstream' and 'trendy' in American society. While the delivery of charity and its 'packaging' are certainly heavily influenced by 'modern' tools, the interpretive lens that many of the practicing Muslims use to make decisions about *zakat* and sadaqa are still rooted in tradition. There is a lot of room for interpretation and the NGOs under study are making use of this opportunity to interpret the intended purposes of *zakat* and *sadaqa*, to suit the needs of a largely non-Muslim America. To this extent, the religious leaders (mosque Imams or elders of the community) do play a significant role. As the 2011 Mosque Survey by Dr. Ihsan Bagby shows, a majority of the mosque leaders and Imams refer to the Qur'an and Hadith and follow interpretations that takes account of its purposes and modern circumstances (p.27). The survey also adds that some scholars follow the traditional way of the *maddhabs* – or the legal schools of thought, while only one percent of leaders follow the literalist way of interpreting the *Qur'an*. If this is true, then the American NGO sector can be considered a very 'progressive' one where traditional ideas often get re-interpreted to suit the needs of modern society.

The younger Muslims, who are often second or third generation Americans, are acting as the 'dragomans' of this tradition, translating practices in the Islamic tradition and merging them with mainstream American acts and norms. For instance, while there is nothing in the 'Islamic' tradition that bars fund-raising events, many NGOs shun away from large, ostentatious events, (the two NGOs examined here are an exception, rather than the rule) which mean a lot of financial investment and entertainment etc. Islamic Relief, as we have seen organizes such events and also brings in 'celebrity endorsements.' Several famous Cricket players, Musicians and others continue to endorse the NGO that is one of the largest of its kind in the world. While

the 'fastathons' and 'cookie sales' are seemingly innocuous attempts at garnering some visibility, they could also be seen as attempts at 'branding' *zakat* and s*adaqa* in a way that it edgy, current and innovative. The Mullahs have given way to the Millennials, and the youth, working with the older generation, are creating a new discourse of giving.

While not entirely theological, nor entirely 'pragmatic' the giving practices towards these NGOs seem to be bordering on the notions of re-imagining and re-evaluating the concept of charity in Islam, and hence I contend that this could fit the framework that Giri offers us – that of practical spirituality. This 'in-between' space of philanthropic giving practices can be crucial for our understanding of how philanthropy and in turn Islam is being re-imagined in the U.S. in particular and the West in general. These developments in American Muslim giving – that of transformations that are ongoing are also challenging the binaries between self and 'other' that have been part of the discourse of 'community' and giving.

As Benthall has argued, the Islamic notion of giving is raw material, ready for Islamic reformists to pick up and put to use. He says that it might also suggest a way out for some of the contradictions in Western charity, with the Western charity bearers as bearers of magical fixes. "The Islamic notion that a poor person in the community is, or ought to be, a source of public shame is one that could be fruitfully built on; and is in tune with some of the fund-raising approaches adopted by Western charities such as Oxfam since the 1960s" (p.18). He further argues, using the example of charities in Sudan and Britain that Islamic charities are seeking common ground with secular aid agencies and aiming at high professional standards. There are various ways of interpreting philanthropy and given the orientation of the founders of the NGO, the organization carries out its philanthropic practices in that direction. Further, as Petersen

(2011) has demonstrated, the discourses of faith-inspired or 'secular' giving are merging among the NGOs that she has studied.

As I have argued through the examples from American Muslim NGO sector, the discourse of giving brings together and builds some deep contradictions in both the Islamic and market-oriented traditions. As Ghaneabassiri argues: "Since the relationality of Western Muslim histories is negotiated differently by different actors in varying historical circumstances, its study begins with the assumption that diversity is the norm and thus calls for the pluralization of our terms of analysis. There is no modernity, but negotiated modernities. No monolithic Muslim community but Muslim communities with varying visions of Islam that stand pluralistically in relation to one another as well as to non-Muslim communities" (2012, p.462).This is a key requirement, as we proceed with a study of Islamic philanthropy. Even within the two case studies examined here, there is much variation in terms of the level of religiosity that both these NGOs' promote, the kinds of discourses they allude, among other things. I have tried to empirically demonstrate the former, while theoretically drawn conclusions from various scholars' works to show the latter. This insight about consumption philanthropy in America is crucial for us in understanding how philanthropy is evolving and the direction it is headed in.

The question, as to whether religiously inspired organizations are stuck in a time-warp and are struggling to 'transform' into modern entities seems a bit of an exaggeration, as these cases demonstrate. Even though two of the three organizations : IR and HHRD are influenced by religious understandings of *zakat* and *sadaqa*, they seem to be also at the 'cutting edge' of doing international development work, offering 'strategic' avenues for American Muslims to engage in international issues as well as building a 'community' of givers. A more appropriate question

that arises from this preliminary research seems to be: How are American Muslim faith-based organizations utilizing ideas of strategic giving in the religious realm? A deeper examination of the preliminary results here will yield a deeper and richer answer; and one that is a better reflection of the changing nature of American Muslim giving.

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