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LESSONS FROM A TEACHING LIFE: TOWARDS A MUSLIM AFRICAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE ON SERVICE LEARNING

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of
The Ohio State University

By
Daa'iyah Abdur-Rashid, B.A., M.Ed.

*****

The Ohio State University
1999

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Approved by
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1999
ABSTRACT

Service learning is increasingly hailed as one of the most promising innovations in the educational reform movement. It is imperative, therefore, that its conceptualization and theoretical base be derived from a multi versus mono-cultural foundation if it is to avoid the pitfalls of other reform initiatives which, though well intentioned were unsuccessful with many non-dominant cultural groups because of their failure to consider culturally specific issues of conceptualization and implementation.

This qualitative study attempted to contribute to the pool of non-dominant cultural ideas available to inform service learning theory and production by utilizing a Godcentric analytical lens to look at the teaching and educational ideas of a leading Muslim African American educator. Through the employment of alternative methodological approaches the research found that Muslim African American perspectives on service learning are rooted in their Godcentric worldview and as well as their African and African American heritages. Themes such as othermothering, jihad (striving in the way of God) and cultural affirmation permeate their understanding of education and can inform dominant cultural perspectives on teaching. Additionally, the Muslim emphasis on the person of the teacher lead to the conceptualization of service learning as a tool to cultivate servant leadership—not just for the teacher, but for teacher educators and all those involved in the processes of education.
This dissertation is dedicated to my children
Safiyyah Ifraj, Taqiyyudeen, Ihsan Ibrahim
and Nafeesah my "first" baby
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Allah asks in the Holy Qur'an “Which of the favors of your lord will you deny?” My answer is that I seek to acknowledge all of Allah’s blessings but recognize that I will inevitably fall short. The names below represent a small portion of those who have extended themselves to help me. To all of you named and unnamed, thank you and thank Allah for sending you my way.

I especially want to acknowledge my gratitude to Sister Nuurah Amatullah Muhammad for agreeing to become a part of this study and whose knowledge and wisdom informed not only the research but my whole being as well. Other participants I want to acknowledge are Chaundra Salaam, Da’Nah Muhammad, Ferdous and Saboor Abdus-Salaam, Jeanette Nu’Man, Hiba Nasser, Saad Kaarkali and Temple Dunlop, Norma Tarazi, Sunni Islam and all the other members of the Islamic communities of Columbus, Ohio, Atlanta, Georgia and Kansas City, Missouri whose patience I imposed upon in the course of this project. A special acknowledgement is extended to Gloria Saleem Muhammad who tirelessly read multiple drafts, talked with me for hours on the phone and always offered valuable Islamic feedback and to Dr. Qadir Abdus-Sabur who offered a critical reading at the last hour.

I acknowledge and appreciate Dr. Cynthia Dillard, mentor, adviser, and friend whose faith in my abilities was matched by material support, encouragement, genuine concern and the ability to inspire me to push for excellence. I also acknowledge Dr.
Marilyn Johnston for "being there" with support and encouragement throughout my masters and doctoral studies. Further, I wish to acknowledge Dr. Helen Marks and my entire committee for their willingness to challenge and encourage me as I pursued a non-traditional mode of research and writing.

As the last of a group of four sisters to finish this doctoral process, I missed out on the direct impact of a writing circle, but I was sustained by the remembrances of our times together. I, therefore, acknowledge Drs. Melanie Carter, Marjorie Davis, and Cynthia Tyson. Their friendship along with the friendship and support of the women of Kensington Place—Carolyn Simpson, Edna Thomas, Carmen Medina and Dionne Blue, also helped see me through.

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Paradise, according to the Prophet (PBUH) lies at the feet of the mother. At my mother’s feet I learned the love of God, family and knowledge. There are no greater gifts than these. I acknowledge my mother, Alberta Thomas Davis, and her contribution to this project and thank her along with all the members of my family. This dissertation is as much theirs as it is mine. Thanks and God Bless.
VITA

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PUBLICATIONS


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Major Field: Education

Studies in multicultural education, community and family involvement and early and middle childhood education
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PRELUDE

This dissertation uses words, ideas and concepts that are not commonly known in Western academic circles. Therefore, throughout the text transliterated Arabic/Islamic terms, when introduced for the first time, are accompanied by an English translation in parenthesis. As additional support a glossary of Islamic terms is provided in Appendix A.
PREFACE

In search of self...

I wandered over the mountains
and valleys of my mind
searching for myself
I found me
somewhere
lost in his images of me
struggling for identity
helpless in his shadow
(personal musings, 1969)

Typically, our conversations with ourselves are performed in private, guarded spaces so that when we present ourselves to the world we can appear whole and "together". The temptation for neat and tidy self-presentation is tremendous, especially when the performance stage is the dissertation. However, my movement through the dissertation process has been anything but tidy. Yet, I invite you to witness me as I am—neither whole nor divided—simply human, wrestling with issues of soul, spirit and intellect. Join me here as I engage myself in a written dialogue that began over a year ago—a dialogue that is personal, provocative and revealing. Through my two voices, Daa’iyah and Iman, I negotiate the meaning of this dissertation in front of you and in so doing introduce to you the themes and issues that run throughout this work.

Mazzei argues that we live in a moment in educational research where "tidiness is no longer a virtue" (Mazzei, 1996, p. 63). Researchers are increasingly being called upon to disclose their personal subjectivities as well as many of the problematic areas of their
research. Lather (1994) describes this current state of affairs “As the concept of disinterested knowledge implodes and collapses inward, social inquiry becomes, in my present favorite definition of science, a much contested cultural space, a site of what it has historically suppressed” (pg. 103). Contemporary research, then, is generating new definitions and new protocols that revolve around the demand for openness, honesty and inclusion.

This preface is in response to the call for honesty and disclosure of the research endeavor. It begins as an open letter to myself. I write it as a letter of affirmation, consolation, celebration and hope. I write to the fourteen year old whose entry into the Quest is marked by the words above and I write for me, the woman she has become. I write to educators everywhere who are wandering and searching for “ways of being” that will allow them to be healers in their classrooms. I write as a Muslim African American woman committed to creating classroom and life spaces where the total human being—physical, mental, social/emotional and spiritual—is nurtured. I write as an act of worship.

An open letter to Daa’iyah from Iman  
August 1, 1997

Dear Daa’iyah,

Recognize that both worship of the creator of the universe and education have always been, in the context of the African American experience, revolutionary acts. It is small wonder then that the powers that be have sought so diligently to suppress them. It is small wonder that all these years later after desegregation and numerous reforms; after federal funds, state mandates and local control; after black studies and paradigm shifts the situation has not improved much—we are still in danger of becoming endangered.

2
This is so because we are at war. Finally, however, the enemy has been identified and we find that it is no one person, community or nation-state. In fact, Daa’iyah, we now know that the enemy is the body of ideas that we all possess. It is the assumptive underpinnings of our most cherished ideals. It is the frenzied and frantic thrust to produce for production’s sake; to educate solely for monetary gain; to ask how before knowing why and to reform education simply to avoid revolution and to thereby maintain the status quo.

We are in desperate need of a liberation pedagogy—a pedagogy that is grounded in our own cosmological, ontological, epistemological and axiological knowings. Daa’iyah, haven’t we always known that our connection to the higher power gives us power in our lives? Isn’t it past time to openly engage that knowing in creating ways of being in educational institutions and the worlds education creates? Aren’t we the ones, Daa’iyah, that must ask the questions and search out their answers? How do we combine our faith, intellect, culture and vision in a way that empowers and heals? What kind of knowledge can prepare teachers to teach in a way that honors and affirms all students, their families and their communities? In short, is there a pedagogical approach that is at once spiritually sound, culturally relevant and liberatory?

Well, maybe. There are a few promising alternatives on the horizon. Service learning is one that, I believe, holds enormous potential for African American children. At the very least, service learning can provide a bridge from the old ways of doing things (a way that has proven unsuccessful with a significant portion of African identified children) to more visionary and revolutionary ways. Although grounded in many traditional notions, service learning does push the envelope of convention, particularly in
the area of making education more purposeful. A purpose driven education challenges traditional school structures and policies.

Purposeful education can only be realized to the extent that educators lead purpose driven lives. For this reason, Daa’iyah, remember that our commitment to education is a commitment against oppression and know that “oppression is worse than slaughter” (Holy Qur’an, 2: 191). Also bear in mind the words of Lerone Bennett (1996) who said, “...an educator in a system of oppression is either a revolutionary or an oppressor” and then make your choice—not once, but over and over, again and again, day by day and moment by moment. Make it in this writing here and now!

To Iman, A-quick-reply

July, 1998

Thanks! Your words are encouraging and challenging. It is so easy to get caught up in the dissertation process—to mobilize the language of educational research discourse without mobilizing the heart and soul. It is so easy to compromise one’s ideals and to lose one’s sense of purpose. But purposefully choosing to transgress the boundaries of convention and write and think in a manner that acknowledges the spiritual and rational as inextricably linked is a necessary first step in the movement toward (re)creating an approach to education that nurtures the whole person. I am willing to take this first step. I have made the first choice.

And, this choice leads to a questioning of a curious vagueness and ambiguity in your comments. Are you sure you haven’t overly camouflaged the issue that is closest to your heart? Why have you not spoken openly about your belief in the oneness of God? Can you even honestly discuss education without first uncompromisingly stating that
your approach is Godcentric? That service learning is used as a point of entree into mainstream educational discourse, not simply because it employs cutting edge pedagogical strategies, but because it has a conceptual foundation that can easily be legitimized in a Godcentric educational paradigm. Admittedly, there are risks involved in taking a stand for Godcentricity in the context of a discourse on public education but ought we not take the risks?

Iman: Daa’iyah, your comments show a naivete and idealism that can prove deadly. Academic suicide will not position you to do the work that you must do. Remember that we are at war. In war one must be bold and cautious. The obvious answer is not always obvious. Consider that the very act of engaging this topic in open dialogue with you is an act of resistance of sorts.

Daa’iyah: You know what Iman? You are right. I remember the elation and gratitude that I felt when I stumbled upon “service learning” during my Masters of Education program. I had been searching for a research topic that was relevant and meaningful—one that I could fully embrace. In fact, I had prayed for guidance. Discovering service learning was an answer to my prayer.

I remember thinking and writing that “The idea of working in public education stirs up internal conflicts. It awakens sleeping demons. It puts me in the desired position of impacting young lives and it places me in the terrifying position of teaching out of a worldview that has dictated the systematic oppression of people like me. I can neither run from public education nor jump wholeheartedly into it” (Saleem, 1996). Then I
raised the question. "What can I do now in the field of education that will not compromise me...." And then finally I respond with "The thought of service learning is like a balm that soothes my war torn soul."

**Iman:** You do understand! The intensity of your personal struggle to remain intact while under attack in the academy is moving. It provides a critical example of the additional layers of challenges facing members of marginalized cultures in academe. Still, a word of caution is due. Service learning is no panacea. Admittedly, it does offer the potential to call a temporary cease fire to the war between the intellect and the heart. It does offer our children an opportunity to develop weapons to combat the disconnected life that Parker Palmer identifies as the consequence of an education out of sync with community and the sacred. But service learning alone can not and will not change the nature, the essence of public education. That challenge will be met by larger, more far reaching social movements.

**Daa’iyah:** Even though I know that you are right, I can not help but feel that I must at least do what I can do. After all, "one ounce of truth benefits like a ripple on a pond."

**Iman:** I love that line by Nikki Giovanni. Daa’iyah, when I think about it, my children, like many Muslim children, were in public school for a while. The education that they were receiving left me anxious and/or angry. If I swallowed the lack of attention to spiritual matters it would just be until I could choke on the blatant institutional racism or vice versa. Having worked closely with Muslim schools for years, I knew there had to be
a better way. Eventually, I pulled my children out of public school and decided to home school. It has worked out fine for them and yet I have no peace. I am plagued by a nagging knowing that my solution is not an option for most of us. I still have concerns for the children left behind—Muslim and non-Muslim, African Americans and all "others". I hope and pray that some way, some how I can be an instrument of positive change in their lives. I hope and pray that service learning pedagogy can help improve the education that they receive. I hope and pray for them even as I attempt to act on their behalf—What about you? What will you do to save our children?

Daa'iyah Iman Abdur-Rashid

August 28, 1998
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load
Or does it explode?
(Poem by Langston Hughes)

America is at war—a war that is being waged by unseen powers and obscured forces. A war that explodes deferred dreams into the heads, hearts and chests of inner-city children wreaking havoc and killing hope. Violence is so rampant in the nation's inner-cities that a young black male is in greater jeopardy of being shot on the streets than were soldiers on the battlefields of W.W.II (Children's Defense Fund, 1989)! One in five American children live below the poverty line. Homelessness is on the increase. Ecological crises abound and there have been dramatic shifts in the ways families are constituted as a result of a staggering divorce rate coupled with a rise in teenage pregnancies (Maybach, 1996; Orr, 1994; Root, 1994). Drug addictions are claiming more victims. And, in the midst of all this turmoil, educational institutions from the
kindergarten to the post-secondary have been identified as being "at risk" of failing to educate our children (Barber, 1992; Radest, 1993). America, it seems, is at war with itself.

Tumultuous times demand questions. What can be done to stop the violence? What can be done to stop the tide of death, destruction and despair that is engulfing American society in general and our African American communities in particular? What can be done to restore meaning, purpose and effectiveness to our "at risk" educational institutions? *What can be done to save our children, our communities and ourselves?*

Social scientists and educational researchers, indeed anyone and everyone that professes concern over the siege on urban America, have engaged in solution seeking activities ranging from casual brainstorming to scientific research and theorizing. While their collective efforts have yielded some results including the identification of several areas of concern such as improved education and the restoration of social capital, i.e., the rebuilding of our communities and our sense of civic responsibility, they have all but failed to acknowledge and identify the numerous sites where, even against the bleak and dreary backdrop of urban warfare, hope lives on (Rashid & Muhammad, 1992).

While there are numerous others (Bush, 1997; Hollins, 1982; Lee, Lomotey, & Shujaa, 1992; Ratteray, 1992), the Muslim African American community represents one such enclave and model of hope. It is my belief that within these veiled but viable pockets of promise, the potential to generate real solutions is enhanced. My personal background as a Muslim African American educator with well over a decade of experience working in Islamic educational institutions with numerous teachers, parents and students orients my research gaze in the direction of the Muslim school.
Inner-city Muslim schools are critical exemplars of an attempt by a segment of the African American community to create an environment where their children could learn in a safe, academically challenging and culturally congruent manner. The Muslim African American’s acceptance of the challenge to “create our own” is deeply rooted in the history of the African American experience. Though the Muslim school has been largely ignored by educational researchers, it represents, to a large extent, our proverbial “bird in the hand”.

*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush* (African Proverb)

But, what and who are they really—these keepers of the dream, our “birds in hand”—the Muslim schools? What in their philosophical and practical orientation enables them to survive and thrive despite the dangers and decay around them? How do Muslim schools compare with non-Muslim schools in terms of student motivation, curriculum, teacher preparation, test scores, etc.? Why do parents choose to send their children to Muslim schools? How do Muslim children feel about their overall experiences in a Muslim school? How are the children, parents and teachers connected to the broader African American community, e.g., from which segments of the African American community are the Muslim ranks derived? How does Islam impact the educational performance and needs of the Muslim child? Do non-Muslim children attend Muslim schools, if so, what is their experience? How do students who have experienced both public and Muslim schools compare their experiences? What difficulties do students experience upon switching school systems? Can the educational philosophy and practice of the Muslim educator somehow inform and contribute to the solution seeking theory producing activities that go on in the academy around issues of urban community
renewal and school reform? How do Muslim teachers negotiate their multiple priorities of God-centeredness, community outreach, moral leadership and academic excellence into a pedagogical approach? More specifically, what might the insights and knowledges of Muslim teachers, parents and students say about what has been identified as a most promising reform initiative, i.e. service learning?

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to address, let alone attempt to research all the questions generated above, yet their nature and sheer number underscores an essential point, i.e. that there is very limited knowledge about Muslim African Americans and any aspect of Muslim schooling. My research project seeks to confront this void by giving audience to the voice of a veteran Muslim educator and engaging her narratives and conversations in an exploration of the implications associated with the service learning reform initiative and its viability for urban schools.

Statement of the Problem

Much of service learning theory is like still waters—calm, peaceful, untroubled and unproblematic (Maybach, 1996). Clearly, there is a need to “trouble the still waters” by throwing into the discourse pool the perspectives and insights of non-dominant culture scholarship. The need for such an exercise arises because service learning is an emergent field limited in theoretical and conceptual depth and has consequently failed to attract much scholarly attention beyond that of its own group of adherents (Giles & Eyler, 1994). As a result, there is a paucity of non-mainstream commentary and critique in the field. In the past educational reforms that have been conceptualized and theorized from a mono versus multi cultural foundation have been largely unsuccessful with nondominant
culture children (Delpit, 1986, 1988; Gordon, 1990). If the service learning reform movement is to avoid some of the pitfalls of its predecessors, it is imperative that issues of cultural specificity be raised, seriously considered and, perhaps most importantly, employed in generating the theoretical and conceptual foundation on which policy and practice are built.

Troubling the still waters of service learning theory and practice with race, culture and class issues is important but not easy. The task is made especially difficult because of the widespread popularity and political support of the service learning movement. Republicans, democrats, educators, community activists, business persons and industrialists have all gone down on record as strong advocates of service learning (Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991). In such an enthusiastic climate, voices of concern and caution tend to be overlooked and ignored. However, ignoring a concern does not make it go away. Cultural, race and class issues must be addressed if the service learning movement is to fulfill its promise of making education more meaningfully responsive and related to societal needs and the needs of children.

The troubling of the still waters of service learning theory can best occur within the context of a broader “troubling of educational discourses”. The tendency in educational research and theory production to silence and subjugate all things spiritual when the purported center of concern is a people (African Americans) whose world view is decidedly spiritual/Godcentric (Mbiti, 1971; Paris, 1995) is problematic. The import of this problematic has not gone unnoticed by African American educational researchers and social scientists. Dillard (1998), Dillard, Tyson & Abdur-Rashid (in press), Stanfield (1994) along with numerous others (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1990; James-Myers, 1993;
Lightfoot, 1994) argue for the need for those of us who have been historically marginalized within dominant traditions of social science research to re-vision educational research and practice such that it includes and makes central excluded elements such as spirituality.

Muslim African American educators can and do “trouble” dominant culture theoretical discourses, and they can raise issues of cultural specificity as they think about and discuss service learning. Still, a question is suggested, “why them”? Why should the voices of Muslim African American educators be sought out and listened to? Are not they too small a group, too insignificant a subculture to matter (see appendix B for information on the Muslim American population)? What good will be their “voices” when what they will say is so linked to specific religious beliefs? Why does it matter what they think? Who cares?

All of us who profess a passion for education; who believe that every child should learn, who have read Dillard (1994), Delpit (1988) and Ladson-Billings (1994) and found affirmation and insight in their work; who are aware of the demographic tidal wave that is sweeping this country; who want to see changes in urban America; whose concerns about inner cities have escalated to fears—all of us should care. Muslim African Americans have had success where others have failed. They have ousted drug dealers from the community and or converted them to morally upright citizens (Al-Amin, 1993; Turner, 1997). They have established businesses and created jobs. They have been a beacon of hope and encouragement. But most importantly they have established independent black schools that operate free of government monies and control and that empower both communities and individuals.
The fact that *any* poor urban African American community, America's "pathological other" was busy doing what all the theories said could not be done went curiously unnoticed. Educational researchers, with their numerous theories on and incessant research into the "problem" in urban education, curiously overlooked the spaces and places within the inner cities where parents were involved, children were learning and the community clearly cared. Curiously (or perhaps by design) the development of a national system of educating a growing subculture within the African American cultural milieu failed to attract the critical attention of academic scholarship. Curiously (or by design) the Muslim community school went unnoticed, her successes unwitnessed, her challenges unsupported and her story untold. Shrouded and veiled by media mystique, misconception, bias and lack of attention the Muslim African American school remained an anomaly.

The freedom from direct outside influences that the Muslim school enjoyed has had the effect of allowing it to grow and expand according to the needs of the community and not from a push from an external authority. This phenomenon has created spaces where the educational beliefs, understanding, curricular and pedagogical approaches of the Muslim African American community could be refined through a natural culturally grounded process. The educators of the community were able to engage their own theories in their classrooms. They were able to be experimental based on their beliefs and the needs of the children they served. They were free to extract principles and apply lessons learned from studying mainstream educational discourses and squeeze, push, pull, tear out and add to them until they fit the culturally specific needs of their children. Consequently, they have developed a way of looking at mainstream educational practice
from a different imaginary, one in which the fit within their classrooms, with their children is a taken for granted site of negotiation and reflection.

The implication is clear. There is potential benefit in interrogating the thoughts of Muslim African American educators around emergent curricular and pedagogical practices, specifically service learning, that are being encouraged in urban schools. And, there is potential benefit in examining the Godcentric ways in which Muslim African American educational praxis honors rather than denigrates the rich cultural heritage of the African identified child.

Purpose of the Study

The primary intent of this study is to engage the theories, narratives and conversations of a veteran Muslim African American woman educator as she draws upon her experience working within urban public and private (Islamic) schools to explore the possibilities of service learning as a viable reform initiative within the urban African American community. It is also to examine and explore the educational implications of Godcentric thinking in culturally specific contexts and in educational research. Underneath, next to, in between and around this primary intent lies my subtler and less foregrounded personal desire to make sense of my existence, my own passions as they relate to Islam, education, research and the plight of African America. These goals in mind, the study attempts to:

1. Explore the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the contemporary service learning movement. What epistemologies ground contemporary discourses on
service learning in this country? To what extent are these epistemologies congruent with urban African American culture?

2. Analyze the implications of cultural relevancy as it relates to a model of service learning. At what place or places do the insights from a Muslim culturally grounded veteran teacher intersect with the theories, techniques and strategies; goals and aspirations of the service learning reform initiative and at what points do they diverge. Why?

3. Explore the inner terrain of a Godcentric spirituality and its outward manifestations in the classroom within a culturally-specific context paying particular attention to the enactment of the spiritually grounded service ethic in the educational context. What “general rules and principles can be practical guideposts for the enhancement of [Godcentric] thought and action in specific [classroom] contexts” (Paris, 1995, p. 21).

4. Examine what the conversations and narratives of a veteran Muslim African American women teacher says to me and about me as a Muslim woman, an educator and researcher? How does my status as an insider, sister friend and colleague inform the flow and form of this research project? How do I interrogate myself when I am “in the presence of my familiar?” What of the things I see and the things I don’t see, how can I interrupt and disrupt the silences—the gaps in my own “ways of being?”

Situating the Study Historically

Having provided a background, statement of the problem, and a section on the major intent of this research, it is now essential that I turn my attention to the task of
situating my work historically. Because the research focus involves several related yet distinct discourse streams, for example, service learning, culturally relevant pedagogy, Godcentricity and the Muslim African American community school, historicization of all demands shifts in subject matter that may, at times, appear uneasy or abrupt. Bear with me. Like parallel streams flowing toward a common destination, they do eventually come together and it is only together that they can define the context for the specific research questions which guide this study.

I begin by briefly historicizing the dialogue around African American education and then move to link that dialogue with service learning and culturally relevant pedagogy. This done, I shift and begin movement along another discourse stream. These different waters propel our discussion toward a brief historical look at Godcentric analysis and the Muslim African American experience. Finally, chapter one closes with a few words designed to create and synthesize our divergent streams into a unified conceptual pool that provide the context for the stating of our research questions. I turn now to my first and immediate task of defining the historical roots of contemporary educational discourses about African Americans.

You may write me down in history

There has been an historical tendency to blame African American children (Maeroff, 1982), their families and their communities for the problems they have encountered in American society at large, and with schooling in particular. This blaming has taken the form of eloquent “intellectual” discourses beginning with the early American “hard scientific” argument that the African occupies a lowly rung on the human evolutionary ladder and therefore was intellectually inferior to the European
(Jensen, 1984). Such discourses devolved to include the “soft scientific” suggestion that the problem was not at all rooted in bio-genetics but rather culture and they have reached their current manifestation in the contemporary “combination scientific” assertions, an example of which is found in the book *The Bell Curve*, where hard and soft scientific “evidences” are united into a comprehensive “theory” of African American cultural and genetic inferiority (Institute N.H.I., 1995).

Each pseudo-scientific narrative is characterized by its own peculiar language constructs. The biogenetic narrative gave rise to the notion of IQ as a determinant of cognitive aptitude. From the soft scientific explanation, constructs such as “cultural vacuum” and “cultural deficit” emerged (Jensen, 1984). Contemporary combination discourses have generated the concept of a “cognitive elite” where a few select blacks and other people of color along with the majority of Europeans unite to govern and to exterminate the expendable/criminal black and lower classes (Institute NHI, 1995). Thus, the “inferiority thesis” has been a recurring theme informing and driving the theory making of most European American educators in both the past and contemporary society.

In systematic and law like fashion inferiority discourses have given rise to instructional strategies and curricula that denigrate the cultural heritage of the African identified child (Akbar, 1985; Ani, 1994; Asante, 1988; Dillard, 1994; Gordon, 1990; Kunjufu, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Murtadha, 1995; Woodson, 1977). Black inferiority/white supremacist discourses dictate the systematic distortion and/or neglect of African American culture and history with the result that many African American students feel alienated from the processes of schooling.
Following the historical traditions of race related research by African Americans, today’s African American scholars are vigorously challenging and deconstructing the white supremacist narrative and its racist cultural artifacts (schools) and knowledge products (educational research and theories) (Akbar, 1985; Ani, 1994; Asante, 1988; Gordon, 1990; Woodson, 1977). Some of these scholars are primarily attending to the successes by identifying those individuals who beat the odds and were able to “make a way out of no way” and in so doing offer hope and possibilities in the place of the doom and gloom of the past (Crichlow, Goodwin, Shakes & Swartz, 1990; Dillard, 1994, 1996; Hollins, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Others are attempting to provide alternative paradigmatic frameworks that are grounded in the life worlds of Africans throughout the diaspora (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1988, 1990; Institute N.H.I., 1995; King, 1991; Schiele, 1998).

Despite their different approaches to the problem, a common thread throughout most contemporary African American academic scholarship is their deliberate attempt to see self and community through eyes of compassion versus contempt; acceptance versus rejection; and hope versus despair. They are all passionately engaged in a process designed to free their hearts, minds and spirits from the shackles of what Akbar (1983) calls the “chains and images of psychological slavery.” Any pedagogical approach that affirms the spirit and humanity of the African identified child must likewise grow out of a similar emancipatory framework. There is a need therefore to interrogate white supremacist originated assumptions embedded in existing theories of pedagogy, curriculum, and institutional structures in education and to create and/or identify alternatives (Crichlow et. al, 1990; Gordon, 1990; Stanfield, 1985).
More specifically, there is a need for a focused, critical, culturally inflected examination of how white supremacist dogma has influenced our taken for granted notions about learning and schooling. There is a need to generate culturally relevant methodological and pedagogical models. There is a need to examine the intersection of contemporary schooling and educational reform initiatives with the insights and knowledge products of those within the African American community whose educational theory production work has, over a wide range of time, consciously and deliberately attempted to locate itself outside of Euro-American hegemony.

This study attempts to address at least one of these articulated needs by exploring the site where one specific reform initiative—service learning—and the culturally relevant insights of Muslim African American educators converge. Politically, the service learning reform movement is a response to the federally legislated Community Service Acts of 1989, 1990 and 1993. These legislative Acts have sparked a fervor of interest around service learning that has had rippling effects at every level of both public and private education from the elementary school to the university. It is precisely this myriad of potentialities that has caused service learning to capture the national imagination and allowed for the development of bi-partisan support for legislation which promotes and funds the service learning school reform movement.

The Commission on National and Community Service (CNCS) is one of the largest funding conduits for federal grants to support service learning programming having awarded $64 million dollars in 1993 to "150 states, colleges, community-based organizations, Indian tribes, and other institutions (Kraft, 1996)." CNCS's definition of service learning, because of its wide use is employed in this context also:
A service learning program provides educational experiences:
a. under which students learn and develop through active
participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences
that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in
collaboration with school and community;
b. that are integrated into the student’s academic curriculum or
provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write
about what the student did and saw during the actual service
activity;
c. that provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired
skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities;
and
d. that enhance what is taught in school by extending student
learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to
foster the development of a sense of caring for others (p. 136).

Here, service learning is clearly defined as a set of pedagogical strategies that engage
student learners in real life settings conducting real life tasks and attempting the
resolution of real life problems. Community service, on the other hand, is the offering of
service to the community with no direct classroom linkages. (Now for the abrupt change
that I forewarned.)

_If I were not at war, I would be in love_

Two lines of a poem by an unknown poet capture the existential dilemma of the
African American experience. Africans throughout the diaspora share a deeply spiritual
worldview (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1988, 1990; Mbiti, 1971; Paris, 1995; Schiele, 1998), where the interrelationships between people, indeed, the interconnectedness of all aspects of creation, are highly valued. And yet, because of the constant realities of violence and the incessant danger of physical, spiritual, cultural and psychic attack, African Americans have been forced to develop a culture of resistance—a culture that seeks not to connect with but rather to separate itself from, to resist the insidious genocidal tactics of the Eurocentric domination.

Black Americans...have rarely accepted the subordinate position forced upon them by the larger white society. American racism and exploitation have therefore generated Black protest/ [resistance].

(Morris, 1989, pg. ix).

Resistance is therefore defined as a natural and ongoing aspect of dominated lived experience—not as an occasional aberrant spontaneous response. An assumption of the historical continuity of resistance, then, allows for the identification of organizational/institutional structures, indigenous resources, goals, leadership styles, religious understandings and even educational philosophies and pedagogical practices that are critical locations of resistance by their very nature.

*You can't have their minds: Education as a site of resistance*

Of mythic proportions within the Muslim community is the story of Sister Clara Muhammad who is said to have started the first Muslim school when she began to keep her own children home to teach them herself. When truant officers came to her doors to inquire about the absences of the children, they ended up threatening Sister Clara. But, Sister Clara stood her ground and told them in a firm bold voice, "I will die as dead as
this door knob, before I allow my children to attend public school!" They left her alone after that (Muhammad & Shakoor-Abdullah, 1996, p. 1).

Muslim African Americans institutionalized resistance in every facet of the educational system they created. Resistance ranged from confrontations with the ontological to the reshaping and revisioning of the pedagogical. Critical culturally relevant curriculum dominated the classroom scene. Teachers, students and parents were constantly engaged in critical analysis of Eurocentricity and all its many manifestations. Muslim African Americans were engaged wholeheartedly in the struggle to name and identify themselves and their community.

In his book, Islam in the African American Experience, Turner (1997) calls the act of naming and identifying self as "signification" and describes it as having dual significance in the Muslim African American experience...

...the religion has a central spiritual, communal, and global meaning among African American Muslims, based on a genuine conversion experience rooted in global Islam and divorced in some ways from American politics and public life. On the other hand, Islam has a political and cultural meaning in African American popular culture. This latter meaning locates and utilizes the symbols of Islam outside the confines of the mosque and particular Muslim communities and asserts their life and meaning in a general understanding and articulation of African-American cultural and political identities (p. 4).
Turner's insightful analysis divides the discussion of the Muslim African American into two thematics: First, there is the transcendent Godcentricity of the Muslim and second there is the sociopolitical interpretation and response to lived African American experience. The relationship of the Muslim African American to the sociopolitical realities of the broader community of African Americans is identical. Hence, their/our need to look critically at the dominant cultural educational approaches to flesh out the implicit cultural biases is ever present.

The relationship of the Muslim African American to "global Islam" is, though outside of American politics and social realities, nevertheless applicable and in that sense not removed at all. The Godcentricity of the Muslim African American is certainly similar to the Godcentricity/spirituality of Africans throughout the diaspora. In fact, the tendency of the African American community to frame cultural critique in a Godcentric analysis is exemplified in contemporary entertainers such as the Last Poets', "the white man has a God complex". As a Muslim, I couldn't come up with a better analysis. Situating cultural critique within the framework of one's relationship with and perception of the divine is, in my view, very consistent with Islam.

Conclusion

Hopefully, wading through the waters of the multiple discourses gathered thus far leads us to our research questions and whets our appetites to know, to understand and to seek out the knowledge products of the Muslim African American as we are allowed to open a window into an aspect of African American educational resistance that has heretofore been closed. And, because of the urgency of the moment with respect to the
dire condition of many of our urban public schools (Kozol, 1990), we frame our search through the discourse of one of the most promising contemporary reform initiatives—service learning.
CHAPTER 2

A (RE)VIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Many of us lived one-eyed lives.

We rely largely on the mind to form our image of reality.
But today more and more of us are opening the other eye,
the eye of the heart, looking for realities to which
our mind's eye is blind. Either eye alone is not enough.
(Palmer, 1993, p. xxiii)

What do Muslim teachers using Godcentric/spiritual approaches to education understand about teaching and learning in Muslim contexts that might be generalizable to public schools and to the discourses around service learning? How can Muslim teachers inform current discourses around service learning? Are the current models of service learning culturally relevant—what are their social, historical and political roots and epistemologies? What processes, if necessary, must be engaged and which variables must be considered to move service learning models toward cultural relevancy? What are the personal and educational implications of conducting Godcentric research?

The purpose of this chapter, a review of the literature, is to provide the theoretical and philosophical background necessary to construct a response to these questions. The literature review proceeds in a conscious deliberate manner from what I understand and perceive to be the heart of this study as Palmer (1998) explains, “heart” in its ancient sense, as the “place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self” (p.11). I begin this chapter in a “place” where heart resides openly
unencumbered by Western dichotomies that place at odds the intellectual versus the spiritual; the scientific versus the sacred; and the subjectivity versus objectivity. I begin this chapter with an explication of the Muslim and her worldview—a look at her religion and an exploration of its relationship to her constructed notions about education. Like other places in the literature review, this first section pushes at conventional boundaries and definitions of dissertation protocol as I acknowledge and include my personal engagement with Islam. I also employ some of the writing strategies that qualitative researchers often "advocate but seldom use" (Middleton, 1996, p. 3).

Literature reviews are traditionally sites where authorial voices are used to recount "objective" readings of academic texts. In contrast, in this first section I am present speaking with you about Islam (the religion of the Muslim) and talking with you about Tawhid (the unitive principle that permeates Islamic philosophy) and lamenting in front of you the veritable void in scholarship in an area that I so deeply value. Middleton (1996) argues that this approach does not necessarily compromise the quality of the scientific enterprise and it is not a "license for undisciplined indulgence. Rather, if done well, it can help us to do better science by making visible to the reader the processes which are hidden beneath the mask of disembodied uninvolved which traditional accounts have required" (p. 19).

With the heart of the matter revealed, the next section of the literature review maintains the critical orientation of the first section as it historicizes and interrogates existing scholarship on service learning. Here again, protocol is sacrificed to purpose as I meld together an analytical stance that openly engages a culturally inflected Godcentric lens that creates opportunities for looking anew at phenomena and gaining new insights.
in new ways. The concluding section of the literature review serves two main purposes. First, it critically historicizes the evolution of the Muslim school movement and situates it within the broader sphere of African American Independent school historiography and secondly, it provides a conceptual bridge to the next chapter on methodology.

Muslim African American Educational Thought

*I will speak genius to myself* (from Ruth Forman, 1993)

When I decided to pursue graduate studies, I really wanted to attend the American Muslim Teachers College (AMTC) located in Randolph, Virginia. However, life led me down a different path. I ended up attending a large predominantly white institution and found that in many ways I was entering a war zone—where everything about me, from my faith to my culture, was constantly under attack. I knew I had to "talk genius to myself" (Forman, 1993). I decided quickly that to survive intact I needed to digest what it means to do battle on an uneven battleground where the mere acknowledgement of war was treated as an attack by my attackers. I had to do my homework. I began with the familiar. I picked up my scriptural text and devoured the words of the creator to create in me a spiritual reservoir. I revisited DuBois and Woodson and developed the theoretical grounding for my intuitive insights. I also became acquainted with more recent scholars such as Asante (1990), Ani (1994), Akbar (1983), Rasheed (1992), Rashid, (1992), Abdus-Sabur (1992), Phillips (1990), McCloud (1995) and a host of others. Rashid's (1992) words below explain my angst.

The fundamental models and theories of Western education are not acceptable for the structuring of Islamic education
as they ignore spiritual development as an aspect of world
view and they disregard the concept of tawhid (literally tawhid
means making something one)...(p. 43).

Through my independent study I was affirmed. Much of the information that was being
passed off as knowledge were simply stories, narratives of the evolution of intellectual
traditions within the Western knowledge project.

I discovered, too, that several important issues are tucked away under the
“narrative about narratives. There is a hidden assumption about the nature of reality—a
“truth” within which all postmodern Western scientists must put absolute faith. This
fundamental truth is that there are no fundamental truths (Lather, 1994); that multiple
realities and truth claims remain valid until they are contested and made transparent
through rational argumentation (Greene, 1991); and that “God” is either nonexistent or
unimportant to the construction of our notions of reality and the ways we live our lives
and conduct our affairs. Religiosity is an option albeit viable for some—especially those
given to dogmatism and magical thinking.

Even while members of the Western knowledge project push their narrative about
some “God trick” (Hardings, 1993), they situate themselves as God and demand strict
unyielding submission. Asante (1990) describes this phenomenon as:

The religion of science, with its rituals, priesthood, orthodoxy,
apostates, liturgy and converts. It is the dominant outlook of the
Western world. ...This religion of science sees everything as
profane nothing is sacred except man. With this view of the world
European man often assumes to be a god. The scholar becomes
the priest, the assistant professor the altar boy, and Newton, Darwin and Freud are made saints to be worshipped (Asante, 1990, p.80).

As I see it, the current "faith in God leads to dogmatism and oppression" narrative has achieved a multicultural acceptance that is amazing given the pervasive societal resistance to multiculturalism! Even many of those whose historical cultural experiences occurred outside of the "Europeans fleeing religious persecution" story uncritically accept this rationale for avoiding "organized religion." As a Muslim, I ask myself questions. How can such a feat be possible? Is it because they have hit upon truth? Or might there be other socially constructed, politically imbedded reasons? Perhaps not, but then why are the questions silenced, unasked? Who decides which questions surface at the public forum? What does the absent presence of a Godcentric/spiritual discourse conceal and what does it reveal? Why? Are there consequences of a mass cultural disdain for God? For the spiritual? How is the discourse on religion constructed such that its arguments for and against have a monocultural tone? Whose interests are served in the suppression of organized religion? The historical track record of Eurocentric hegemony is not one that is weighted heavily in the area of looking out for the needs of the disempowered and the marginalized--why should I think that their disdain for religion looks out for me now? Why have religiously grounded liberation discourses been marginalized (e.g. Black Liberation Theology and Latino Liberation Theology)? Why is global Islamic resurgence portrayed so negatively in the media? Why is the mass conversion of African Americans to Islam not portrayed at all?
Tawhid: The fabric of our lives

Muslim African Americans “live” at the intersection of African American culture and Islam. Where there are border disputes and other skirmishes, Islam rules. Otherwise there is peaceful coexistence. As Muslim African Americans, we see no problem with this arrangement and feel that it is fair and just because Islam simply means the path of submission to the One God, and that is what we truly want—to know God even as we are known (Palmer, 1993), and to live our lives in complete submission to God’s will and to no one and nothing else. That, we believe, is true freedom.

The path of submission that Islam embodies is manifested in the concept of Tawhid. “Literally Tawhid means unification (making something one) or ‘asserting oneness’ and it comes from the Arabic verb wāhhaba which ... means to unite, unify or consolidate” (Phillips, 1990). Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him (PBUH), taught only the concept of Tawhid for the first thirteen years of his prophetic life (Rahman, 1980). According to Rahman (1980) Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) teaching of Tawhid included both a philosophical and a practical component. “He explained not only its meaning and significance but also all the demands and requisites of the belief in One God” (p.12). As Muslim educators, we take this Sunnah (example of the Prophet PBUH) as the normative example by which we attempt to guide our pedagogical practices and curricular decisions. We strive for a Tawhidic approach to education.

Tawhid is the philosophical expression of the belief that there is one creation stemming from the One God. That even though there were many messengers they delivered One message. That the creation itself is a message from God. That underneath the variety in creation the same messages are conveyed. That the creation is unified,
interconnected and interrelated. It is orderly, balanced and harmonious. The belief or assumption that the universe and by extension all of creation is orderly is at the root of all scientific enterprise, i.e. it is what makes science possible. All scientists whether students of the physical, biological or spiritual sciences, implicitly accept that through the application of specific methodologies, they will come to know more fully and understand more deeply some pattern in some aspect of their chosen field of study.

Thus, a Muslim educator views herself as a scientist of education. We attempt to draw out from the Qur'an (the last in a succession of revealed texts from God), the Sunnah, and the creation concrete examples as well as guiding principles of pedagogical movements and curricular choices. We willingly accept to face the challenge of extracting "...from the Qur'an [and the Sunnah] the proper ideology, the proper way to look at the external world of reality" (Muhammad, 1982, p. 20).

Rasheed (1992) argues that "accumulating knowledge (studying the signs in creation) is an act of divine worship that strengthens our faith in God" that is encouraged in both Qur'an and Sunnah. Numerous Quranic ayaat (verses or signs) extol the virtues of reflecting, observing and engaging in intellectual pursuits (Holy Qur'an, 20:114; 7:179; 39:9; 10:6). Islamically, intellectual work is highly valued and those who participate in the pursuit of knowledge are deemed honorable. Hence, the hadith (saying of Prophet Muhammad PBUH) that "The ink of the scholar is greater than the blood of the martyr."

Tawhid: The fabric of our education

Tawhid infuses the pursuit of knowledge with a moral imperative where the ought-to-be’s and ought-to-do’s are openly confronted and considered. Therefore, as a
Muslim African American educator I join other Muslim educators in arguing that faith without action is flawed, knowledge without purpose is dangerous and an education without service is wasted (AbuSulayman, 1993; Faruqi, 1982.) We are living in an historical moment where the need for critical sustained action is upon us. We do not have time to waste time. Using Tyson's (1997) metaphor, it is our house that is on fire and we must be about the business of putting out the flames. It is African American children, Muslim and non-Muslim, who are being shot and killed in the inner-city battlefields where drugs are more available than a good education.

The Muslim educational ethos embraces the ought-to-do as a guide directing the way the threads of creation and purpose are woven into the fabric of our education. Alkebu-Lan & Alkebu-Lan (1991) maintains that given that the creation was purposefully created by the Creator, then purpose is a constitutive part of all that exists where creation refers to not just the created world but to a “process of change, evolution and growth which brings the human being into excellence” (p.1). Helping children to identify, clarify and pursue their purpose is a major goal of Islamic education.

As Muslim African American educators we actively search for ways to make the knowledge that is imparted and constructed meaningful not only for the children in the classroom but in their lived lives as well. We seek to construct an education that emphasizes both process and product in a complicated paradoxical manner that leads to a profound way of thinking and being rather than to either or simplicity (Alkebu-Lan & Alkebu-Lan, 1991). We strive for an education that leads to the establishment of the ought-to-be by engaging ourselves and our students in the ought-to-do’s. Service is not an option, it is as Edelman (1993) says “the rent that we pay for living.” Much like
Noddings' (1992) circles of care, we ground our education first in learning to do for self and then, by moving out in ever-expanding circles of concern, we learn to do for others.

Interestingly, this ‘do for self’ initial emphasis implicitly employs a conceptual understanding of “self” that at once embodies and transcends the individual. The “self” is simultaneously individual, familial and communal. Muslim African Americans recognize that in American society racism haunts African Americans regardless of their religious affiliations. Consequently, the call to “do for self” is a call to overcome the historical legacy of racist injustice and inequity and to do so in a way that serves and helps all those who share the burdens such a legacy imposes. Thus, the very conceptualization of the call “do for self” is rooted in a culturally nuanced understanding of unity and the service ethic.

Muslim educators, like many of their African American colleagues (Hollins, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, Lomotey & Shujaa, 1992) outside of the Islamic fold, addressed the challenge to educate our children by honoring the culture they brought with them to school. They, like Delpit (1988), argued that their students needed to learn phonics and standard ways of talking in order to make it on the outside, i.e. to acquire cultural capital to better negotiate mainstream American culture. Long before the multicultural teaching and textbook movement came en vogue, Muslim African American educators had sounded a call to “develop our own ways of teaching, our own textbooks that more accurately represent our history, etc.” (Muhammad, 1982, p. 18).

Today, when service learning has been crowned the "sleeping giant of school reform" (Nathan & Kielmeier, 1991) and service learning programs are being heavily pushed and backed by public and private funding—funding that is already finding its way
into inner-city communities, it could prove instructive to seek out and listen to what Muslim African American educators have to say. Their insights might contribute to a broader multi versus mono-cultural way of conceptualizing service learning. It is the need for a multicultural theoretical base for service learning that drives the critical nature of the following section.

Service learning

Within the past twenty years, there has been a resurgence of interest in community service and service learning. In the 1970's and 80's several states began to require a certain number of hours of community service for high school graduation. The year 1985 saw the formation of Campus Compact, an agency designed to promote service learning at the collegiate level. In 1986, the AACC (American Association of Community Colleges) issued a statement urging that all community colleges "encourage a service program at their institution, one that begins with clearly stated educational objectives" (Barnett, 1996). By 1988, President Bush introduced his "Points of Light" campaign where individual citizens were encouraged to take up community service and within a year the National Community Service Act of 1989 was signed (Children’s Defense Fund, 1989). The 1989 Act has been followed by two subsequent legislative acts-the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and the National Service Trust Act of 1993.

Service learning is being embraced by a broad and diverse group of advocates, each of whom brings to his/her vision of service learning a unique outlook as to its primary ideals, potentialities and purposes. These intellectual, political and moral goals, indeed most of the outcomes envisioned, will be realized to the extent to which service
learning pedagogy is effectively enacted in education. It is this realization of the centrality of pedagogy, coupled with an acknowledgment of the need for greater theoretical depth, that directs the focus of this literature review toward a critical look at service learning in teacher education programs. But first, let’s examine the historical background of service learning.

**Historical background**

Roots of service learning theory appear in every setting where human beings come together in interdependence and communal living. The articulation of fundamental service learning concepts in the context of formal schooling in mainstream America is, however, credited to John Dewey and his contemporaries in the Progressive Movement (Bell, 1995; Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Giles, 1992; Kendall, 1992). Service learning theorists have dutifully unearthed the Deweyian roots expressed in his classic books *Experience and Education* (1938), *The School and Society* (1915) and *Democracy and Education* (1916) giving particular attention to his discussion of the "organic connection between education and personal experience" (Giles, 1992); the need for mutually negotiated learning objectives (Kraft, 1996); ideas on the nature of learning (Conrad & Hedin, 1991); nature of experience (Bell, 1995); and citizenship and democratic education (Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Fertman, 1994; Seigel & Rockwood, 1993).

When seeking to critically review any literature base, particularly that of one as politically, culturally and historically embedded as service learning, it is first necessary to situate the topic/academic field contextually. Stanfield (1985) elaborates

> No matter how well tested a theory is and no matter well constructed social research instruments
are, they are human constructs and are therefore embedded in the cultural background of social scientists. The social sciences are ethnocultural institutions that...are reflectors and microcosms of the social hegemony of Euro-Americans (p. 387).

It is essential therefore to make explicit the pervasive albeit invisible specter of Euro-American hegemony more often termed "white supremacy" (hooks, 1995; Scheurich & Young, 1997) and its concomitant assumptions and presuppositions because the whole of the academy is informed by white supremacist dogma. Earlier in this work we turned to the words of Asante (1990) to help rethink white supremacy through a Godcentric lens. His argument that science is the religion of the west and that Europeans have positioned themselves as gods helps us to understand the challenges and the resistance, the sense of entitlement and the arrogance that characterize white supremacist thinking. With such understanding in hand we can look anew at Eurocentric hegemony in service learning theory. Bell (1995) calls to mind the radical musings of John Dewey who stated that "any theory and set of practices is dogmatic which is not based upon critical examination of its own underlying principles" (p. 10).

Ironically, then it is the oft quoted Dewey who offers, from a Eurocentric perspective, an argument that underscores the need for a critique of his work. Acknowledging a need to offer a more inclusive analysis of the historical roots of service learning, does not preclude the recognition of the overwhelming influence of Dewey's theories in shaping the conceptualization of contemporary mainstream service learning. Dewey's major theoretical contributions to service learning have been analyzed in two
parts: First, from the perspective of the service/social component and then again from that of the learning. His theoretical contributions in the area of service grow out of his philosophical discourses on issues of democracy, citizenship and community. In terms of learning Dewey's insights into the interrelationship between experience, education and reflection along with his concept of the continuity of experience and the experiential continuum have had particular currency as conceptual and analytical tools (Giles & Eyler, 1994).

Again, there is no argument that Dewey’s contribution has been significant. However, it is worth noting that other American cultural and schooling traditions such as those found in Native (Olszewski, 1993) and African American communities (Anderson, 1988; Gordon, 1990; Stanfield, 1994) have also generated indigenous practical and scholarly theories on the integration of service and learning. Bearskin, a Winnebago Native American, states “My earliest training in the home impressed me with the philosophy of our forbearers. It was taught to us that if one could be of service to his people, this is one of the greatest honors there is” (Olszewski, p. 4).

Yet, the attention they have received from theorists in the academic community is negligible. This tendency to render invisible the contributions of non-white Americans is a critical issue born of the arrogance of white supremacist thinking that is itself born of the positioning of Europeans as gods superior to all others. Such thought processes have profound, dangerous and potentially deadly implications.

Carter G. Woodson, in what Wynter (1992) calls a "Copernican turn", successfully isolated a key causal variable in the reproduction of oppressive social structures when he postulated that there was a direct causal relationship between
classroom misrepresentations of "Negroes" and the lynching that was then occurring in the society. Woodson (1933/1977) states "The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything [gods] and has accomplished everything worth while, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and will never measure up to the standards of other peoples" (p. xiii). Thus, he goes on to assert that "there would be no lynching if it did not start in the schoolroom" (p. 3).

Service learning literature is a living exemplar of the very heart of Woodson's argument. By developing a theoretical and conceptual base in the history of only one group of people it sets up a power dynamic that privileges those whose history is taught. Consequently, the would-be-service learning participant enters into her/his service with a knowledge base that has preconditioned him/her to see the poor, the needy and the person of color as deficient. Even those preservice teachers imbued with the best of humanitarian intentions may find it difficult, if not impossible, to approach as equals those whom, through omission or commission, they have been taught to disrespect and devalue. Such attitudes, no matter how latent, invariably impact the structure of the relationships that develop (Ani, 1994).

Kendall’s (1992) reflection on some of the causes of the death of an earlier era in service learning suggests that the failure to take into account the full humanity of the service recipient evidenced in such acts as planning for, versus with, recipients can sabotage and undermine the intent of the whole program. Her story of a personal experience illustrates an oft recurring outcome:

As an undergraduate tutor of farm children in Chapel
Hill, North Carolina, from 1969-1971, I learned that universities and well intentioned students cannot determine what the community needs. When the superintendent invited us to go back to the campus where you belong and reminded us that he didn't invite us to come teach his fifth graders how to do calculus anyway, I was given a vivid firsthand lesson that people must decide what their own needs are and how those needs will be met (p. 11).

Among Africentrist and black feminists (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1990; James-Myers, 1993; hooks, 1994, 1995; Schiele, 1998) there is general agreement that these kinds of occurrences are the result of the hegemonic and unchallenged assumptions of white supremacist thinking whereby to consider the "other's" perspective is a non-issue because of the implicit negation of their "true" humanity and the consequent perception of their inability to know their own needs. According to Maybach (1996) the dynamics of service learning shifts when historically marginalized people are the "doers" of the service. Booker T. Washington (1970), made the same observation over 100 years ago in his book *Up from Slavery*. In the same text Washington both articulates an experience based educational approach and describes his own concrete experience as a participant and founder of Tuskegee Institute where students not only built the buildings in which academic instruction occurred but made the bricks as well. All of this took place within a spirit of service inculcated by a culturally specific notion of the interrelationship between service and learning.
The American Negro Academy, a think tank of African American intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century, described in its mission statement, principles and strategies currently embraced in service learning philosophy (Gordon, 1990). The language in which these principles were articulated however was culturally relevant and culturally specific—just like the language in which Dewey articulated his theories is culturally relevant and culturally specific. However, in imperialistic type acts of Eurocentric hegemony (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1990) attempts were made to universalize the Deweyian approach and to either ignore or devalue the former.

Woodson's (1919/1968) *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861* portrays numerous stories of enslaved Africans who endured life and freedom threatening risks for the sake of learning to read then turning around and again risking the same in service to the cause of teaching others to read. The historically appropriate and culturally embedded construct of racial uplift parallel Deweyian theories about meaningfulness in the educative process. Early African American theorists such as Woodson, DuBois, Washington, Bond, Bullock (Gordon, 1990) and others offer another way of conceptualizing and theorizing service learning. Many successful grassroots community service programming naturally employ a culturally relevant theoretical frame by consciously and deliberately drawing from the historical insights and conceptualizations of service learning theory imbedded in the obscured scholarship of early African American intellectuals (Gordon, 1990; Saleem, 1996). Research on these community-based efforts might reveal ways to facilitate the implementation of service learning within the African American community. Again, the imperative of rethinking service learning is underscored as we next explore the conceptual foundations supporting current
pedagogical moves in teacher education programs and their ability to respond
appropriately to diverse and urban communities of children.

But let us not move too quickly. Before we go any further, before we begin
another exploration, let us revisit the review thus far. So far, our surface ratiocination is
in black and white, race and ethnicity, power and oppression. Such framing of the review
of the literature yielded some very important insights that though not inconsistent with
Godcentric analysis may, if taken in isolation, fail to mirror the complexities, the
paradoxical and profound truths that a comprehensive Godcentric reading of service
learning literature can provide.

A Godcentric reading will reveal that there are other potential treasures that
remain hidden, obscured by our conceptual tools of choice. We started this particular
section of the literature review by redefining white supremacy as essentially a
pathological disorder that situates white as right, Godlike and normed. We followed that
premise up with some very convincing evidence that gave voice to the silenced dialogue
of the service learning ethic in African American culture; that showed some ways that
unexamined beliefs and assumptions about “others” got in the way of achieving the goals
of service learning; and that underscored the need to both create and explore alternatives
to existing models of service learning. What we have failed to do is to look at service
learning through Tawhidic lenses.

Through Tawhidic Lenses

In gazing at service learning scholarship in teacher education through Tawhid
colored lenses a curious thing happens. Distinctions between individuals along class,
race, age, and all other lines are muted against the backdrop of their common humanity.
Consequently, biases for and/or against particular segments of humanity become
magnified and are more easily discernible. Nowhere is the inequity more glaring than in
the very definition of service learning. But before addressing the definition of service
learning, I need to say a few words about my approach to this discussion.

As stated earlier, I believe that the intellectual, political and moral goals of service
learning, indeed most of the outcomes envisioned, will be realized to the extent to which
service learning pedagogy is effectively enacted in elementary and secondary education.
The effective enactment of K-12 service learning pedagogy is contingent upon the
development of a cadre of purpose filled teachers who are armed with the character,
knowledge and skills, i.e. the "know-how and the be-how" to be leaders and healers in
their classrooms and in their communities. My intention here is to deploy a Godcentric
analytic lens to conduct an alternative reading of the definition of service learning and the
major teacher education models which have arisen and evolved out of that definition and
its epistemic roots to ascertain the viability of current service learning teacher education
programs for the task at hand.

Simply put, my approach is an attempt to uproot and examine the implicit
epistemological foundations of service learning as currently conceived in the Western
knowledge project. Towards this end, the Commission on National and Community
Service (CSNS) definition presented in the first chapter is repeated here in an effort to
facilitate the ensuing discussion:

A service learning program provides educational experiences:

a. under which students learn and develop through active
participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences
that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with school and community;
b. that are integrated into the student’s academic curriculum or provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity;
c. that provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities; and
d. that enhance what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others (p. 136).

The CNCS defines service learning totally in terms of the student’s service and the student’s learning. Why? From a Tawhidic perspective, Prophetic wisdom enjoins service to humanity and the pursuit of knowledge from “the cradle to the grave” on every servant of God (and we are all potentially servants of God!). Why is it that some of us are supported and encouraged to seek knowledge and not others? The language of the definition builds the center of care and concern around the student. It is the student who is to learn and develop—and the “other”, i.e. the service recipient is merely served. It is the student who is engaged in reflected upon experiences—the “other” is the means through which the student is enabled to gain her experience and about whom she reflects. It is the student that is provided with “opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge”—the “other” is the object of the student’s actions. Of course, there is
mention of collaboration and community but no other explication and exploration of exactly what is meant in terms of the "other" individuals involved. The terms collaboration and community become decoys to deflect attention away from the underlying raison d'etre of the whole service learning program which is to facilitate the development and growth of the student using a community, preferably one that is marginalized and in need.

This is a critical issue that is symptomatic of one of the most fundamental problems in service learning programming, evaluation, research and philosophy today: The failure to adequately frame the service experience in terms that would support the growth and development of all those involved—the students, service recipients, faculty and the administration (Kendall, 1992; Maybach, 1996). Lifelong learning has always been a prerequisite to successful negotiation of human existence but it is especially true of contemporary times. It would seem essential therefore, that the "service" include attempts to attend to the learning needs of all participants whether they be young or old, differently abled, financially challenged or whatever. They could benefit from being at the center of care around which a service learning program is constructed. When something as obvious as the learning needs of the other humans involved is overlooked, a warning signal is sounded that something is fundamentally wrong. Questions emerge. Who are the students? And, who is the other?

Statistics tell us that students particularly those in teacher education programs are predominantly middle-class, white and female. The "other" tend to be made of the lower classes and people of color. So, again we have a program designed so as to disproportionately benefit the privileged. This theoretical oversight is, to a large extent, a
consequence of the uncritical hegemonic currents that flow unbounded and unbridled by critiques and commentary from contrasting epistemes (Abul Fadl, 1990). The potential effect is to diminish the possible merit and impact of service learning by making it yet another means for the reinscription of the status quo. Reinscription of the status quo means strengthening rather than lessening the tentacles of white supremacy. Such allegations have been levied against other reform initiatives as well. Delpit (1986, 1988) identifies ways in which one well researched and theorized reform initiative in literacy, designed to promote academic achievement had an adverse impact on African American students because the theoretical and analytic roots were grounded in hegemonic soil. Gordon's (1990) references similar incidences in other areas of the reform movement.

While it was relatively easy to point out that, all too often, the locus of concern in service learning programming is not extended to all human beings involved, it is more difficult to tease out the ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions that preclude a deep and profound generalized ethic of care from developing in the first place. One way to move toward a more penetrating analysis and understanding is by appropriating "an idiom of inquiry which attempts to transcend the conventional confines of arbitrary and historical dualisms" and recognizing that there is an inevitable and inextricable link between "episteme and society" (Abu Fadl, 1990, p. 17).

Abu Fadl (1990) attempts to contrast the episteme of contemporary Western society with that of the Tawhidic episteme. She notes that

...The one [Western society] is postulated on the autonomy of human reason, the other [Islamic society] places this autonomy beyond human reason; divine revelation is the axial to the latter mode
and the circuit of human consciousness operates within its framework, unlike in the former where divine is incidental or marginal and is itself made to be contingent on human consciousness. In the one mode, the phenomenal/visible world is (the life world and society) is a self-sufficient, self-subsistent entity which begin and ends with itself in the here and now; in the other mode...the life world exists in time and points beyond itself: history is only a fraction of an extended temporal zone which spans the hereafter and relates it to the here and now (p. 18).

Abul Fadl’s major point is that epistemic assumptions underlie social theory. In this sense Foucault’s (Winkle, 1989) assertion that all theory lacks innocence has relevance for our discussion. It would be naïve and reckless to assume that the rampant disregard for the humanity of all but a few is coincidental. It is not. Rather, the CNCS definition and its reluctance and/or inability to even frame the conceptualization of service learning in terms that at least honor the humanity of all involved is a logical consequence of an ontological framework that is wholly imbedded in the here and now and recognizes a fixed and expendable amount of resources. Ani (1994) and James-Myers (1993) identify assumptions about scarcity being tied to the development of a certain attitudinal predisposition toward the valuation of people based on their possessions. Thus, with respect to service learning theory, it may be hard to truly work for the enrichment of others if you believe on some level that their enrichment may eventually mean your impoverishment.
No wonder then that the student’s voice is sanctioned as the mouthpiece for the service learning movement. But, where are the voices of all the others involved? If we only hear from the student we never are in a position to assess the service activity itself. Thus, we become as Barber (1992) fears, dedicated and committed to the “cause” of service and thinking little or nothing about the “effects” of service.

Critically thinking about the effects of the service might lead to a different reading of service learning especially if we ask ourselves provocative questions like: How does the epistemic fear of scarcity and other epistemic undercurrents get translated into service learning models of teacher education?

Theoretically and practically the CSNS definition translates into service learning programming comprised of four essential elements or processes—preparation, service/experience, reflection and celebration (Duckenfield & Swanson, 1992; Duckenfield, 1995; Fertman, 1994). These elements, though arranged in a multiplicity of formats, are employed in teacher education programs throughout the country. The specific why’s and how’s of individual teacher education service learning programs are determined by the rationale driving those program design.

Educational researchers have identified several different rationale for integrating service learning into teacher education programs (Root, 1994). These rationale range from that of creating avenues for the predominantly white female middle class preservice student to get exposure and experience in settings that are distinctly different from her own cultural background but in which she may spend some portion of her professional career (Tellez & Hlbeowitsch, 1993); to helping equip teachers with the skill and knowledge to implement service learning in their own classrooms (Anderson, Deithahn,
These teacher education service learning models can be subjected to analysis utilizing a typology developed by Kahne and Westheimer (1994) where programs are differentiated on the basis of whether their principle goal is charity or change, and that further identifies the manifestation/expression of the charity/change goal in the intellectual, moral and political domain. Following is a table excerpted from Kahne and Westheimer’s article “In the Service of What?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Moral</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Intellectual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>Giving</td>
<td>Civic duty</td>
<td>Additive experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Social reconstruction</td>
<td>Transformative Experience</td>
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Charity is the act of giving—from the privileged to the less privileged, from the empowered to the disempowered, from those at the center of society to those at its margins. Charity in its purest sense is an act of altruism where the giver receives nothing from the recipient of his or her service but is rewarded by an inner feeling of “having done something good”. Charity is not necessarily concerned with the broad societal issues imbedded within the needs that it encounters. It does not necessarily require challenging or even questioning the status quo. Above all, charity does not require a personal engagement with the “other”. Thus, charity can lead to the kind of attitude portrayed in a quote taken from a former service learning participant (Maybach, 1996): “Doing service as a college student was such a meaningful experience for me. I hope my children have the opportunity to work in homeless shelters” (p. 226.). Clearly the
statement projects a state of dysconsciousness, i.e. the uncritical acceptance of the status quo.

Again, through Tawhidyic lenses differences are muted against the backdrop of a common humanity. All are human beings and servants of God. All face the challenge of submission. All have shortcomings and strengths. And, all are encouraged to pray: “O Allah! I seek refuge in you from ...the evils of poverty and of wealth” (al-Ghazali, 1986, p. 97).

There is a hadith which asserts that the believer is to change an oppressive wrong through action via the hands, or through the mouth, i.e. speaking out against wrongdoing and oppression, or to, at the very least to hate it in his/her heart. And the latter is viewed as the weakest of faith. The bottom line is that even the weakest of acceptable acts is not dysconsciousness. It acknowledges and critically analyzes oppression, even if for reasons of circumstance, lack of knowledge, will or character, s/he is unable to change the oppression.

Muslim Schools and the Independent Black School Movement

Rashid and Muhammad (1992) open their article on The Sister Clara Muhammad Schools (SCMS) by describing the SCMS’ earlier forms as “the ideological predecessors of both the Black Nationalist independent education movement of the 1960's and the current Afrocentric education movement” (p 178). I would add, however, that the Muslim schools were also evolved from a rich historical tradition of independent educational initiatives within the African American community. As both heir and predecessor of traditions of independent schooling, an examination of the Muslim
African American school experience can do much to build a foundation for understanding Black independent schools. Now, however, let us first glance back at the history.

Early Independent Black Schooling Initiatives

Independent schools sprouted up in both the northern and southern states. In the north, free Blacks formed a variety of institutions to educate their children. One of the earliest was begun in 1787 by the New York Afrikan Free School. The early 1800's also witnessed the establishment of independent educational initiatives with schools and societies opening up in Philadelphia, Rhode Island, Baltimore, Pittsburgh and a host of other cities throughout the northeast (Franklin & Anderson, 1978). In the south, during the slavery era, some 500+ secret schools existed solely because the transported Africans' drive for education was so compelling that even the threat of death could not still the desire for literacy and learning. These clandestine, southern schools along with their sister schools, in the north mark the beginnings of the Black independent schools movement (Woodson, 1919/1968).

By the time the Federal government got around to sending agents to set up schools for the freed slaves, they found independently funded Black schools operating everywhere they went. Anderson (1988) documents the dismay turned hostility of White benefactors and missionaries who misconstrued the former slaves insistence upon controlling and determining their own educational destiny as arrogance and false pride. They were baffled over the reluctance and/or downright refusal of the ex-slaves to dissolve their societies and institutions in favor of White publicly funded ones.
Perhaps these ex-slaves intuited what Garvey articulated at the turn of the century when he stated, “The present system of education is calculated to subjugate the majority and elevate the minority.” (Hill, 1987, p. 263). Garvey also advocated the creation of an educational system that was grounded in the culture and history of African peoples. Garvey’s call for independent Black institutions was heeded years later by a small band of African Americans during a period ushered in on the heels of the federal destruction of Garvey’s movement.

The first Muslim African American school of record began in the 1930's amidst a decade of despair and depression for Americans in general and African Americans in particular (Turner, 1997). It was the decade that gave birth to Woodson’s (1933/1977) *Miseducation of the Negro* and a decade that saw the untold numbers of African Americans due to lynchings, rape, burnings and beatings (Rashid & Muhammad, 1992).

Also in the 1930's, DuBois raised the issue “Does the Negro need separate schools”? The responses that he offered to this deep and provocative question resonate closely with the challenges facing public urban schools today and go a long way in offering a rationale that still explains to some extent the development of an independent alternative school system

...There are many public school systems in the North where Negroes are admitted and tolerated, but they are not educated; they are crucified. ...Under such circumstances, there is no room for argument as to whether the Negro needs separate schools or not. The plain fact faces us, that either he will have separate schools or he will not be educated. ...There are times when one must stand
up for principle at the cost of discomfort, harm, and death. But in
the case of the young, you must consider not simply yourself but the
children and the relation of children to life. It is difficult to think of
anything more important for the development of a people than proper
training of their children; and yet I have repeatedly seen wise and
loving colored parents take infinite pains to force their little children into
schools where the white children, white teachers, and white parents
despise and resented the dark child, made mock of it and literally
rendered its life a living hell. Such parents want their child to 'fight' it
out,—but, dear God, at what [cost] (p. 330-331).

DuBois' words of 60 years ago echo in the research report containing comments of
teachers in today's schools.

During a recent visit to a large suburban high school in the Midwest,
teachers told me that some of their colleagues openly refer to basic
math classes as "monkey math" and to black students as "city students",
while referring to white students as "our students." Several white students
told me that these "city students" were their school's major problem,
bringing with them "their drugs and bad attitudes." (Teacher Magazine,
1994).

Today's parents of children attending independent Black institutions have
decided, as did their historical counterparts, that the cost is, indeed too high.
The University of Islam

The University of Islam, precursor to the contemporary Sister Clara Muhammad School and predecessor to the Africentric school movement, started in the early 1930's in Detroit, Michigan in the living room of Clara and Elijah Muhammad. Despite the name "University" it was not a system of higher education at all, instead the University of Islam was really was an elementary and secondary school with Clara Muhammad as its first teacher (Rashid & Muhammad, 1992). The University of Islam began teaching in ways that "placed Black people at the center of civilization, made them feel good about themselves and led them to view Caucasians as 'devils'" (p. 179). Universities based their curriculum and teaching strategies on the teachings of the Nation of Islam, "a social movement of African American people based on a philosophy that included concepts from Al-Islam, Christianity and a mythology ...conveyed by Fard Muhammad" (p. 180). Rashid & Muhammad (1992) testify to the accuracy of the Nation’s social commentary and assert that "it articulated the conditions, needs and aspirations of a large segment of the African American community, identified its oppressors, and offered specific programs for its self determination" (p. 180). The primary aim of the Universities were to teach African Americans to "know self, love self and do for self" (Bush, p. 106), and the curriculum and texts were either created or selected to accomplish these goals.

For nearly thirty years—from the thirties until the 60's, Nation of Islam schools are credited with being "virtually alone in providing Black children with instruction and guidance that stressed self-knowledge, self-reliance and self-discipline" (Rashid & Muhammad, 1992; Bush, 1997). The sixties paved the way for another era where the
rhetoric and ideology of the Nation of Islam incited and informed the Black nationalist movement.

Malcolm X was the force that catapulted the Nation of Islam onto the national scene. His fiery and eloquent speeches ignited the seething rage of Black America and swelled the Nation's ranks. His speeches, along with the re-discovered scholarship of Black intellectuals such as Woodson, DuBois and Garvey ignited the Black Power movement. By 1965, the year of El-Hajj Malik's assassination (Malcom formally changed his name after making the pilgrimage to Mecca), the Nation of Islam was well on its way to realizing its goal of having a school in each of its many locations throughout the United States and the Black Power movement was well on its way to founding the Black Studies movement on college campuses (Bush, 1997). Eventually many of the founders of the college Black Studies movement were instrumental in founding a similar movement in K-12 education and in 1972 the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) was formed. CIBI still exists and there are numerous CIBI affiliated schools throughout the country.

Despite their overt and forceful rejection of American public schooling, Muslim African Americans held education in high regard (Akbar, 1982). When Shalaby conducted research into the Nation's schools in the late sixties, he found a system of education designed to foster identity transformation and cultural renewal. He described the University of Islam as approaching its students in a "holistic [way] that included curriculum that focused on both self reliance and self knowledge" (Rashid & Muhammad, p. 181). According to Rashid & Muhammad, C. Eric Lincoln had made a similar discovery when he observed the Nation's schools in the early 1960's:
Muslim schools are emphasizing Negro history, Negro achievements and the contributions of Negroes in the world’s great cultures and the development of the American nation. These facts are rarely taught in public schools and the Muslims may be alone in trying to bring the Negro community to an awareness of racial heritage. (p.290).

**Islamic Education**

Elijah Muhammad died in 1975, and with his passing the era of the Nation of Islam came to an end. Elijah Muhammad’s successor and son, Imam Warith Deen Muhammad, set immediately upon the task of turning the community into an orthodox Muslim community. The name of the organization and its schools were changed to the World Community of Islam in the West (and later to the American Muslim Mission) and the Sister Clara Muhammad Schools respectively. Already, despite the social commentary calling all whites devils, the Nation had in place certain Islamic ideas, principles and practices that actually facilitated the transition toward fully embracing the beliefs and practices of the global Islamic community. For example, daily individual acts of worship, a month of fasting and organized charity already institutionalized within the Nation of Islam closely paralleled orthodox practices in Islam. For the majority of followers of Elijah Muhammad, the community transition was an almost anticipated evolutionary step.

Even many of the then 41+ schools had been gradually prepared for change, through their increased exposure to the Qur’an, Arabic and immigrant Muslims. The curricular changes meant that “while students in the Sister Clara Muhammad schools
were to continue to be taught about the African origins of and contributions to
civilization, their religious education was to become consistent with the belief system
embraced by over one billion Muslims throughout the world” (Rashid & Muhammad p.
182).

The transition of the Nation of Islam’s University of Islam school system into the
American Muslim Mission’s Sister Clara Muhammad School’s marks a process of
moving from ethnocentricity to Godcentricity. It marks a fundamental ontological and
epistemological shift that simultaneously expanded, bounded, and recentered the
philosophy such that the cultural ethos and stories—the triumphs and struggles of Africans
throughout the African Diaspora came to be viewed through Tawhidi lenses. The
journey toward an Islamic based approach to education has been arduous. The spiritual
and intellectual work necessary for a shift of the magnitude described has taxed the
educators and the entire SCMS school system. National conferences and eventually the
establishment of the Muslim Teachers College in 1991 are some of the practical
responses to the challenge of Islamizing the knowledge and pedagogy.

On a lesser, more personal scale, this same struggle gets played out in the
following chapter on methodology as I grapple with what it means to me, as a Muslim
African American educational researcher, to conduct research from a culturally relevant,
gender sensitive, Godcentric location. Chapter 3 articulates my efforts to bring a
Tawhidi lens and focus to the knowledge production processes of the academy while it
actually enacts and responds to some of the problematics facing a Muslim African
American scholar.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Traveling toward higher ground

If all you want is an intellectual...
Someone to compose complex
and sophisticated sentences
intelligible to a select and secluded few
I can intellectualize
I can analyze and theorize
mobilize and utilize
the communicentric hegemony
that oppresses the many
for a favored few
I can intellectualize
But...
What will Allah say
If I use my gifts that way?
(personal musings, 1996)

In qualitative dissertations, the methodology chapter reveals and clarifies the
theoretical and philosophical leanings of the researcher and the research project. It is the
stage upon which the doctoral student displays her sophisticated grasp of both theory and
application by divulging the rationale behind the strategies and techniques she employed in
the formulation of her research design and during her data collection and analysis.
Traditionally, it is here in this chapter where the legitimacy of her specific research project
and the entire academic enterprise is asserted and/or reaffirmed. In this dissertation I have
consistently sought to simultaneously honor, challenge and transcend the traditional. In
this, the methodology chapter, I again invite you into a transgressive discourse that enacts the problematic posed in its opening words by employing the language and conceptual constructs of the academy to challenge and transcend the language and conceptual constructs of the academy. I enact my response to the question “What will Allah say if I use my gifts that way” by doing what I think I ought to do. I attempt to use my writing as a spiritual, philosophical and methodological offering to those seeking alternatives to dichotomous ways of thinking about research and as an open challenge to many of the traditions and assumptions of the Western knowledge project.

There is widespread recognition and acceptance of the futility in attempting value free research. All research, indeed all human action, is an outer expression of an inner world of assumptions, values and beliefs. Lather (1986b) explains that knowledge is “socially constructed, historically embedded and valuationally based... [research] scholarship that makes its biases part of its argument has arisen as a new contender for legitimacy” (p. 260). Dillard (1998) similarly argues that “[all research] is social construction and a cultural endeavor” (p.6 ). Historically, validity issues as defined in the positivist traditions have obscured and masked the fact that the very nature of research makes it a subjective and not a neutral endeavor.

This epistemological rupture from Western scientistic traditions enamored with neutrality and objectivity has opened spaces for alternative approaches. It is in these spaces that I work to sculpt an epistemological framework and methodological approach that celebrates and embraces my Islamic grounded spirituality. My sculpting takes form in the following three sections, each of which is concerned with a specific methodological
issue. Individually, they represent my attempt to carve out my own place amongst and between the maze of paradigmatic positions, ethical postures, and technical choices prevalent in the research world of today. Collectively, they give voice and audience to my struggles and triumphs as I search my heart for a way of being and doing research that honors me both as a Muslim African American woman and as a novice educational researcher.

Paradigmatic Positioning

Inside/outside and against: A methodological tale of positionality in a postmodern scene

This first section of the methodology chapter tells the research tale (Van Maanen, 1988; Richardson, 1997). It narrates the story behind the study. It makes explicit the assumptive underpinnings flowing beneath the surface of choices, strategies and practices that I made in the implementation of the research project. It articulates the practical methodological implications of an Islamic paradigmatic approach to inquiry.

The movement towards a completed knowledge product called a dissertation was conceived by the “powers that be” as a kind of journey, an intellectual odyssey through research territory—a rocky, rigorous and dangerous terrain with theoretical mountains to climb, oceans of discourse to traverse and streams of polysyllabic words with sophisticated, complex and complicated ideologies to cross over. It was never intended to acknowledge, introduce or embrace the spiritual. It was never intended to acknowledge, introduce or embrace me.
Is there a place in the academy for me?

And so I sit where I have been placed, outside of the postpositivist moment looking at it from a distance with lenses that reveal something of its secrets and silent spaces. The places in research country where even postpositivists with their inclusiveness and open mindedness fear to tarry, where even they remain remarkably exclusionary and singularly close-minded.

I sit where I have chosen to sit, comfortably outside, in the company of believers, of African Americans, of women—all "others." We sit in the presence of the Divine, reading scripture, making salah (the formal ritual daily individual acts of worship in Islam, often translated as prayer), singing praises, seeking guidance, studying virtue, talking truth, developing plans that will heal, that will empower, that will save.

Even while I am outside, I sit inside the postpositivist moment. It is part of the conversation that I was born into when I gave birth to myself as an aspiring researcher. I have sat in classes and traveled to the land of theories. I have collected mountainous piles of articles, and swam so far into postpositivism that I was in danger of drowning in an ocean of ideas, values and beliefs that would have destroyed the me I value. Instead, I emerged stronger from the exercise of swimming and determined to be heard. I am a Muslim African American woman with a definite vision and purpose for this study.

I sit inside the postpositivist moment talking theory, ignoring indifference, challenging stereotypes. I speak truth to theory in the classrooms, in the hallways, in my writing. I am a religious, intelligent, critical thinker capable of seeing outside of my own chosen path, capable of acknowledging God and science, capable of seeing truth in
multiple sites, capable of mobilizing the language of the academy to hold up a mirror so that it too has an opportunity to heal, to see itself. Religion is not the only site of dogmatism, fanaticism, self-righteousness and a “I know better than thou” self indulgent arrogance.

I sit situated against postpositivism because in it I see so much of what existed before. Once again, there is no where I can be fully myself. Borrowing from Scheurich’s (1994) “masks of validity” metaphor I posit that the postpositivist paradigmatic proliferation is also masked. It, too, conceals “a profound and disturbing sameness” (p.3). Like ripples in a pond, each expanding circle of waves (discourse) owes its origin to a singular ontological stone throwing act. In fact, I submit that even positivism is in response to this same event. The ocean of discourse into which the ontological stone has been thrown is one where deeply submerged ideologies and beliefs flow in uncharted unexamined currents beneath the rippling surface waters.

I swim against these underwater currents that silently sweep away the problematics, that dismiss, disfigure and distort spirituality such that God is not a part of the conversation. That tell tall tales—a narrative that trivializes God as simply story, a conceptual tool of pre-intellectual minds, a creation of convenience, the opium of the masses. The academy, in the name of freedom, attempts to usurp my right to name the world. They name the world as Godless, and the God loving as addicted, pathetic, uncritical. In defiance of their names, I choose my own, and I give it my meaning. I am a believer, striving for submission to God. I name this pursuit my life’s vocation and label it as honorable and good. I am a Muslim African American woman with a definite vision
and purpose for this study.

Is there a place in the academy for me?

In the second asking of this question, I turn my gaze not so much to where I position myself paradigmatically but to how I can present myself textually (Richardson, 1997; Frances, 1996). I look at issues of access, audience and authorship (Coffey, 1996; St. Pierre, 1996). I consider realist, confessional and impressionist tales (Van Maanen, 1988).

Where do I want to be in this writing? Where should I be? I turn to Islam for guidance and I find it among some words of the Prophet (PBUH). "Honesty", the Prophet (PBUH) said, "is on the road to righteousness..." That is the road I want to travel so I resolve to be honest in my writing? How much honesty is necessary? What should I be honest about? Complete honesty involves a complete knowing. Only Allah knows completely. My writing can only approach the ideal. It will never reach it. Yet, I must try. The struggle for honesty demands soul searching, a willingness to dig beyond the surface of my familiar, to seek out hidden suppressed personal attitudes, thoughts, ideas. It involves my engaging the why's of my researcherly ways. It involves reflexivity. Reflexivity is a buzzword of the postmodern scene. I wonder if I would try to be reflexive if it were not embraced by the academy. I think I would, but I strive for honesty. I honestly don't know.

In the Arabic, the Qur'an is rhythmical, poetic, eloquent and beautiful. My writing strives for these qualities. I employ literary devices such as alliteration, metaphor, repetition. I use poetry to introduce sections of my work for drama and effect. I use Qur'anic ayaat (i.e. verses) to orient the flow of thought as my writing is approached by
the reader. Again, the postmodern moment embraces the use of such literary techniques and blurred writing genres (Lightfoot, 1994; Lather, 1986a, 1991; Richardson, 1997; St. Pierre, 1993). I wonder if I would try if it didn’t. I strive for honesty. I honestly don’t know.

I look at the Qur’an as a literary text that is non-linear and recursive. I seek non-linearity and recursiveness in my writing. Fortunately, this too coincides with the flavor of the current qualitative moment (Richardson, 1997; St. Pierre, 1993). The literary style that dominates the Qur’an is the narrative or story. The Qur’an is permeated with recursive tales that, upon reflection, relate deep insights about everything from the metaphysical to the mundane (Holy Qur’an, 3:1-5). It stands, therefore, as a model legitimating for me as a Muslim scholar the use of narrative as a tool to both acquire and convey knowledge. I use narrative format to acquire and (re)present the data stories. Among qualitative researchers, the story or narrative as a site for the embodiment of personal and professional knowledge has been well documented (Middleton, 1996). It is acceptable. It is postmodern. I wonder if I would try if it weren’t. I strive for honesty. I honestly don’t know.

I keep a journal to record my thoughts. These musings are included as a part of the multiplicity of texts that come together to form the whole dissertation tale. They are not separated out, the unsolicited comments from family, friends and colleagues. My family throws out tidbits of organic research “everybody got a story to tell”, “no point in being book smart but life dumb”, “same folk you see going up you see coming down”. I devour their words and they become part of me, transforming my way of looking, thinking and
being in my researcher world. They become part of the words that I pull from as I attempt

to weave the research tale. I attempt to integrate “make as one” -- the Tawhidic principle is

enacted.

The Qur’an says of itself that it is easy to understand and remember. I seek therefore
to simplify my writing. To make my text user friendly, I experiment with various forms of
data presentation such as poetry, written mosaics and dialogue. When writing up the data,
I avoid polysyllables and reach instead for the simple and familiar words that more people
are likely to know. The academy loves polysyllabism, it values the complex and the
complicated, and the highly contested terrains of discourse. It does not like simplicity.

Still, I must try it. I strive for submission. I serve only one God.

Frances (1996) writes about the dilemmas of the dissertation student as she gets
initiated into the academic club. In an earlier writing, I used instead the metaphor of
gangs and gang initiation rites to describe this same process (Abdur-Rashid, 1997). The
street gang does its violence on the physical bodies of its victims, members of the
educational research gang perpetrate their acts of violence on the cultural and
epistemological “bodies” of all those deemed “other”. The imagery of gangs is more
provocative and dangerous than that of a club. I like it because it embodies the element
of violence that the club metaphor lacks. The academy is a very violent place for those
who are different. Real dangers lurk like the not uncommon violent practices around the
production and publication of knowledge products, articles, professional presentations and
dissertations.
Is there a place in the academy for me?

The final raising and asking of this question is directed to neither text, nor methodology. It is essentially a religious question. The voicing of an existential dilemma as I try to understand my mission, purpose and lessons from this experience of being in the academy—"a place where folk would rather you curse than mention God (personal musing)". I search out meaning by reflecting on the story of Prophet Moses. In this story, baby Moses is saved from being murdered by Pharaoh, and miraculously comes to live in Pharaoh's house, having complete and full access to his resources. Moses also maintains intimate contact with his family and learns from them the love of his culture and his people. Allah placed Moses (representing an individual from the oppressed) in Pharaoh's (representing the leadership among the dominant culture) house. There he learned and acquired the cultural capital of the ruling class, and positioned himself to successfully lead his people out of bondage.

My mission, like the mission of Moses before me, is to acquire the cultural capital that will enable me to move my community forward, further out of our oppressed state. The skills and knowledges that I acquire are not just to help me get a good job, their main purpose is to help me to expand my range of service as I define my life's work in submission to Allah and working against oppression.

I recognize a need to make du'a (i.e., informal prayers) at every stage of the process. Moses said that he worshipped Allah incessantly. I strive to carry the spiritual with me everywhere. When I meet with a participant, if she is Muslim I ask that we seek Allah's guidance together before we begin. If I happen to talk with a non-Muslim about the
project, I try to remember to begin and end our conversation with my own silent du’a. I try to remember to begin and end all my research efforts in a state of remembrance.

Meaning making is rarely a singular event. It is recursive. So, I return to the question of the meaning of my being in the academy. I look to several sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for guidance. They affirm my pursuit of knowledge as valuable. The ink of the scholar is greater than the blood of the martyr/Acquisition of knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim, male and female./Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave./A seat of learning is a garden of heaven. I balance my legitimized love of learning with another saying of the Prophet (PBUH), “Pray, O my Lord save me from useless knowledge”. I pray, “O my Lord, in my reading and my research protect me from that which will corrupt my soul and prove useless to me in this life and the next. Let my writing and my thinking be in service to you. And, O my Lord, maker of the atom and the galaxy, save this dissertation from uselessness and self indulgence.

Ethical Postures

Qur’an/Hadith and Tawhid: A methodological account of Islamization of the research ethic

This second section of the methodology chapter tells more of the research tale. It opens up a fuller view of what it means to me to do research at this time, at this place and in an Islamic way. It cites Qur’anic ayaat and various hadith and links their meanings and messages to ethical methodological matters. It, too, narrates the story behind the study. It, too, articulates the practical methodological implications of an Islamic paradigmatic
approach to inquiry.

When I think of methodology, my mind is moved. It shifts from the spiritual, to the epistemological, to the methodological, to the ethical and then back again to the spiritual, to the epistemological, to the methodological, to the ethical and so on in a recursive dance of meaning making. It meanders from theory to theory, from Africentric to feminist to critical to multicultural and back again to Africentric to feminist to critical to multicultural and so on in a recursive dance of meaning making. It rambles past memories of lectures, class notes, research articles, book readings, academic talks, seminars, study groups, writing circles, brown bag series and classroom debates. It wanders to the Qur’an, to the Sunnah, to the hadith and finally finds God and wisdom and guidance.

*How shall we sing our sacred songs in a strange land?* (line taken from Lee et al, 1992)

*It is Allah who has created for you all things that are on earth. Moreover, Allah’s design comprehended the heavens for Allah gave order and perfection to the seven firmaments...*  
*(Holy Qur’an, 2:22)*

How can I sing my sacred songs in this, the strange land of research? How can I sing of Qur’an, Sunnah and hadith so that their harmony and melody is not lost amidst the discordant noises of academe? My sacred songs are praise songs and they are sung in a chord of humility. They tell of the majesty of the Creator and inspire awe and appreciation for all created things. They tell of the responsibilities that we share for the created world and each other. They speak of the unity between the action and faith. They speak of ethics and Tawhid.

Tawhid is the unitive principle which asserts that all of creation is divinely related. Tawhid maintains that the order and perfection found in the universe is not the result of
coincidence. Rather, the entire creation is the expression or the will of the One Creator. Tawhid is an argument that a belief in the Creator must accompany a recognition of the need to worship Creator, i.e. to bring one’s actions, thoughts, indeed one’s whole being in alignment with the pattern upon which the creation is made—to make of oneself a living testament to the Oneness of God. Therefore, an Islamic researcher must concern herself with her self.

*By the soul and the order and proportion given to it. And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right. Truly s/he succeeds who purifies it and s/he fails who corrupts it. (Holy Qur’an, 91:7)*

Quality research is determined not simply by understanding, disclosing and foregrounding my personal biases and assumptions as a researcher but by actively and sincerely seeking to purify my self and by extension my research. Purification is a dynamic process. It involves acknowledging and addressing what Dyer (1976) calls “erroneous zones”—those complex compartments of self that have developed ways of being and thinking that fall outside of one’s overall ideals. For me this means that I interrogate my intentions and seek to cleanse them of selfish self interest. That I examine my biases and prejudices to determine their alignment with what I understand to be God’s will. That I wrestle with my passion for Africentricity and attempt to maintain a Godcentric focus. That I embrace the struggle that it takes to do a dissertation in an honest, honorable and dignified manner as opposed to my tendency to dismiss the whole academic enterprise as just another example of “white folks celebrating themselves” and to thereby justify cutting the corners of research protocol. That I challenge my ego need for academic and
intellectual acceptance and recognition with my ideals of integrity, humility and honesty.

An Islamic researcher must concern herself with herself. As I embrace my multiple positionalities as a Muslim African American woman, I strive to simultaneously address, act and speak out of all aspects of myself. My approach therefore gestures toward being integrative/Tawhidic. Methodologically, this translates into a research design that is at once religiously grounded, culturally situated, community relevant and gender sensitive.

The negotiation of multiple positionalities involves balancing the various expressions and needs of the different components of self such that the unity and integrity of the whole is maintained. Balance as exemplified in the unitive principle is the conceptual and analytic sieve through which every nuance and detail of the entire project is sifted.

Interestingly, there is a kind of triangulation that occurs in this approach that is reminiscent of Greene's (1991) reference to critical multiplism where researchers are encouraged to triangulate from a variety of perspectives. By consciously embracing the unitive principle and applying it throughout, each element of program design is constructed and assessed in terms of the multiple facets of itself and the ways in which it interacts as a unit within a broader sphere of relationships. Adherence to such an assessment strategy can lead to internal and external validity because of the attention to the whole unit, i.e., its internal and external functioning.

An Islamic researcher must concern herself with herself. A Tawhidic concern with self involves the recognition of the need for the unification of self, or more specifically a synthesizing of one's multiple positionalities into a coherent whole. This process is similar in kind to what Collins (1990) and Palmer (1998) call a both/and conceptual orientation.
Both Tawhidic philosophy and both/and conceptualizations are as Noffke (1990) says, "epistemological variances" to traditional paradigms of inquiry. They disrupt commonly held notions about the role of the researcher and the researched as they create spaces where one can sit comfortably in multiple sites at the same time. They have the potential of re-situating the researcher as a co-member of a research partnership where much of the project is emergent and subject to being shaped and negotiated by the knowledge and experiences of both researcher and participants. Also, because I am aware that my personal habits of being will have an impact on how the study unfolds and the service that it provides to all participants I commit myself anew, for the sake of the study, to an on-going personal resolve to character improvement and personal growth. That is, as part of my methodology, I consciously attend to issues of my own honesty, humility, integrity and willingness to serve where needed.

The study of Tawhid has occupied the attention of a vast number of Muslim scholars (Ahmad, 1988; al-Faruqi, 1981, 1982, 1987, 1988; Phillips, 1990; Rasheed, 1992). Two streams of thought, two points of view have special meaning for our attempt to set forth a conceptual framework for educational research. First, Rasheed (1992) frames Tawhid in terms of its holistic implications for the scientific endeavor:

The theoretical perspective (paradigm) for Islamic science, like every other aspect of life revolves around the concept of Tawhid (the reflection of divine unity (order) in all creation). Tawhid integrates the Islamic moral-ethical truths with the scientific-technical truths instead of making them
antagonistic and mutually exclusive’ (Husaini, 1990, p. 14).

In other words, Tawhid, in the scientific process, brings to
together the activities of faith, reason and observation. (P.48).

The second stream of thought is expressed in the words of Al-Faruqi who speaks about Tawhid as a life guiding and life defining principle:

The essence of religious experience in Islam...is the realization
that life is not vain; that it must serve a purpose of the nature
of which cannot be identical with the natural flow of appetite
to satisfaction to new appetite and new satisfaction...For the
Muslim, finality consists of ...the natural and the transcendent.
...Having identified the transcendent realm as God, [s/]he rules
out any guidance of action that does not proceed therefrom His
rigorous Tawhid (or unization of divinity) is, in final analysis a
refusal to subject life to any guidance but the ethical.

Tawhid recognizes the unity of God, knowledge, religion, humanity and all of life. It
affirms for the believer that her aim and objective in life is to “initiate and introduce
change in the individual person and at every level of community from the family and the
nation all the way to the level of a global Ummah” (i.e., global community of believers)
(Ahmad, 1988). Because Tawhid imposes a duty to emancipate and liberate from all sorts
of oppressions, it can be classified, through the postpositivistic lenses of Western
methodologies as critical. Because it stimulates and encourages systematic investigation,
exploration and application of reason in the study of the creation of Allah, through the
lenses of Western methodology it can be classified as scientific. And, because it recognizes both revelation and creation as the “words” of Allah, and sees no conflict between revelation versus reason or scriptural authority versus science and therefore insists that in situations of apparent contradiction that either the deep and multilayered meanings in revelation or the infinite patterns and layers of patterns in creation have not been sufficiently understood—there is absolutely no parallel Western concept.

_How shall we sing our sacred songs in a strange land?_

O ye who believe! Be steadfast witnesses for God in equity, and let not hatred of any people seduce you that you deal not justly.
Deal justly, that is nearer to piety.
(Holy Qur'an 5:9)

How shall I sing my sacred songs in a strange land? How can my ballads bear witness to tales of injustice and inequity? How shall I sing the sorrow song and not give way to sorrow? Traditionally, the Qur’an is not simply read, it is chanted. Through the rhythmical recitation of its verses worlds of knowledge and meanings are conveyed and the Islamic paradigm is revealed.

Justice and equity are methodological matters of critical concern within an Islamic paradigm of inquiry (Alwani, 1995a). They are the motifs in the mosaic of research design. They shape the color of the questions I ask myself and delimit both the unimaginable and the knowable. I considered issues of justice and equity as I decided where to direct my research gaze. I wrestled with whose voice would give voice to alternative service learning theoretical conceptualizations. I recognized that my personal situatedness as an African American coupled with the legacy of injustice and inequity that characterizes the African American experience in this country dictate that my focus be in
the African American community. I knew that issues of equity and justice inevitably surface when the subjects of study are the subjugated.

I recognized also that the African American community is not monolithic. Initially my intent was to consider the administrators of service learning programs at HBCU’s (Historically Black Colleges and Universities). I conducted interviews, collected documents and artifacts and sat in on a service learning course at an HBCU. However, an uneasiness crept over me as I became engaged in the process of writing and data analysis. I found that there was virtually no scholarship that supported my positionalities as both a Muslim and an African American. I found that to be just to myself I needed my research to reflect who I am; that even within the scanty and scarce African American academic community the Muslim African American scholar’s voice was practically non-existent. I began to feel compelled to offer a space for the airing of the Muslim African American perspective. I settled on Muslim African American educators with experience in both Muslim and public schools. This choice satisfied my personal desire to give back to the institution that helped me become who I am today, the public inner-city school; it made it easier for me to initiate the task of sculpting a Muslim African American approach to research; and it allowed me to maintain my commitment to addressing issues of oppression. I knew that issues of equity and justice inevitably surface when the subjects of study are subjugated.

Studying the subjugated involves a dangerous process of immersion. I became immersed in the statistics and stories on the failure of African American children in public schools (Kozol, 1990); the plight of African American males as they struggle to negotiate
hostile educational systems (Black Community Crusade for Children, 1998; James-Brown, 1995; Tyson, 1997); the poor fit between curriculum and culture (Dillard, 1994); the debilitating conditions of urban schools (Kozol, 1990; Jones-Wilson, 1989); and the dangers and dilemmas caused by an increasingly white female middle class teaching pool on the self esteem and self efficacy of children of color (Delpit, 1995; Dillard, 1994; King, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Studying the subjugated involves a dangerous process of immersion. Immersion nearly caused the rage that I generally keep on low to burst into flames. The Qur’an’s admonishment to “let not hatred of some people seduce you so that you deal not justly…” forced me to gain control of my rage and to acknowledge a need to understand and analyze rather than simply blame and condemn. My desire for equity and justice is a spiritual commitment that must be extended to every creation of God—even oppressors.

*How shall I sing my sacred songs in a strange land?*

[The believers are …]

Those who show patience firmness and self control
Who are true (in word and deed); Who worship
Devoutly; Who spend (in the way of Allah) and
Who pray for forgiveness in the early hours of the
morning. (Holy Qur’an 3:17)

How can I sing my sacred songs in this, the strange land of research? What lyrics can tell of mercy when they don’t know the Merciful One? What hymn will sing of a duty tempered by compassion, charity and care? What drum will beat out the rhythms of gratitude that move the soul to share, to sacrifice and to serve?

Although this ayah speaks to several methodological matters of importance in an Islamic paradigm, our current concern is with just one—spending in the way of Allah. To
spend in the way of Allah is to share one's wealth, whether that be material, time, energy, personal qualities such as intellect, attitude or any other such resource, for the higher good. It means to give in service. Thus the axiological foundation of the service ethic is rooted in the will of Allah—the ought-to-be of all that is. Al-Faruqi (1982) elaborates, “Under this view [woman]/man is a servant whose vocation and destiny is the service of God, or fulfillment of the divine will; that is the actualization of value in space and time...Islam is a religion of action, and action is public and societal....” (Al-Faruqi, 1982, p.193 & 198).

Islam’s call to action is a call to service and thus goes forth to all. It requires that “the doer involve others in the action as co-doers or co-operators” (Al-Faruqi, 1982, p.88). As an educational researcher, my commitment to a spiritual tradition that valorizes the service ethic moves me toward a re-visioning of research as a reciprocally educative process. Lather (1986) defines reciprocity as a “mutual negotiation of power”. In contrast, I here define it as the dynamic, fluid sharing of responsibilities and freedoms in creating, responding to and/or interpreting a situation or event.

Questions about the utility of the research become central and critical in determining the focus and direction that evolves. Why should this research be conducted? Who will benefit? Is conducting this particular project the best use of my talents and abilities given my needs and the needs of the community to which I belong? What impact, if any, might there be on other communities? What are the immediate and long term implications of the project? These questions along with others emerge out of the axiological standpoint of Islam and are openly engaged by all.
Technical Choices

Data drama: A methodological narrative of design, technique and choice at an Islamic research scene

This last section of the methodology chapter wraps up the research tale. It, too, narrates the story behind the study—a methodological narrative detailing participant selection processes, data collection and management procedures, reconciliation and treatment of validity issues and approaches to data analysis. This last section, too, articulates the practical methodological implications of an Islamic paradigmatic approach to inquiry.

When I think of methodology, my mind is moved. It travels across the landscape of my personal spiritual geography, "climbing up its hills, roaming in its contours, lingering in its valleys, rethinking its boundaries" (Holt, 1995, p.3) — How does Qur'an direct my methodological moves? Where does Tawhid lead me methodologically? What must I be to perform the research act? What role do I play at the research scene?

How does Qur'an direct my methodological moves?

The research design for this project was born from a Tawhidi episteme where the Qur'an and the Sunnah are revered as the sieve through which sound knowledge is sifted and the base upon which purpose driven knowledge is produced (Abdus-Sabur, 1992). Throughout the Qur'an, specific civilizations, lay individuals, and Prophets are utilized as critical exemplars and living testimonies to the realization of human excellence; the consequences of specific human behaviors; and/or the place and power of the Divine and
provided a location for me to visit and revisit as I attempted to sculpt a research design that made its central focus the life, lessons and legacies of a critical exemplar. With the Qur’an in heart, I read through and was informed by Stake’s (1994, 1995) discussions on case studies and other scholarly discourses on qualitative research design such as Bogdan & Bilken (1992), Glesne & Peshkin (1992), Marshall & Rossman, (1995) and Patton (1990). Donmoyer (1993), also informed my thinking with his argument that “when we realize that research is no longer a pathway to truth or a source of prescription for practice, we are freer to develop new approaches to research and even break the traditional rules of research...” (p. 38). Immersion in qualitative research methodology literature facilitated my struggle to break free of tradition and to write, think and research from a Qur’anic base.

In addition, to the critical “templars and “cases”, I found in the Qur’an numerous ayaat offering guidance and insight on how to bring my actions into alignment with the very pattern upon which Allah established the creation. Many such ayaat have particular currency for our discussion on research design. For example, in the Sura entitled Shura (the Consultation), ayah 38 provides a vision of how to best conduct private and public affairs.

*Those who respond to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance...*  
*Holy Qur’an 42:38.*
Here, Qur'an directs my methodological movements along a path of discovery that speaks to my need to place my researcher self in relationship with God, a small band of people with whom I can consult and with community. I attempted to heed Qur'anic direction by engaging in prayer, by consulting individuals/community and by spending of my gifts for the greater good. As we proceed through this section and describe in greater depth the particularities of the research design the issue of turning to Allah in prayer and spending in the way of Allah will be addressed. However, our current attention is directed toward exploring the role of consultation in the very conceptualization and construction of the research design.

Research design, participant selection and community consultation

Although my personal involvement in Muslim schools extends over a twenty year time span with approximately half of that time working directly in the schools as teacher, director and/or education supervisor, I still sought to conduct my research affairs by mutual consultation. Consequently, I entered into conversation with other Muslim women educators around research specific issues that included concerns over design considerations and participant selection. These early initial conversations contributed to steering me away from my initial research focus on HBCU's and recentered my focal of concern within the Muslim community. Furthermore, these conversations affirmed the need to look at and try to describe and define a Muslim pedagogical approach to K-12 education.

Despite their collective contribution toward keeping me grounded and thinking
from my standpoint as a Muslim African American woman researcher these four women were not really a "collective". They never met with each other or discussed the project together. Individually, their impact on the emergent design and methodology ranged from limited to substantial depending upon their own level of involvement, personal inclinations and circumstances. This method helped me to counter the tendency toward what Janesick (1994) labels as "methodolatry", i.e. an over zealous commitment to the method of research at the expense of the subject of the research, by maintaining the natural dynamics of my personal relationship with each sister. It also decreased the intrusiveness of the research by not adding more tasks and responsibilities to their already busy lives.

In our numerous spontaneous and informal conversations each individual sister and I indulged in "uncensored women's talk" (Bell-Scott, 1994, p. 1) where we shared stories, talked as sister friends about issues of mutual concern and sought solutions to pressing community problems and/or national dilemmas. My research needs were just one item in a laundry list of topics we drifted through in the natural ebb and flow of conversation. When the subject of selecting participants for my dissertation came up we discussed it and then moved on to other topics. It took several phone calls and face to face meetings before an extensive list emerged. Often, the sisters would converse with their family and friends and/or remember names they'd forgotten to mention and bring their suggestions with them to our next conversation. Because our conversations were often deeply personal I decided against tape recording them, instead I noted dissertation relevant points in my research journal after our talks. They were each okay with this approach.

Below I provide a brief description of each sister, her Muslim community
affiliation and a quick glance at her unique contribution. My rationale for including such lengthy descriptions is that doing so interrupts the hegemonic notion that research is primarily a solitary affair. These sisters truly helped shape the form and flavor of the research design and their nominations determined the subject of the study.

- Challis with her twenty-five years of experience working in Islamic education in various positions ranging from principal to teacher to guidance counselor contributed several unfamiliar but important names. Challis' involvement in Islamic education is, in many ways, broader than mine and the other three sisters. She has been involved on the national level and communicated and "walked" with some of the leading Islamic educators. Currently, a doctoral candidate in education at a southern HBCU, Challis has graciously agreed to assist me as much as she can. Her suggestions and comments increased my awareness of the national and international Islamic educational scene and of reference materials not accessible through mainstream research sources.

- Maali is a Muslim educator who acquired her formal education late in life. She has worked in the public schools of Virginia and Florida and directed the early childhood education department at a leading HBCU. In addition to having taught art in one school, she has been involved in Muslim education through her children and grandchildren. Also, her husband's position as Imam (akin to minister) in two southern states has afforded her access and influence in the Muslim schools attached to those communities. Currently she is fundraising coordinator for her local Muslim school. In her own teaching Maali was recognized as an exceptionally talented classroom
educator. She utilized many of the principles of service learning and consequently brought to her suggestions and comments a practical element and critical eye that proved invaluable.

- Fatimah was an art teacher in a suburban school district in the Midwest for several years prior to becoming Muslim. As a Muslim her passion for teaching pushed her beyond her comfort zone and into numerous other educational roles that included tutor, organizer of a home school collective, home school teacher, co-founder of a Muslim school and principal. Fatimah’s Islamic community affiliation is different from the other sisters in that she is not a member of the American Muslim Mission\(^1\). Her different community base exposed her to a whole different set of African American Muslim educators and consequently the names she suggested were, for the most part, not duplicated by the others.

- Radeyah, a former public social studies school teacher, is currently teaching one class at the same Muslim school that her youngest child and oldest grandchild attend and where one of her adult children also teaches. The mother of eight children, Radeyah’s experiences with Muslim schools spans three states and nearly twenty five years. Her social studies and art background is complemented by a passion for music. These diverse interests combine to create a unique perspective that has greatly enhanced my work.
Together these sister friends reflect my attempt to fold into the research design the spirit, wisdom and concerns of the community. The Qur'anic principles that lead me to make such a methodological move are elaborated upon by al-Faruqi (1981) who suggests that it is characteristic of research within an Islamic paradigm where "...the principle of ummatism holds that no value, hence no imperative is merely personal, pertinent to the individual alone" (p. 14). The strong societal emphasis of the ummatic principle, conveyed by the words of the Qur'an, was translated by me into a concern to enter into dialogue with Muslim community members who could help guide the research toward community relevancy. Ladson-Billings' (1994) model of community nomination of research participants and Dillard's et. al (in press) discussion of the centrality of community in the legitimization of her research topic also reflect a culturally embedded value in "community validity", where community validity is defined as both the congruence of the research subject and design with the cultural norms, ideals and visions of the community and community collaboration in key aspects of the research design.

Radeyah was the most involved and it was to her that I turned to help me go through the numerous recommendations. Together she and I sorted and sifted through the names and finally identified three particularly strong candidates who met my criteria and some other criteria that Radeyah generated independent of me. Radeyah's criteria were that the person had to be a Muslim in good standing in the community whose personal life reflected a congruence between the Islamic educational principles that she espoused and her movement within the community and in her family life; and she had to have articulated at some point or another a well thought out philosophy of Islamic education. Eventually,
constraints of time and resources pushed the project to become a case study. With an ease that belied our lengthy earlier discussions, Sister Nuurah Muhammad emerged from the nominations as the ideal candidate to be our critical exemplar.

Interestingly, only one of the four sisters did not include Sister Nuurah in her suggestions and presumably that was because of their limited contact. Even she conceded that from what she had heard, Sister Nuurah was a good selection. A profile of Sister Nuurah is presented in the data analysis chapter but a few words of introduction now will provide entree into the next section about data collection.

*Critical Exemplar: Sister Nuurah Amatullah Muhammad (October 12, 1930- present)*

Sister Nuurah is an educator extraordinaire. In fact, during the time of Elijah Muhammad, there was a saying “If you want to be educated go to Sister Eleanor (her birthname).” She was a member of the inner circle of Nation of Islam educators who sat at the table of Elijah Muhammad and charted out the future for the Nation’s schools. Having been a teacher, principal, teacher educator, tutor, college professor, and author, Sister Nuurah’s educational career spans four decades, numerous states and the Republic of Sudan. Even now, approaching seventy and legally blind, she still manages to have a cadre of students who consider it an opportunity and a privilege to be under her tutelage.

Remarkably, Sister Nuurah has met her blindness with the same energy, enthusiasm, insight, scholarship and abiding faith that she brings to her educational career. She brings these same qualities and a high energy commitment to this dissertation project as well. When I asked Sister Nuurah if she would be willing to participate, she enthusiastically agreed. We discussed data collection strategies and together watched ideas emerge as the
design of the study evolved informed by and in collaboration with Sister Nuurah. For example, my initial intent was to tape record our phone conversations but Sister Nuurah suggested that I send her an audio cassette tape explaining the topic of discussion and then she would thoughtfully respond on the tape and send it back to me. I readily accepted her suggestion and thus began the first phase of our unique data collection activities.

This journey into the mind and heart of our critical exemplar was not a seamless passage onto a mapped out and clear cut path, rather it was an exploration marked by the expected and the unexpected—the emergent and the planned. Research acts unheard of within qualitative research circles became a part of the design—the tape exchange; allowing the "research subject" to define the method of data collection and to take a key role in the analysis and representation processes; living with a subject who is not an exotic other but rather one who shares personal histories, religion and friendship; the constant renegotiation of the substance of the research draft based on the input of the critical exemplar and other community members; and the persistent effort to openly engage the spiritual in every aspect of the design and project. These research acts, though outside of hegemonic norms on the one hand do manage to comply completely with the systematic nature of the scientific knowledge production enterprise.

Phase 1

Data were collected throughout the study but principally occurred within two specific phases. Phase I describes the initial data collection activities of the tape exchange. The tape exchange lasted for a period of one month and was scheduled to involve four tapes or a tape a week. However, for personal reasons the first and last tapes were delayed (I
actually ended up listening to the last tape after Phase 2 had begun). Also, during this month several telephone conversations took place. These conversations, though not taped, often took place immediately after a tape was sent and had the effect of complementing, extending or clarifying tape exchange comments. Following is a flow chart representing the tape exchange events.

My taped readings → *Sister Nuurah's taped response* → My taped readings → *Sister Nuurah's taped response* → Telephone conversation → *Sister Nuurah's taped response* → Telephone conversations → *Sister Nuurah's taped response*.

I knew that I wanted the initial tape to serve as background into the study and as a prompt to add direction and definition to Sister Nuurah's response. I also knew that Sister Nuurah is in the midst of a training program learning yet another skill to facilitate her transition into her life without sight. I didn’t want to take up too much of her time. Consequently, on the first tape, I carefully selected sections of the dissertation draft/story that I thought effectively wove together Islam, service learning and the African American educational foci. I read excerpts from the preface, a selection from the opening of the introduction and the definition of service learning. Then I talked briefly about the logistics of our communication, the self-addressed stamped envelopes that I had included and the extra tapes that I would send along with the first introductory tape.

After mailing off the initial tape, I selected service learning vignettes that were not included in the dissertation draft, and other information that I thought might also prompt reflection and made a second tape. On this second tape, I made a specific request for stories. All in all, two tapes were ninety minute tapes, however, Sister Nuurah responded
on a special four track tape recorder made especially for the blind. These recorders
doubled the amount of recording time to three hours per tape. The other two tapes were
sixty minutes and only one of them was recorded on the special tape recorder.

I attempted to transcribe the tapes as I received them. Where this was not possible I at
least gave them a thorough listening to and took notes so that I could discuss them with
Sister Nuurah and also begin some preliminary synthesis/analysis.

The collection of data in phase 1 centered around a methodology that is betwixt and
between conventional data collection practices. It was, in many ways, an eclectic
gathering and (re)viewing of old ideas and a creative (re)visioning and (re)shaping of
established practices to fit the needs of the moment. Qualitative research convention and
culture dictate that I write and think about the tape exchange within the contexts created
by such descriptors as conversation and interview. I resist. Abdus-Sabur (1991) offers an
Islamic justification for my resistance with his argument that the Qur'an and the Sunnah
are the criteria by which Muslim action is not only judged but explained and understood.
Abul-Fadl (1990) situates her argument for resistance in a discussion about the
subjugation of the discourse of the “Other” where she states, “It has been the practice for
the dominant paradigm to set the terms of rational discourse and for the “Other” to defer
in reverence—if it wanted to be admitted to the circle of respectability. In this case {in my
case} the tables are turned and the dominant paradigm, which is secularist, is viewed
critically through the lens of a re-emerging Tawhidi paradigm” (p.6).

The nice, neat tidiness conveyed by the words “interview” and “conversation” may
suffice the dominant secularist paradigm but they obscure complex critical issues central to
the Islamic worldview. The Tawhidic episteme rotates the axis of the research gaze such that the first focus of concern is not the “right method but rather … [the] issue of the knower possessing the correct virtues and the frame of mind adequate to the object of knowledge” (Kazami, 1998). Further, certain knowledge is not even accessible to “just anybody but only to one who exhibit such virtues and moral qualities as are considered necessary to proceed successfully on the road to knowledge” (p.107).

Therefore, an Islamic researcher must concern herself with her self. It is evident that outweighing the influence of any choice in technique are the choices the individual researcher has made and will make in terms of her relationship with the Divine will, and within the context of her relationship with others. In our case, because both principal participants—researcher and critical exemplar—are Muslims (and co-researchers) we recognized a shared responsibility to Allah, ourselves, and each other to attend to issues of self. A Tawhidic concern with self involves a willingness to use the criteria of Qur’an and Sunnah to both guide and judge one’s actions. It means a willingness to interrogate and purify one’s relationship with self and others.

From the very beginning of the revelatory process that marked the instantiation of the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH), the Holy Qur’an has linked the pursuit of knowledge to purpose and centered its axiological base in the will of Allah. The first words revealed are quoted below. Of note is how Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is enjoined to read, i.e. to pursue knowledge, not of and for himself, but to do so “In the Name of Allah” and from both the books of revelation and nature.

*Read! In the Name of thy Guardian Lord who created humans from a clot of congealed blood.*
Read! For your Lord is Most Bountiful. He who taught by the pen, taught humans what they did not know (Holy Qur'an, 96:1-5).

Similar admonitions to read and reflect on revelation and nature are found throughout the Qur'an.

And He has subdued to you whatever is in the heavens and the earth; it is all from Him. Behold! Herein are signs indeed for those who reflect. (Holy Qur'an: 45:13)

There is not an animal that lives on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but forms part of communities like you. Nothing have We omitted from the Book. (Holy Qur'an: 6:38).

Reading from both revelation and nature is an epistemological mandate of the Tawhidi paradigm where the production of knowledge is recognized as inseparable from the axiological womb in which it was conceived and out of which it is born. It is this ability to hold together the seen and the unseen worlds in a dialectal relationship that is not confrontational or antagonist but are instead complementary and harmonious that add depth, breadth, purposefulness and utility to knowledge products born from a Tawhidi episteme.

A dual reading of the importance of the tape exchange’s emergence as a data collection technique must be situated within a discourse grounded in insights from the study of revelation alongside those from the systematic inquiry into “the world”. Both revelation and the world are sources of knowledge composed of primary sources and non-primary sources. According to Idris (1987) the world can be divided into the following subsources:
1. The natural or physical world.

2. Our internal states: pain, pleasure, envy

3. Human beings, as physical objects, as informants

4. Dreams: As Muslims we have no doubt about the fact that some dreams come true and that as such they are sources of knowledge, but since we human beings—excepting God's Prophets—can never be sure about the truth of our dreams, we cannot take them as independent sources of objective knowledge neither in the field of religion nor in that of the world, but we may benefit from them personally.

5. Minds: The mind has three functions
   a. it is a means for acquiring knowledge
   b. it is also a store of knowledge
   c. but is as well a secondary source of knowledge, and it is in this respect that we are considering it here now.

The tape exchange evolved out of a dialogue between Sister Nuurah and myself. It represents a concretization of our faith, personal realities, imaginaries and knowledge. Constraints of time, distance and resources precluded serious consideration that the entire data be collected face to face. At the same time, Sister Nuurah's blindness predisposed her to communicate via tape recorders and other audio devices. And, because our objective was to gather narratives, insights and theories from her it was logical that space be created where she could "be" in the research in the way with which she was most comfortable.

The tape exchange allowed for the systematic collection of data in a way that was well within the imaginaries bounded by our faith and the requisites of scientific methodology. We allowed it, therefore, to become the bridge by which we attempted to connect "our means of acquiring knowledge (the mind and the senses) to the sources of our knowledge (the world and revelation)" (Idris, 1987, p. 204).
The tape exchange afforded us the opportunity to “keep our own counsel” (Vanzant, 1992), as we retreated to our separate spaces to reflect upon the why’s of what we would say and how we ought to say it. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) often withdrew to a cave near his home for solitude, reflection and meditation (Lings, 1983). Solitude can offer the soul an opportunity to witness and know itself and has long been recognized as a spiritual tool to facilitate the inward journey. It promotes self knowledge and deep thought. The tape exchange wove a space for solitude into the research design and in so doing increased the likelihood of gathering the thick rich descriptive data that so enhances qualitative research.

Just as opportunities for solitude increase the depth of thought generated around any given issue, so too can opportunities for dialogue refine, hone and expand thought and increase the transformative power of the word (Freire, 1971). Freire’s explication of the essence of dialogue recognizes its constitutive elements as being reflection and action. The dialogue that took place through the tape exchange was a kind of “dialogic solitude”. My co-researcher and I had the opportunity to engage in a deep reflective dialogue where responses were not driven by the demands of “real” time but were interspersed with long periods of solitude in between. The result was increased space for a deeply reflective discourse. And consistent with Freirian logic, action was a constitutive aspect of our dialogue. We, through the power of the word, engaged in clearing out and creating a space in academia where the voices of Muslims can contribute to the pool of ideas and strategies directed toward healing the urban school.

In short, the tape exchange provided a forum where systematic communicative
events could occur. The nature of the events were shaped by a dialectical relationship between the technological instrument, the way it was used, and the character of the dialogue and interaction of the participants.

Phase 2

In Phase 2 data were collected during the nine full 24 hour days that I spent living in Sister Nuurah’s home. There I took field notes, tape recorded face to face conversations, and took note of how and where she lived. During this time Sister Nuurah and I talked about service learning, the future, the past and everything in between. While we talked and lived together I had the opportunity to watch, observe and take note of Sister Nuurah’s interaction with her students, her classmates and others. Together we took the bus to the college where she takes courses in anatomy and physiology, medical terminology and braille. I read her text books out loud to her so that she could prepare for her exams. (I was conscious of my need to serve during this learning experience and reading material out loud was a way for me to spend of my gift of sight).

Sister Nuurah and I went to the health food store, Friday congregational prayer and the movies. I met her biological sister and a former student who was so touched by her blindness that, not only did he train to be her sighted guide, but he made a commitment to serve her for as long as he lives. I listened to him and other of her students speak about her with such respect and love that I was awed. In fact, it made me re-examine my own relationship with Sister Nuurah and question myself.

So, there I stood, watching and interrogating myself as I lived and breathed for nine days in the presence of my familiar— Sister Nuurah, my teacher, friend, “other-mother”, sister in Islam and now co-researcher in my dissertation project. I asked myself
questions: What has the experience of data gathering meant to me? To her? What was the experience like? How did I make sense of it, come to understand it, and come to see connections in it? It seems remarkable, looking back, that I had not realized the impact of Sister Nuurah on me, on the way I think about and “do” Islamic education, on the way I perceive and think about myself as a Muslim woman educator, on my sense of mission as it relates to children, schooling and the African American condition. Now, I wondered.

As we thought, walked and talked together, I watched myself and examined my silences and the places that I filled with meaningless chatter. I wondered what undercurrents of our relationship spill over into the way the research is conducted? What of the things I see and those, by virtue of who I am and who I aspire to be, are hidden from me? I am aware of a lack of innocence in everything I say and do. I push, challenge and interrogate myself, my feelings, my way of being. What does the fact that I have known Sister Nuurah for over 20 years mean in the context of this project? How have we, through the years, negotiated the striking differences in our personalities—I tend toward being quiet and reserved at times, Sister Nuurah is outgoing and outspoken? How do we negotiate those differences now?

Co-Researching

Whether sitting in her apartment or riding on the bus, we seized opportunities for me to read aloud the dissertation draft. After, during and in between the reading, we talked about everything from what needed to be taken out or added to how to organize and present the data for chapter four. We discussed issues of audience, access and presentational style. We laughed about Sister Nuurah’s theatrical bent as she dramatized a conversation that might “get them going”. We settled on the use of narrative and dialogue
interspersed with commentary.

I shared my knowledge of research protocol such as the fact that we could not include the real names of the numerous people that are mentioned and Sister Nuurah, as an Islamic scholar and an educator, shared with me a critical assessment of my approach and ideas. Her critical comments helped shape and reshape my writing and my thinking. For example, her cautionary comments about the use of language to “show off” rather than heal made me examine and seek to purify my own use of the postmodern discourse.

(Re)searching, I believe, is the way we live our lives and make meaning of our existence. Social scientists do not have a monopoly on the desire or the drive to systematically understand. Together Sister Nuurah and I engaged in a systematic process of making meaning. We took our own perspectives, insights and understanding and turned around and used them as data to understand more fully ourselves and our philosophies. I read aloud and we reflected together. She spoke and we assessed and analyzed her thoughts. We generated an insight and then we ascertained its congruence with Qur’an. Our reflections were either taped or written about in my research journal.

Beyond Phases

The specific data collection activities that occurred in the phases centered around Sister Nuurah. Yet, there were other complimentary ongoing data generating processes that were not necessarily directly linked to her. A few of these processes are only marginally paralleled by western methodologies. For example, throughout the mundane experiences of daily life, I continually used du’ā in generating concrete and inspirational data by asking Allah to give me guidance from a phrase, gesture or the simple turning of my head to witness that which I might ordinarily have missed. The result was that I often

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recorded words of praise and gratitude in my journal and/or my heart versus (and
sometimes in addition to) recording a particular action, comment or event. These
“inspirational data” created a sense of purpose and awe that had a profound influence on
me and allowed me to “keep on keeping on” when the going got tough. They also
account for many of the spaces and places in the text where the words flow rhythmically in
an almost lyrical manner.

Inspirational data is similar to other recognized forms of data such as St.Pierre’s
(1997) emotional data. St. Pierre makes the point that other researchers such as Kleinman
and Copp (1993) and Van Maanen, Manning and Miller (1993) acknowledged the
inevitable import of emotions in fieldwork and argue for its conscious deliberate inclusion
in multiple phases of the research process.

Because they are concerned with intellectual movements resulting from unseen,
nonquantifiable forces, events, and situations, emotional data do reside in a realm that
exists in close proximity to inspirational data. However, they never quite make a
connection. Where inspirational data is actively sought after and invoked through prayer,
emotional data just “happen”. Where inspirational data creates a sense of awe and an
increased awareness of the ought to be and the ought to do that leads to humility and a
renewed sense of purpose, emotional data do not necessarily impact the moral and ethical
sensibilities of the researcher. Where inspirational data draws the researcher into a
Tawhidyic relationship with her research that calls upon her intellectual, spiritual,
emotional/social and moral selves to rally together behind a common cause, emotional
data leaves the researcher only intellectually wiser and/or aesthetically enriched.

As stated above, inspirational data collection was an ongoing process accompanied
by other ongoing data collection processes, another example of which has to do with diverse perspectives. Like me, the research has feet in multiple worlds and so throughout the study I sought to garner the input from both Muslims and non-Muslims, academics and non-academics, African Americans and non-African Americans, women and men. St. Pierre (1995) explains how she too “...deliberately sought the Other, many different others, at every stage of the research process, knowing that my very limited, partial, and situated position in the world was both productive and dangerous” (p. 3). What evolved was a mosaic of perspectives that, again, pushed the boundaries of my researcherly thinking beyond the comfort of the familiar and into uncharted territories. The spiritual and intellectual wrestlings that this multivocal approach fostered were played out in my research journal. In addition, the research journal was the place where I recorded descriptive field notes right alongside the treasured tidbits of wisdom, insight and comment that came my way via the diversity of people with whom I interacted.

I found, as did St Pierre (1995), that “When we go to other people for input as our work proceeds, we gather more and more response data, we analyze it, and it feeds our interpretation and our practice” (p. 3). Response data is not a thing but rather a process. It involves inviting the audience/community into the research, opening up spaces where their insights move the project in unforeseen ways. It leads to an ongoing process of deconstructing and reconstructing of the research boundaries and imaginaries. It complicates and problematizes the prim and proper data gathered from our critical exemplar and the knowledge used to interpret that data gathered from the writings of other researchers. It gestures toward infusing a Tawhidic tone to the inquiry as it places under erasure fragmented
ways of designing research “by breaking apart the investigator/audience binary by inviting the audience to be a co-investigator” (St. Pierre, 1995, p. 2-3).

One group of people invited into the research, the Islamic consultants, merit special mention. I enlisted the assistance of several Muslims who, by virtue of their studiousness, knowledge and practice, have distinguished themselves within the Muslim community. I wanted to make sure that my writing, thinking and general approach was Islamically sound. An example of their role in my writing can illustrate their overall importance. Two of my “Islamic consultants” read through the first section of this chapter and immediately identified a hadith (saying of the Prophet PBUH) as not sahih (i.e., traceable directly to the Prophet). In fact, they informed me that the particular hadith I had quoted was more than just weak it was not even authentic despite the fact that it is highly quoted by unknowledgeable Muslim writers. I promptly removed and replaced the offending hadith with those that were legitimate.

In addition to providing response data regarding specific technical information, the Islamic scholars raised critical issues that went straight to the heart of conducting research as a Muslim African American. They interrogated my knowledge of Islam, my overall approach to this research and in general raised critical validity issues. Their concerns moved me deeply.

The Value of Validity

Consequently, I thought long and hard on how to approach this issue of validity. Should I approach it head on from a Tawhidic worldview or angle it from the slant of postpositivism? Should I embrace the language and problematics of the Western knowledge
project's validity discourse or trouble to transcend "their" language with a language of "our" own? What is the heart of the validity question? What is the value of validity?

Western educated Muslim scholars throughout the world are (re)defining what it means to do science and in so doing are also re)claiming the legacies and traditions of an Islamic heritage rich in scientific achievements. The soil of the Islamic legacy is so fertile and rich that many argue that it alone is sufficient for the Muslim. They argue that we do not need to lean upon and/or refer to the scholarship of a secularist Western world to legitimize science. In fact, they say that the very nature of Western science is invalid because it relies only on the reading of one text, when the essence of the Tawhidi episteme unequivocally requires the reliance on both the book of nature and that of revelation.

Other scholars argue that the assertion of the validity of Islamic knowledge products and traditions does not necessarily mean disavowing all things Western because certain of their [the West's] insights and knowledge may have legitimacy within an Islamic paradigm given the fact that much of Western knowledge is predicated on the book of nature which is from Allah. Further, the need may be more to (re)cast and (re)frame than to totally dismiss. Admittedly, Western knowledge claims are often skewed and imbalanced but as Kazami (1998) states, "To challenge knowledge claims is not to prove them invalid, for that would be acquiescing to the basic assumptions of that knowledge, but to put forward an alternative knowledge structure, i.e., to liberate subjugated knowledge structures...The reversal of valuation...is not a rejection of dichotomous categories but a reaffirmation of it. The distinction is accepted and left intact" (p. 98-99).

In asserting knowledge claims throughout this dissertation I have attempted to stand on sacred ground (the Tawhidi episteme) while yet maintaining an eye toward the
world (postpositivism). In other words, I have attempted to "liberate subjugated
knowledge" structures by relying on and referring to Qur'an and Sunnah throughout my
work. But Islamization of knowledge is not "a cosmetic addition of religious terminology
and sentiment ... or the grafting of relevant Qur'anic verses onto the sciences or disciplines
intended for Islamization...[it is to be] viewed as a methodological and epistemological
rearrangement of the sciences and their principles" (al-Alwani: 12:1 p.83). Thus, the
validity questions most salient to my work are not limited to concerns about the adherence
of the methodological techniques employed in the research design with qualitative research
protocol but are extended to include concern with a core issue—the congruence of the
conceptual and practical "acts" of the study with the Tawhidi episteme. In fact, this latter
validity issue takes primacy over the former.

The Tawhidi episteme extends the need for rational and systematic ways of
ascertaining knowledge claims to both knowledge of the world as well as religious
knowledge. Idris (1987) says "Thus, if I claim to have discovered a fact in the physical
world, I must be able to show others a way, either of observing a fact, or of deducing its
truth from the truth of other well known facts.... But if I say that it is obligatory on a
Muslim to do thus and so, then I must be able to support my claim by Qur'anic or
Prophetic texts, or show that it can be deduced from such texts. In both cases rational,
systematic and specific procedures have to be followed.

After all that has been said there remains an unanswered question— are the
approaches, knowledge claims and assertions in this dissertation valid in the context of a
Tawhidian episteme. My answer is a whispered... I hope and pray so! I have tried. I have
employed sincere efforts to systematically flesh out my own subtle and nuanced
epistemological baggage. Yet, in all honesty, Muslims whose knowledge I respect have challenged me on several fronts. Specifically, concerns about my over reliance on Western knowledge products has been identified as a key problem. I answer them with this prayer of the Prophet (PBUH):

O Allah! I seek refuge in you from the evil of what I have done and the evil of what I have not done.
Forgive me my wrongs and my ignorance, my excesses
With myself, and all that You know better than I.

(quoted in al-Ghazali, p. 97)

Limitations of the study

The study attempted to articulate and utilize an Islamically sound approach to educational research. However, without a substantial community of Muslim educational research scholarship to draw upon, the challenge to operate wholly inside of the Tawhidi episteme proved daunting given my academic immersion in secularist research traditions and my limited personal scholarly history in Islam. Consequently, the overall methodological strategies are unevenly theorized and developed.

Huberman (1995) articulates one of the most fundamental limitations of life history research when he states that “Working with life histories brings home sharply the intrinsic dilemma of doing social science research. The source material, an account of people's lives is so multifold yet at the same time unique that we seem to corrupt if from the moment we lay our descriptive or analytic hands on it” (p.157). This natural limitation of my particular methodological choice was compounded by constraints of time and
resources. With greater access to either, a more sustained engagement in the field would have been called for.

Additionally, there is a very real gap in the voices that appear in this project. Although it is not atypical to find, in the life histories of teachers, only the voice of the teacher represented, it would have made the findings of this research much richer to have included the voices of parents, teacher colleagues and former students.

Analysis and (Re)presentation

The procedures of data collection and analysis mirror the original purpose of this study’s design which was to explore the inner and outer terrain of a veteran teacher’s experience and knowledge about teaching in multiple contexts in order to mine for lessons and insights that might lead to an alternative conceptualization of service learning. The (re)presentation of the data in the following analysis chapter also mirrors a purpose of the study which was mired and muddled in the beginning confusions of my heart but later emerged clear and focused—that Muslim schools, like their public school counterparts, like many of the institutions in our ailing societies need assistance if they are to realize their full potential. Muslim teachers and by extension Muslim schools can benefit from a critical discussion of service learning pedagogy.

In this next chapter Sister Nuurah and I attempt to raise critical issues that we think ought to be take considered if we are to infuse service learning theory with alternative perspectives.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS FROM A TEACHING LIFE

Introduction

_They didn't bring me, they can't send me_
_They didn't create me, they can't destroy me_
_They didn't make me, they can't break me_
_Tell them they better mind their own business_
_Because I came because of Allah's intervention_
(Nuurah Muhammad T.E. 1)

And so goes Sister Nuurah’s response when told of a group of people demanding that she relinquish her position as head of a fledgling Muslim school and go back where she had come from. Such spirited, uncompromising and wise words make it absolutely clear that Sister Nuurah is a woman of great courage, insight, wisdom and voice. She doesn’t need me (or anyone else for that matter) to tell her story for her. She is more than capable of weaving her own tales, describing her own life and publicly detailing her own stance on any educational issue she chooses to address. And yet, she very graciously allowed me to assume full responsibility for arranging and re-arranging the (re)presentation of her story in ways that facilitate understanding and at the same time maintain the integrity of her original words and actions. My efforts toward relating her life and legacy were done with the knowledge of the awesome trust placed in my hands.

So, here in Chapter 4, I invite you to listen to Sister Nuurah. Enter into her “space” and “sit” at her “feet” so that you too, can take in her brilliance, humor,
conviction, compassion and knowledge. As in many African American communities where the call and response traditions that flow throughout cultures of the African diaspora are very much alive and well, audience participation is often the hallmark of a great storytelling event. When Sister Nuurah invites her audience into the story, I jump at the opportunity and on such occasions she and I really get into full fledged dialogues where we share the task of unpacking her pockets of wisdom and opening up the contents for all to witness and explore. These are wonderful digressions from the story and hopefully add depth and clarity to an evolving understanding of a Muslim African American perspective on education in general and service learning in particular.

Storytelling and commentary with a little dialogue sprinkled throughout is an apt way to describe the organization of this chapter. The storytelling and the dialogue are an amalgamation of every data gathering technique employed in the study—from the tape exchanges (TE), the face to face conversations taped in Sister Nuurah’s home (FTF), the notes taken from telephone conversations (TC), the field notes I took recording the sights, sounds and feel of living in her presence (FN), to the inspirational data that were gathered along the way (IN)—all get woven into the fabric of the data tales told here in these research findings.

Despite my efforts to limit the amount of data I collected, the end result was still a dizzying amount of stuff—stories, anecdotes and the like that had the effect of pulling me in two directions. I wanted to present an authentic view of not just Sister Nuurah’s philosophy and perspectives on education but of her person as well. I wrestled with how much of which stories to include. I decided that I would restrict the (re)presentation of the
data to those teaching stories that do the most to underscore the defining principles of a
Muslim African American service learning perspective. I decided that I would also
employ whatever literary devices I could conjure to ensure that Sister Nuurah’s fascinating
life is (re)presented in ways that do it honor and at the same time keep us mindful of the
importance of the “person” of the teacher.

The Qur’an says that we travel from stage to stage and I attempt to frame Sister
Nuurah’s storytelling by the three major “stages” of her educational career. These
moments reflect the chronological time line of her life and begin with her early years of
teaching in the public schools of Detroit where she came face to face with the stark
realities of the mis-education, treatment and failure of inner-city black children. During
this time, her already ingrained resistance to racist acts developed into a full fledged furor
over systems of racism that would lead her to the Nation of Islam and the second stage of
her story. Her service as a key player in the revitalization of the Nation’s schools included
gutsy, daring decisions that, when highlighted, underscore some key principles of a
Muslim African American service learning perspective. They also foreshadow her
transition into the third stage of her educational career where, frustrated with public and
private schools, she establishes her own learning center and works toward further
developing her God centered curriculum specifically tailored to the cultural needs of
African American children but can be generalized to others as well. While already testing
and applying her theories in Muslim communities throughout America, a chance
opportunity to teach overseas opens yet another site for the utilization and refinement of
her educational ideas. Finally, Sister Nuurah’s transition into blindness marks her
initiation into the current stage/moment of her educational career and it is from the understanding garnered through a life without physical sight that she truly begins to see the essence of education.

Even while Sister Nuurah's storytelling is presented in stages, another story is unfolding in the commentary that frames it. In the commentary, a story arranged by the major themes identified in the prayerful synthesis/analysis of the data, grounds the meaning and messages in Islamic soil. These themes, other mothering, striving/resistance and cultural affirmation coexist alongside and within personal characteristics such as faith, integrity and courage to form a dynamic matrix of forces shaping a Muslim African American perspective on education and service learning.

We are very fortunate to be in Sister Nuurah's presence. Often the pace of our society denies us opportunities to hear really wise people. Many of us live in an age stratified world where our contact with those older and more experienced is extremely limited. We have lost so much as we moved through our lives at "satanic speed", too busy and too hurried to stop and talk and listen to our elders. We lost many of our links with our past. But today, our situation is so dire that the force of necessity turns us backward. We have to seek out the voices of our teacher elders. This need is in the air. Even while I write another doctoral colleague, Edna Thomas (1999), works and writes on a similar project that looks at lessons from the teaching lives of four African American teacher elders. We join a growing number of educational researchers who recognize the importance of honoring the honorable tradition of listening to and learning from the wisdom of experience.
Hopefully, listening to the words of Sister Nuurah can help us to reconnect some of the threads of our collective memory and, perhaps, teach and show us something of how to salvage the unraveling fabric of our education and our communities.

The Opening

We begin. The beautiful melodic chanting of the Qur’an in Arabic is the first thing that comes from her mouth.

Sister Nuurah: BismillahirRahmanirRahim (With the Name of God, The Merciful Benefactor, The Merciful Redeemer)....I hope that you can hear me well. This is my opportunity to address the issue of God centered service learning education. The first thing I need to say is that we know that God created us to worship Him and to serve humanity and I see in service learning education an opportunity to do just that. This represents a revolution in education where human beings will learn very early their purpose for having been created and what they are responsible to do in this world. It might cut out a lot of the waste of time as people vacillate, move in and out back and forth round and round trying to decide what they are supposed to do in this world. The whole focus on service learning education should be to bring man into harmony with Allah and with the purpose for which he placed us on this earth.

I don't know what you want me to say except that I think that service learning is an excellent revolutionary vehicle and I really don't understand every aspect of it but I can see what it would do for students and for teachers and the nation, parents and everybody included. I don't know where to go Daa’iyah I listened to what you said and
all I can do is to share my experiences and to hope that something I might say will have some value. (T.E. #1)

Daa’iyah: Sister Nuurah, you are doing great! Already you have laid the conceptual foundation for a Godcentric definition and model of service learning. According to you service learning is a vehicle through which each individual human soul can get in touch with the purpose for which s/he was uniquely created. Just think, if educators viewed their students as each embodying something of the Divine and having a unique purpose in this world that alone would change things.

Sister Nuurah: Yes, why certainly I see service learning as practice. I’m looking at theory and practice. The fact that educators have to teach and to motivate the children they have that responsibility I mean what else would you need [other] than that? We are here to worship God and serve humanity. Now I say what else do you need and I am not talking facetiously but I’m just thinking that I see service learning as putting Islam into practice. ...Don’t you? (FTF #1)

Daa’iyah: I don’t know that I had thought about it quite as clearly as that, but, yes I do. I suppose that is why I was so attracted to it. But just for the record let me make sure I am getting you right. You’re saying that Islamically service and education are so interconnected that service learning pedagogy is just the actualization of the Islamic philosophy in the context of schooling. While I can agree with that I still believe that there is a critical need to examine Islamic philosophy and discuss it in terms of specific classroom practices and teacher education. We need to be able to translate the philosophy of Islam into specific behaviors and ways of being in classrooms and communities. In fact, that is the purpose of this project—to explore and to define a Muslim African American perspective on service learning and to conduct our exploration by using you as a critical exemplar.

Sister Nuurah you were saying that you didn’t quite know what to say. I think if you begin by sharing your personal teaching stories then we can both share in highlighting some of the lessons from your legacy. Let’s start at the beginning of your teaching life.

Beginnings: The start of a teaching life

In the early 60’s after a decade of partying and having fun, the then Eleanor Milner (she had already met, married and was in the process of divorcing her first husband)
decided to go back to school so that she could become a teacher. She began substituting in the Detroit Public Schools (DPS). Finally, after two years of substituting and simultaneously doing course work toward a Master's degree she earned a certificate and a full time public school job. She stayed with the DPS for five years before being asked personally by Elijah Muhammad to "put the [Nation of Islam] schools on a professional basis."

Following are public school stories about her classroom teaching practices presented in the context of her story about her conversion to Islam. Although she did not formally convert to the Nation of Islam until 1968, the influence of Elijah Muhammad's teachings on her teaching is clear as well as her ability even in the context of a public school to boldly shift and mold the curriculum until she felt that it met the culturally specific needs of "her" children. The public school setting ought not to shroud the fact that there within its walls a Muslim African American educational praxis was going on. Coincidentally, there are scores of Muslim teachers, African Americans and non-African Americans, teaching in the public schools. I know of at least one large major urban area that at one time had a formal organization of Muslim public school teachers. Exploration into their pedagogical practices is a potentially valuable yet untouched area of research. Are they on the average more experimental than other teachers? How do they negotiate the curriculum? In the context of public schooling is there a Muslim educational praxis? How does it differ from that found in Muslim schools? What are their views on the challenges facing the urban schools of today?
While understanding the African American experience can be challenging for both African American and non African American scholars, the challenge is multiplied when complicated by the addition of a religious tradition that falls outside of the mainstream African American experience. If there is to be any understanding at all then there must be a concerted effort made to step (or perhaps leap) far outside of the familiar zone of white conceptual tools and meaning making strategies. The teaching stories that follow push and prod those of us trained in Western educational thought to consider possibilities previously unimaginable. But, I would argue that we really do need to at least look at these alternatives, for if it is true that “the proof of the pudding is in the eating” then the following success stories represent a delicious meal.

We enter this part of the story where Sister Nuurah is talking about her first time going to the Nation of Islam temple.

The Mathematics of Teaching

*Sister Nuurah:* I got turned down the first time because my dress was too short. What made me become a Muslim, the minister was teaching. You remember Minister Philbert Omar?

*Daa’iyah:* Yes, I do. He was Malcolm’s brother wasn’t he? I used to listen to him all the time.

*Sister Nuurah:* He was teaching one night and he said the story of Jesus Christ was symbolic of the black man. The persecution, the crucifixion and the resurrection, that this was the life of the black man. It made so much sense to me that I jumped straight up
and said; I WANT TO BE A MUSLIM! That's really what converted me into becoming a Muslim.

This culturally relevant highly political reading of Christianity, although expanded, extended and institutionalized in the Nation of Islam teachings is not uncharacteristic of the way African Americans have historically constructed religion. From the spirituals where “steal away” meant to escape slavery to Harriet Tubman assuming the name “Moses”, religion has historically been a site for the expression of an ethic of resistance. Religious institutions have also served as the site for the practicing of an ethic of care where psychological wounds could be tended and healed.

Sister Nuurah: I had been given a first grade class and I had been taught that if you teach a child mathematics that he can learn anything. That’s what the Honorable Elijah Muhammad had told me sitting at his dining room table, so I decided to experiment and see. I went back to Detroit [Public Schools], from Chicago, and I put all the books away except the math book. I don’t remember what type of math book we had but it was a paperback math book. We read from the math book, we spelled from the math book, we calculated mathematics from the math book, we did our writing from the math book; everything we did from the math book so we were doing all these different subjects but it was based in mathematics. So then after thirty days I said to the children I’m going to take the other books out but you’re going to be doing the same thing you’ll still be doing mathematics. We’re going to read but we’re still gonna be adding, and subtracting, and multiplying, and dividing letters, and syllables, and words, and phrases and sentences. This gave them the courage to pick up every book in that room and read it. I’m not
saying every student read every book but there was no book in that room that hadn't been
read because they were so successful with the math that they just transferred that success
into the reading. When I left, the principal double promoted [all of] those children to the
third grade.

Daayiyah: Wow! I think of the implications of this story for the articulation of an Islamic
perspective on service learning and the high level of integration across subject areas jumps
out at me. In theoretical discussions about service learning the need to integrate the
service project across all the subject areas is often discussed. But I have never seen it
discussed in terms of reshaping the very foundations of each subject area such that they
can all be expressed in terms of each other. Am I making myself clear? What I am saying
is that you did not build a solid math foundation and then move on to build a solid reading
foundation etc. You actually expressed reading in the language of math so that math and
reading became one. What about social studies, science and other subject areas? Where
you able to unify them under the language of mathematics as well?

Sister Nuurah: Yes,...what I'm saying is that unity has to permeate that classroom. You
can't have fragmentation. You can't have separation. Mathematics is the unifying force
because everything is math.

What Sister Nuurah has done here is that she has both articulated and modeled a second
critical principle of an Islamic conceptualization of service learning—unity of knowledge..
From the Muslim perspective, the Tawhidi concept of unity must permeate everything in
the classroom from the knowledge base to the way the children and teacher perceive
themselves as a community of learners. In one conversation, Sister Nuurah said that even
though she was not yet Muslim, she still saw the need for a sense of unity in her
classroom. In fact, she used to tell her students that because they all belonged to the same
classroom they had a responsibility toward each other. She admonished them to look out
for each other on the playground and that if someone picked on one of the members of
their classroom, she told them “you are responsible to protect him or her.” The next
public school story demonstrates unity in the context of classroom dynamics. It also
dallies with the theme of education as a site of resistance.

_Sister Nuurah:_ When I wrote my masters' [thesis], I wrote on a reading clinic that I set
up. I recognized that in my first year of permanent teaching in 1963 about 18 of my
students had reading deficits. Some of the teachers in the school told me that these
students couldn’t read. My initiation into the school was that these children couldn’t
learn and “you don’t have to work so hard.” I remember this one Jewish teacher telling
me that “oh they can’t learn to read.” And so, this was in the 60’s remember and we
were kind of like all up in arms about things. We were headed toward the riots and ...
complete rebellion.

But, at any rate it made me angry when they said the children can’t learn,
especially when I saw that all the kindergarten, first and second grade teachers were
Caucasians of some type. So they had the opportunity to destroy these children’s will and
their ability to learn. I remember this one little boy, Reginald, who was... This is another
little story but it all goes together. Reginald, when he wrote he held his pencil down
between his index and his second finger and he held his thumb underneath to stabilize his
pencil. We were having a writing lesson and I was going around looking at how the
children were holding their pencil and writing. So when I got to him I said, “Is that the
way you hold your pencil?” He was so frightened, he was just terrified and he looked up
at me and I remember thinking “Oh God, I’ve got to get out of this some kind of way, this
boy is terrified.” So I looked at his paper and his writing was absolutely beautiful. I said
to him, “Well, if you write that way you can hold your pencil with your toes if you want
The whole class fell out laughing and Reginald just laughed. From that time on he seemed to enjoy the class so much more. He had been a quiet student.

Daa’iyah: I am fascinated as I listen to you with not just what you are saying but how you say it. For example, when you were talking about Reginald you could have easily said to him “don’t be terrified, I am not like your other teacher” but instead you indirectly humored him by invoking the bizarre. That is a verbal technique that is used a lot in our communities. I’m sure that those small things helped you connect with your students. But what about their parents? How were your relationships with them?

Sister Nuurah: [Reginald’s] mother came and told me one day, “I had to come to meet the teacher who inspired my child to come to school.” She said, “Before he came to your class he hated to come to school and he would vomit and do everything he could to avoid coming to school.” She said, “I talked with him and he told me about what you had said about him holding his pencil. When he was in Miss So and So’s room, she would tape his pencil to his fingers.” Reginald was a tall spindly child, he would stumble on the feet of the seats. We had those seats that were bolted down and he would stumble on the chairs and the teacher would call him clumsy and all sort of things. She had destroyed his self-esteem and his little ego. So after I said that to him it perked him up and he begin to really love school. His mother later told me that he made straight A’s all the way through school except in the 6th grade. A teacher gave him a “B” because she felt he was a little too cocky—a Caucasian teacher.

Sister Nuurah’s next story, to be fully appreciated, must be read against the backdrop of the preceding one. In the above story Sister Nuurah uses another common African community speech pattern called indirection. Instead of saying “a white teacher did such and such…” Sister Nuurah makes her point first and then “to add insult to injury” she relates what she has held back—the teacher’s racial identity. The racial identity is held
back so that there would be no mistake of viewing the incident as an isolated case of a single poor teacher, it needed to be properly considered in an historical context. Thus, this particular act of injustice becomes linked with a legacy of injustices. The story of African American teacher triumph that follows can now be seen as “talking back” to the subtleties in the preceding story.

Sister Nusrat: ...after recognizing the problem the children had, I setup [for my masters' thesis] a reading clinic. The reading clinic required the children to stay 2 days a week, 1½ hours. They were allowed to eat as we read, because I had read Sylvia Ashton Warner's book; Teacher and in that book she had been working with the Maume Indians and, because of the culture and the poverty she always saw that they ate at school and they would eat as they worked and she felt that, that had a great deal of influence on how well they learned. So at lunch time I would tell them to be sure to bring your goodies back, anything except candy. So they would stop at the store and buy goodies. I would tell them, “Don't forget to bring me some cheese popcorn”, because I love cheese popcorn. So they would come in at lunch time and bring their goodies. We had a cabinet behind my desk a little bit to the left of my desk when I was facing the wall. We would go to that cabinet and put in all the goodies. And then from time to time throughout the afternoon I would go to the cabinet and look in and say “yummy, ummm”, or something of that sort to motivate them to want to be in that reading clinic. So I just made it fun for them. Then after the other children left, and believe me the other children didn't want to leave. So from time to time I would make them our guest with their parent's permission. Now remember they were the children who could already read, they had it made, but they
wanted to be in that reading clinic. But at any rate, after the other children left we take a
few minutes and line the chairs up in front of the room in two rows in front of the
blackboard. As they would read I would identify the problem immediately and each one
of the children became aware of his own problem and everyone else's problem also, and
they would correct each other. I moved out from in front of the group over to the side to
my desk and I let them run the group. They were helping each other, and eating all the
time and patting their feet. They just enjoyed this so much. After about a six month
period of time those children were self sufficient in their own reading. (FTF#2)

Interestingly, the model of students teaching students (STS) or what is more
commonly called peer tutoring in today's educational jargon has been identified as one the
most successful models of service learning.

Each person knew his own problem and had worked to solve his or her own
problem. The group as a whole was reading on a very high level. So at the end of the
project they could function at a very high level, even the ones that had been at the lowest
level could function at a very high level and felt proud of their accomplishments. I would
have the whole class reading the math book or the spelling book or whatever and
everybody could do it and everybody felt proud. Those children were in the 2-B I kept
them into the 3rd grade. And in the 3rd grade they took the California test of mental
maturity and the whole class passed at such a high level that the principal and the
regional supervisor came out to see what was going on. They thought I had cheated. The
principal wanted to double promote them to the 5th grade and I refused because I don't
maturity and the whole class passed at such a high level that the principal and the regional supervisor came out to see what was going on. They thought I had cheated. The principal wanted to double promote them to the 5th grade and I refused because I don’t think children need to be double promoted until they have reached 7th grade and had a basic education. Then you can double promote them to the 9th grade (FTF#2)

Daa’iyah: I need to think out loud about the implications of these stories in terms of our task of defining an alternative perspective of service learning and offering insights on teaching that may help others. You know, several important issues surface for me...there are really several stories going on here. First, we have the reading clinic story and then there is the story of Reginald. Those two are obvious and they contain lessons about teaching, creating classroom culture, humor and joy as pedagogical tools, peer tutoring, curriculum and on and on. But there are at least two other stories going on there as well. One is about the perception of the children by the teachers that teach them and the other concerns the teachers’ need to politicize novice teachers with their perceptions. Your success challenged teacher perception.

Sister Nuurah: Yes! This group of children, those whom I was able to follow did exceptionally well in school. I had a 4th grade teacher to tell me one day that it’s very hard to follow in your footsteps. And when I inquired why, she said “every time I go to teach them something they tell me that Miss Milner taught us that”. So I said, “well teach them what they need to know for the fifth grade.” (FTF#2)

Daa’iyah: Sounds to me like you were saying to that teacher “don’t hold them back, expand their capacity to learn and then give them more”! I think that teachers must have a vision of where, what and how they want their students to be. They have to hold a high standard of excellence for themselves and their students. Your culturally relevant teaching challenged the teachers’ deficit theories because it placed the spotlight on their teacher performance and showed that as teachers they needed to be able to “read” their students and the classroom situation and then respond to that reading in culturally relevant ways. In terms of service learning your story raises concerns about the specific pedagogical “acts” that occur within the service learning project.

Sister Nuurah: You know I did my masters’ [thesis] on that reading clinic. My advisor told me that I didn’t have to do all that work. I said, “this is my [thesis].” As I analyzed
[my data], what I realized is that the teachers can't teach reading. I took some of the children back to the teachers and I said, "Read for her boy or girl." And when they would read [the teacher] would say, "oh I never had that success." Then [the teacher] said: "You're a mother image to them." I said to her; "You're a woman too!" What she implied is that you are black like them so you are the mother image to them. Anyway I learned then that we just don't give enough attention to math and reading and from then on that is what I did! (FTF #2)

These teaching stories are rich in matter that can help us craft a Muslim African American perspective on service learning. Though the stories take place before she had accepted to become a part of the Nation of Islam, they do take place under the umbrella of its influence. Gazing at these early teaching stories through Tawhidi lenses can definitely lead us to some useful and important insights. For if, as she asserts, service learning is the translation of Islamic philosophy into a pedagogical language/approach then we now need to explore the how's and why's of it all. How do Islamic principles get enacted in the classrooms? Why is it that echoes of an Islamic service learning philosophy sound different when bouncing off the walls of African American culture?

To even begin to approach a response to these questions some Islamic groundwork must first be laid and then followed by the forging of connections between Islamic principles and specific aspects of African American life and culture. Toward this end I begin with the role and concept of motherhood in Islam and a hadith of the Prophet (PBUH).
Othermothering: An ethic of care

There is a hadith that says that a man, torn between the demands of various members of his family, came to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and asked who among his family members should he honor most. The answer was given “your mother” whereupon the man repeated the question by adding “who next” and again received the answer “your mother.” Again the man repeated the question with “who next” and once again for the third time was given the same response “your mother.” Finally after the fourth repetition the response came back “your father.”

The Qur’an, too, speaks about the role and rights of the mother when it states in the opening ayah of Sura IV:

O (hu)mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single soul, created, of like nature, her mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;—reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you. (4:1).

Al-Ghazali, a very noted historical figure in Islamic scholarship wrote about the duties of a teacher to her student by paralleling them to the duties of a mother to her child. According to Imam Muhammad, motherhood is an institution and a symbol for transformative and generative power and as such is much needed as a force in society. It was the transformative and generative power of motherhood that Sister Nuurah invoked when her other mothering ignited the thirst for knowledge in Reginald after it had been nearly destroyed by his other teachers.
Throughout the biographical narrative, in anecdotes, and stories we witness Sister Nuurah engage in pedagogical “acts” and express philosophical thoughts that are overt expressions of a spiritual commitment and understanding of teaching that places “mothering” at the center of her care ethic. When, for example, her colleague attempted to dismiss and explain away Sister Nuurah’s success by saying that she was a mother figure to the children, Sister Nuurah’s response “you’re a woman too” acknowledges and affirms the other teacher’s assessment while at the same time holding her accountable for mothering as well.

Though never blessed with biological children, Sister Nuurah is “other mother” to children that “stretch from Japan to South Africa and Malaysia to South America.” A Japanese student from several years ago, wrote to her from her native land “Mother, you are the one who took care of me, everyone else wanted me to take care of them.” This young student joins many others in recognizing and responding to Sister Nuurah’s role as teacher mother. Below is the story of another student:

*Sister Nuurah: This young man had come to the United States from Jamaica. Ben, did not come to my learning center but you know I carry it on my back. Anyway, he was sitting in my computer class and was looking so lost and perplexed we began to talk and eventually to walk in the halls together. I began to see that there were some educational needs that he had. Then one day he said to me, “I believe God sent me here for a special purpose”. Electric shocks ran through my body and I said to myself “Okay, Allah I’ve got the message. This is another one that you want me take care of.” (TE#1)*
Sister Nuurah felt that it was her spiritual obligation, her duty before Allah to serve as mother and teacher to this young man and she did. Ben needed educational support and motherly guidance. Often, he'd call her late into the night and she would fall asleep, exhausted after a day of teaching at a College, teaching elementary and secondary children in her learning center, and taking classes toward a degree in computer technology. Yet, she would listen, as much as she could anyway, as he thought through his world out loud. Several years later when Ben heard that Sister Nuurah had lost her sight he came to her, offering the same self-sacrificing and nurturing care that she had given him. "Mother", he said, "I am here to serve you for as long as I live." I had the opportunity to watch his gracious responsiveness to her when I visited to collect data. What goes around does come around! In Ben and in the reciprocal helping of the family of children that Sister Nuurah other mothered, we have examples of the most fundamental service learning dynamic. Even the reflection that is such an integral part of current notions about service learning was evidenced in the way teacher and student, Sister Nuurah and Ben, engaged in a constant dialogue that included the ongoing retelling and replaying of shared histories. They frequently referred to a time, not too long ago, when roles were somewhat reversed.

The duties of children to their mothers and of students to their teacher/mothers provides the third site for the articulation of an Islamic service learning perspective (the first occurred with the brief mention of purpose driven education in the Opening and the second with the discussion on Tawhid and the integration of knowledge). Sister Nuurah talks about how young children naturally want to help out and how simple opportunities
to stay after school and help out in the classrooms provide some first authentic ways in which academics and serving can be connected. She tells another story that helps to illustrate the enormous importance that teachers expressing (or in Sister Nuurah’s case her life circumstances expressed the need) the need for help from their students is an educational opportunity for service.

_Sister Nuurah:_ I had a little girl who was three years old and I taught her until she was six. When I lost my vision, without my ever saying one single word, that little girl reached out to help me. She and I would go walking everyday after school. We would walk around everywhere. Without me ever saying a word she began to walk in front of me. I had taught her how to cross the street safely. She would look both ways and then put her hand out to me and take me across the street. Now why did she do that? Because she felt the responsibility to serve. I didn’t teach her that! (FTF #1)

Islam assumes the inherent good of all people. One component of an Islamic perspective on service learning involves the opening of spaces, where in the course of schooling, children are given opportunities to assist.

_Sister Nuurah:_ it may be important to build programs into the early grades where after school students would have opportunities for maybe an hour or so to work in the classrooms and maybe do preparations for the next day some of the older children could help the teacher with paperwork and there are just a million things that can be done. These things develop a sense of loyalty to the school. (TE#2)

These ideas are not revolutionary. They are simple and are being done by many teachers. Still, they are worthy of discussion. The notion of teaching as mothering lies underneath
Sister Nuurah’s words. Mothers help children develop a sense of responsibility and in so doing create a sense of belonging and family. Teacher mothers have similar concerns for their students. The students need to be connected with a community drives these notions of service learning. Loyalty to the school, like loyalty and a sense of family connectedness are outgrowths of service learning. In Sister Nuurah’s description of student helping the planning and coordination necessary to ensure full participation and sharing of responsibilities is carried out, in dialogue and writing in the classroom. The classroom as family model permeates the thinking of African American teaching other others. Sister Nuurah describes her mother as always encouraging and positive, complimentary toward her personal appearance and proud and encouraging of her sharp intellect. In life notes not cited in this text, she portrays a home where inspection of the children before they went to school was a daily routine. She, too, with the same love and patience implemented inspections in her classrooms. Sister Nuurah describes how, in her public school classrooms she would walk up and down the aisles inspecting her students dress, carefully examining them from head to toe, checking to see if they were clean, she’d even go so far as to smell them. If a student was found to be less than the acceptable she’d say, “Boy, you’d better get in there and clean yourself up” or “Girl, you need to comb that head of yours.” Her words were spoken with care, humor and authority and the children knew it. They did not take offense.

By acting out of the mother ethic of care, Sister Nuurah and other African American teachers invoke cultural patterns that transcend slavery extending all the way back to the extended family systems of many African communities. Moral teachings are
often couched in story or proverbs, and reprimands in humor and indirection. Sister Nuurah often utilizes cultural communicative events to help forge a sense of community and cultural alliance and to affirm the background of her students. In the context of schooling Muslims, an ayah or Sura is often recited. This ability to openly connect the moral discourse with the cultural knowledge of family and community is critical.

However, other mothering is not always soft and gentle word play. Sometimes it involves a moralizing discourse directed toward adults. Sometimes the willingness and drive of the teacher mother to nurture and “push back to strength” (Wade-Gayles, 1993) children who have been declared unacceptable by the dominant culture calls for a political act of resistance. Sister Nuurah adopted literacy as a cause that was worth fighting for, she conducted research and brought all her knowledge and skills to bear on the task of teaching her students to read. And when she had succeeded she engaged her students in a moralizing discourse of their own. She had them speak truth to power by way of example. They read.

Sister Nuurah’s strong mothering ethic combined with her deep commitment to educating children moved her to an act of resistance. In the language of her day, in the particularities of her circumstances she aligned herself with the historical role and legacy of African American educators. She embraced and acted out of a recognition of the challenges facing African American children in particular and the African American community in general. She felt and responded to the need to “lift as you climb.” Lifting as you climb is a thematic motif that permeates African American educational historiography. It seems to me that tapping into the service ethic embodied within the
words "lift as you climb" and coupling it with K-12 education would be a powerful rationale to undergird service learning theory, programming and practice within teacher education programs geared to preparing teachers for urban schools.

The Nation: A Fight for the Teaching Life

The racial uplift motif has led to a number of different views on how to achieve the shared objective of liberation and elevation of African America. Throughout the historic struggle there have been separatists, integrationists, repatriations and a host of other ways of seeing solutions to the problem. The Nation of Islam had clear separatist leanings and after her experiences in the public schools Sister Nuurah did too! She could see no other way to save our children so she left Detroit Public Schools on her way to educating a Nation (Nation of Islam).

Educating a Nation

At the invitation of Elijah Muhammad, Sister Nuurah left the Detroit Public School System and became the administrator of the then University of Islam in Detroit. The University of Islam was the name of the national system of K-12 education within the Nation of Islam. Full of excitement, hope and the know-how to educate, Sister Nuurah was ready to put into place her dreams of creating an educational environment where African American children excelled.

Sister Nuurah: While sitting at the table with the educators the Honorable Elijah Muhammad gave me the responsibility of turning the school around. He said "Turn that
school around and put it on a professional basis.” So we are talking about 1968 I took over that school in 1968 after coming out of the Detroit City Public schools. Now by turning it around and putting it on a professional basis it meant to get qualified teachers and also to develop a curriculum so that the children would be able to progress. I had already looked at the curriculum and knew that it wasn’t satisfactory so I began to apply the knowledge that mathematics is everything and everything is mathematics and we began to set everything on a mathematical base, but that mathematical base went back to the religion which indicated that the straight line was the beginning of things and the straight line is a representation of the number one which is a representation of almighty God Allah. This was actually putting the education on an Islamic base. We studied the straight line from a mathematical and a geometric standpoint, from a spiritual standpoint, and from a numerical standpoint.

I first began to train the teachers and to show them how since everything comes from God we must bring everything that we use from the straight line. I showed them how to express all the subjects from a mathematical and God centered base. By teaching children of God it gave them purpose and motivation to know that God required this education of them and that it was not to get a job or to please parents and to please teachers but to please God. (TE#4)

These were challenging times. Inexperienced and untrained teachers were the rule rather than the exception in the Nation’s school. Detroit was to be the teacher training site for the entire country and Sister Nuurah was determined to make it an exemplary one. But her approach was so different, the teachers so entrenched in the old ways, her newly
instituted academic standards so high that the school climate quickly grew incredibly hostile. Finally in a bold and uncompromising move Sister Nuurah fired all the teachers except for one. Together the two of them taught all the children in the entire school for six months.

Eventually, new teachers were hired, old teachers returned with new commitments, teacher standards were set, a teacher training program was instituted and the school progressed. But it was never easy. Deep resentments seethed underneath the calm exterior. The oppressive hierarchy of the Nation clashed with Sister Nuurah’s bold spirit and there were incessant battles with ministers and their assistants that made it extremely difficult to function. Never one to back down in the face of wrong doing especially when there could be a negative impact on children, Sister Nuurah responded to each new offense. If the minister called her to his office and demanded that she come immediately, Sister Nuurah refused to stop in the middle of a lesson and leave her classroom. In the Nation of Islam Sister Nuurah’s behavior was heretical. Even Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the movement, could not protect her from the day to day stresses of such an environment.

Clearly, the legacy, history and sociology of the Nation of Islam in general and the University of Islam school system in particular needs to be researched so that a better understanding can develop of how the passionate power of poor urban communities can be harnessed to take on the challenge of educating its children. Can this same power be harnessed in service learning programs? Is it possible that the personal, cultural and human affirmation that turned around the lives of scores of poor African Americans can
be used in urban schooling to motivate and rekindle the spark of life and hope within the inner city child? To what extent does this legacy live on in the Muslim African American schools of today?

The fact that the NOI's schools fell victim to many of the same obstacles faced by the public segregated all-Black schools and independent Black private schools in terms of scarce resources and inadequate buildings is not surprising. Nor is the fact that poor urban parents were unable to generate the funds necessary to hire competent teachers. The real wonder is that the sheer force of faith could give birth to an educational system at all. "Do for self" and "self-determination" are the mottoes that express this culturally embedded ethical force that spawned not only educational establishments but entrepreneurship and other African American institutions as well.

Elijah Muhammad had encouraged Sister Nuurah to read and study the Holy Qur'an despite the fact that it contradicted his teaching. (Generally members of the NOI were discouraged from reading the Holy Qur'an). The liberating words of the Qur'an made it clear to Sister Nuurah that to really break free of the psychological chains of racist domination a whole new system of education had to be developed. Her dedicated and persistent efforts to institute a truly revolutionary curriculum did make some differences but not enough.

What learning can be gleaned from the Nation of Islam teaching story that move us toward the articulation of a Muslim African American service learning perspective? Actually, at first glance, my look through Tawhidi lenses revealed little. But, as I continued to stare, my gaze shifted from the teaching stories to the teacher. The learning
from this section are rooted in the “person” of the teacher. Sister Nuurah gives us opportunities to witness, close up and personal, a “teacher way of being.” And, once again Qur’an and hadith help us to situate our discussion of our subject, this time the teacher’s person, within the confines of a Tawhidi episteme.

Striving: An ethic of resistance

I begin with the concept of resistance against oppression or “jihad” (striving in the way of Allah) as it is called among Muslims. In Islam “the way of Allah” is one in which all human beings, indeed, the entire creation itself is to be treated with equity and justice. In fact. Allah in identifying the characteristics of the believers says that they are those who “when an oppressive wrong is inflicted upon them (are not cowed but) fight back” (Holy Qur’an, 42:39). Sister Nuurah had begun reading Qur’an and her persistence in trying to have its philosophy translated into pedagogy and curriculum was fueled by the Qur’anic lessons she was learning. She refused to acquiesce to uninformed hierarchy. In the face of great personal sacrifice she held tenaciously to the belief that fundamental structures of western knowledge had to be called into question.

The boldness that Sister Nuurah displayed in having her children in the public schools speak truth to power was now demanded of her and she found support for her actions in the spirit and words of Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) when asked “what kind of jihad is better” replied “A word of truth in front of an oppressive ruler”! (Islamic Information and Education, 1994).
The issue of struggling against wrongdoing and “fighting back” appears in the Holy Qur’an with theme like regularity. Interestingly, it is not always directed toward fighting external forces. In fact, the biggest jihad, is said to be the jihad that one faces with self. Again a quote from Qur’an makes our point. “The (true) believers are only those who believe in Allah and his Messenger...[and who] strive with their wealth and their selves for the cause of Allah. Such are the truthful.” (49:15) Sister Nuurah wholeheartedly entered the Quest. She committed herself to personal, professional and spiritual liberation and growth. She refused to linger in the teachings of the Nation of Islam and its previous curriculum even though it would have been easier and the curriculum was empowering in many ways. Instead, she read, thought, prayed and then acted upon her understandings. Thus, she models a teacher way of being that is courageous and thirsty for knowledge. She didn’t just teach and demand excellence of her students and staff she constantly pushed herself as well. Palmer (1998) says it beautifully “teaching holds up a mirror to the soul.” And, the reflection looking back at Sister Nuurah included in addition to the ethic of care, an ethic of service and learning that were so deeply ingrained that they incited resistance in the face of obstacles versus acceptance of the status quo.

The Business of a Teaching Life

Years later, after the name of the schools had been changed to the Sister Clara Muhammad Schools and Elijah Muhammad had passed away and was replaced by his son
Imam Warith Deen Muhammad, a call for Islamic based curriculum in all schools would be sounded and Sister Nuurah would have an opportunity to share her revolutionary ideas with teachers and administrators who sought her out. But that’s getting ahead of the story.

For now we turn to 1972 the year she left Detroit and met and married a farmer from right outside of Toledo, Ohio.

A Teaching Life

On the farm, Sister Nuurah had the opportunity to quiet herself, reflect on her philosophy of teaching, write, garden, can vegetables and fruits and, of course, teach. Collecting a few of the Muslim and non-Muslim children in the area she brought them to the farm and started teaching them gardening and the mathematical base of knowledge. Again, she found that the children learned enthusiastically and at a phenomenal rate. (FN)

Burnt out on schooling, both public and private but still passionate about education, Sister Nuurah started toying with the idea of creating her own learning center. While yet working with small groups of children and their parents, she began to collect information and attempt to mobilize the resources to start her dream—the Muhammad-Way Learning Center. But after three years her marriage failed, so she left Toledo and moved to Bowling Green, Ohio where she worked at the University (BGSU). Though working full time, on the week-ends she still taught the children from Toledo along with the children of some of the older adult students on Bowling Green’s campus. During week day nights she acted as a mother figure to the young Muslim and African American
students on campus. At 21, I was one of those students taken under her wing. The year was 1976.

A Muslim student, an African American male, was falsely accused of attempted rape of a Caucasian student. Sister Nuurah mobilized the defense effort that generated over $10,000 in funds and secured the services of an attorney. The campus was in an uproar, white students hung Sister Nuurah in effigy in several places on campus and threats to her life were a constant. After it became clear that her life was truly in danger, Sister Nuurah left and moved to Atlanta, Georgia. In Atlanta she started right away trying to get her learning center off the ground. She took in children from 6 months to 16 years of age. Often the parents were unable to provide proper supervision because of their work schedules. It was not unusual for her, on such occasions, to have her students live with her. (FN)

The accused student at BGSU was an orphan. Sister Nuurah’s maternal instincts found expression in defending him. They found a similar opportunity for expression in the “situational orphans” that she took into her home. The teacher as mother is a recurrent theme in the African American community in general and Sister Nuurah’s life in particular. I remember one instance where she had a family of five children living with her. She educated, mothered and cared for them and they in turn helped her out with household chores and personal errands. Occasionally, they would even help her sale the egg rolls and other goodies that she prepared to supplement her meager income. Always entrepreneurial Sister Nuurah found creative ways to follow her passions. Come what may she was determined to teach!
Sister Nuurah: By '79 I was doing a traveling teaching thing. I used to say "have blackboard will travel." I would go into a neighborhood and the children would be gathered from the neighborhood, these were Muslim children, and I would set up my blackboard and bring out my books and chalks and stuff and I would teach in some house. One time a brother from a mid-sized New England community was visiting in this house. He was sitting in the back where he heard me teaching. When I finished and was getting ready to go, he came out and said “Sister where did you come from” the question could have been answered you know, like Mars, Jupiter or something by the way he asked it, that's the way I felt like answering. But I told him “I came from Kansas City.” He told me “we're trying to set up a school in [our city] and we need you this is exactly what we're looking for. I listened to you teach the children and I watched how they responded and I listened to the things that they were doing. We really need you.” So he went back to [his home] and talked to the brothers there and they made arrangements to come and get me and to move me there. I wrote a proposal so that they could get the funds. I had to survey the community and find out what everybody was like. I explained to them that they could not support the kind of school that I had organized in this proposal because of certain things. I wrote the sisters a twelve page letter and explained to them their responsibility in getting the community in shape because you know a community shapes around its women. After the sisters read the twelve page letter they voted to send me back to Georgia.

(TE#1)

Some of what Sister Nuurah wrote the sisters about had to do with them assuming full responsibility for their roles as mothers of the community. She admonished them on
the way they were allowing the "forces of destruction" to take over their lives pointing out to one sister that "you know your mother wouldn't like it, if she could see you now."

Many of the sisters were married to brothers with drugs and violence in their histories.

Sister Nuurah: The brother who was the Amir (leader) now he was wonderful, he really wanted me to stay there and he was very nice they paid my rent and took care of my expenses and everything. But he told me that they had voted and they wanted to send me back. I said to him, "Now look, they didn't bring me, they can't send me; they didn't create me, they can't destroy me; they didn't make me, they can't break me; tell them they better mind their own business, because I came because of Allah's intervention!"

In the meantime while I was there I was training teachers in another [large New England city]. I would go to [there] on the week-ends and we would set up seminars.

That's where I met Brother Abdul-Ghaffar from Egypt. He sat in my workshop and heard me training the teachers in regard to teaching from the Islamic foundation, from the mathematical foundation and he asked me the same thing "Sister where did you come from?" and he said "I want you to come to my Arabic class, it's on Wednesday." So I went to his class on that Wednesday and he was up there drawing straight lines and explaining that this is a representation of Allah and this is one and all numbers come from one and blah blah blah and on like that! We had this in common that is why we became interested in each other and we began to talk to each other quite a bit...At any rate I stayed there until 1980 and I finally moved back to Atlanta but I left the proposal with them and told them how to straighten out the community. But an interesting thing did happen the sisters did get things straightened out. The whole community really turned
over. I talked to a sister [twelve years later] and she told me about the changes? When I came back from New England I reopened the learning center in Atlanta and worked from 1980-82. Sometimes I sit down and think about all the children that came through the learning center and its amazing, it's just unbelievable sometimes. Some of them I can put my hands on today. ... I remember one girl Constance who was in high school and was having trouble with Algebra and I taught her on Saturdays. I taught her the basic mathematical approach to algebra and she was able to go on and finish school. She told her mother she said, "Mom when I go to college I want to be a teacher just like Sister Nuurah." And, she did go to college and when she finished she became a teacher and when I came back to Atlanta I found her teaching in the public schools and she was really making a difference—a really revolutionary teacher. When I returned and reopened the learning center in 1980 I also set up a word processing service because I needed to fund the learning center. I would teach during the day and work from 3-11 or 4-11 or something like that I ran that for quite a while. In 1982 I decided it would best for me to get more training so I closed the learning center and moved to the Sudan where I worked in the Northern and Southern provinces teaching in the Universities there and studying Islam and Arabic. Upon my return from Sudan in 1985 I moved back to Kansas City and reopened the learning center. (TE# 1 & 2)

The text of Sister Nuurah's life reads like a novel with the learning center a theme running through it from the mid seventies through the mid nineties. She loves to say how she "carries it on her back", which essentially means that, for the most part, she was the Learning Center. Of course throughout the years there have been several sisters who
have worked with her learning her strategies and assisting with the children. Also, throughout the years she has gotten involved with various Islamic school efforts, offering training and workshops on how to break free of the chains of educational mimicry and truly create an alternative approach to education. In the early 80’s when Imam Muhammad insisted that schools had to have an Islamic base, Sister Nuurah was called upon by more than one community to train and assist its teachers in developing an Islamic based curriculum.

**Cultural affirmation: An ethic of self awareness**

In this last major teaching story of chapter four, the “person” of Sister Nuurah continues to assert itself as a focus along with the theme of cultural affirmation. She is a teacher filled with both the know-how and the be-how to work effectively with African American children and their families. She models dedication, persistence, excellence and a submission to God that is so intense that she boldly stands for right regardless of whether the wrong doer is “her own” as in the case of the Nation’s hierarchy or “others” like the European American public school teachers. Additionally, her commitment to teaching and feeding her own intellectual appetites compelled her to learn and to grow. In the Sudan, for example, she went in pursuit of knowledge for herself and ended up teaching in the Universities there and working with children on the weekends while she pursued her own studies of Arabic and Islam. Even there, half way across the world, her mathematical approach was successful.
Again, through Tawhidi lenses Sister Nuurah’s teaching stories divulge much that needs to be considered for the clear articulation of a Muslim African American perspective on service learning. And, once again, we work at situating our discussion within a Tawhidi episteme by referring to the words of the Qur’an. In fact, we recall Qur’anic verses cited earlier as we revisit our discussion on ethics and Tawhid:

*By the soul and the order and proportion given to it. And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right. Truly s/he succeeds who purifies it and s/he fails who corrupts it.*

(Holy Qur’an, 91:7)

Tawhid, we have already asserted, is the unitive principle that requires of the Muslim a unity of action and faith. The Muslim is commanded by Allah to attend to issues of herself. A Muslim teacher, like the Muslim researcher mentioned earlier, must concern herself with herself. Thus, Sister Nuurah’s pursuit of knowledge is not based upon some arbitrary whim, it is an act of faith just as the way in which she has grown her character has not been based upon happenstance but rather her efforts to comply with the requisites of a Tawhidi episteme.

The three major ethical concerns—care, service and pursuit of knowledge/learning that are manifested in Sister Nuurah’s teaching biography are all expressed through a way of teaching and being that reflects her African American cultural heritage. The Qur’an speaks to issues of culture in the following two ayaat:

*O (hu)mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most*
Muslim African Americans, like Muslims the world over find, within the Tawhidi episteme, room for cultural affirmation and expression that is bounded only by the principles of Qur'an and Sunnah. The principle of jihad i.e., striving in the way of Allah against oppression and wrongdoing, is especially relevant to any discussion of an historically oppressed and dominated people such as African Americans and can be used to illustrate the above point. The culturally specific ways in which resistance and striving for equity and justice have been enacted in African American culture need to be considered when theorizing any pedagogical approach because what good is an education that does not move an oppressed and dominated people toward liberation? Sister Nuurah’s teaching and personal autobiography give us specific sites to turn to as we examine the issue of education as a site of resistance.

In African American educational historiography two recurring thematic motifs stand out as reflecting culturally specific models of resistance that can inform the shaping of a service learning perspective—racial uplift and “setting the record straight”. Both have been dealt with somewhat, albeit racial uplift more directly than setting the record straight, however here we want to mention them again to reemphasize their importance for urban education and attend especially to issue setting the record straight. To make our point, I refer back to the second teaching story presented where Sister Nuurah taught all
the students in her class to read and then had them read for those teachers who had said
that their academic achievement was impossible. This singular act, is discussed in terms
of the thematic motif of setting the record straight.

When the slaves sang “everybody talking about heaven ain’t going there” they
sang after having systematically analyzed their personal and collective situations vis a vis
the messages of Christianity they were being taught and, noting the lack of congruence
they sang to set the record straight. When Carter G. Woodson wrote about Black
education initiatives prior to 1861 he opens with a discussion of the common
misconceptions about Black education and then, through an extensive process of
systematic research he begins setting the record straight. When the American Negro
Academy embarked on a full fledged campaign to disseminate information about the
contributions of African history to world history so that the lies and distortions prevalent
at that time could be corrected they were engaged in a process of setting the record
straight. When Sister Nuurah Muhanunad [then Eleanor Milner] developed the reading
clinic and then proceeded to systematically enhance the reading of every child that
participated, when she walked her students over and had them read for their former
teachers, she, too, was setting the record straight. Setting the record straight is a form of
jihad that recognizes communication as a powerful tool for justice. A service learning
ethic that builds upon the cultural strengths of African American communities can not
ignore the historical legacy and importance of setting the record straight.

Setting the record straight and racial uplift reflect cultural locations for a service
learning pedagogy as do the ethic of care and service expressed in other mothering, and
the ethic of learning and pursuit of knowledge that defines education itself as a site of resistance. These along with the person of the teacher represent something of the findings evidenced in this study of Sister Nuurah's example of a teaching life. In the following chapter the research questions that guided the research project are (re)presented and used as guides directing a discussion of the implications and overarching value of the research endeavor.
CHAPTER 5
FROM SERVICE LEARNING TO SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Introduction

_We keep thinking that policy, structure and government are the best tools that we have to respond to the challenges we face in education...But I think the most effective tool we've got is the human self, the teacher's self and if we don't learn to honor that and help people explore it, then we are undermining the ability of teachers to make a difference (Palmer, 1998)_

The purpose of this chapter on implications is to attempt to synthesize the learnings, lessons and findings from the entire research project and to do so against the backdrop and shadow of the original research questions by answering (or at least responding to) the more simple but poignant question of “so what?” So what, after all has been said and done, are the implications of the research? For our efforts to forge an alternative understanding of service learning in teacher education? For the educational research community? For teachers in public and private schools? For curriculum development? For me as a Muslim African American educator and researcher? For others who want to research in alternative ways?

This research journey began with a passionate commitment to the idea of troubling the still waters of theoretical discourses on service learning in teacher education programs. And, to some extent, the research findings can do that. So much of what the findings are
about underscores the essence of the point made in the opening words of this chapter—
educational reform initiatives have generally failed to attend sufficiently to the person of
the teacher (and to persons of color). The research findings can push us to situate the
discourse of service learning in teacher education differently. They reshape the theoretical
discourse foci such that emphases are not on doing service learning pedagogy better but
on instilling the service learning ethic in the person of the teacher. The research findings
lead us to an examination of a teacher's way of being.

There is an interesting correlation between service learning philosophy and
pedagogy and the very nature of a teacher way of being. Philosophically, service learning
has been described as the integration of community service into the academic process in
such a way that both the community and the academic process are enhanced. Pedagogical
descriptions depict a process whereby students plan, act, and reflect (Conrad & Hedin,
1991; Duckenfield, 1992; Fertman, 1994; Kendall, 1992). However, this dissertation
process lead me to the realization that with minimal imagination and a simple shift in
language the classroom itself can be recast as the "community", the teacher as the "student
learner" and reflection as the ongoing process of intra personal and interpersonal
assessment that teachers ought to do of their own learning. Service learning, in this sense
becomes more than a pedagogical model that teachers employ. It becomes the essence of
teaching itself. It becomes a site for the expression and cultivation of the teacher as a
servant. It becomes a site for the expression and cultivation of what has been called
"servant leadership" (Greenleaf, 1980).

The term "servant leadership" expresses a philosophical commitment to a type of
leadership based on an ethic of service where the goal is the healing and transformation of people and institutions (Greenleaf, 1980). It represents a “form of leadership that encourages collaboration, trust, foresight, listening, and the ethical use of power and empowerment” (McCollum, 1998, p. 1). Servant leadership represents a form of leadership that is desperately needed in our schools.

We, Sister Nuurah and I, begin this discussion on implications by circling around our topic. Rather than approach our discussion in a linear fashion where we immediately link service learning to servant leadership via the findings, we offer first story, remembrance, and wise words and then, we reflect upon and share our lessons and learning. We start with story.

A father had three sons but favored one above the others. When questioned about his favoritism, he failed to respond verbally. Instead he gave each son a chicken and asked him to go kill it where he would not be seen. The first son returned almost immediately and said boastfully, “I killed my chicken at such and such a place and there was no one around.” The second son returned a little while later saying with great pride, “I hid in a secret spot where no one ever comes and in that spot I killed my chicken”. The third son, after what seemed like an extremely long time, returned with his live chicken in hand and his head hung low. His brothers laughed at him and said, “See father, he could not even do as you asked, why then do you favor him?” The father looked at the questioners but did not address them, instead he spoke to the son carrying the chicken. “Son,
why have you returned with your chicken alive’’. ‘‘Because’’, said the
young man, ‘‘I could find no where I could be fully alone—no where that
Allah would not see me.’’ The father said nothing for, by way of example,
the brothers had the answer to their question. (personally adapted from oft
repeated folktale)

Followed by a remembrance:

We call to mind the words of Sister Nuurah when Ben, the young man who
returned to serve her in her blindness, spoke to her:

“I believe God sent me here for a special purpose’, [Ben said]. Sister
Nuurah said in response to Ben’s comments, “Electric shocks ran through
my body and I said to myself, ‘Okay Allah, I’ve got the message. This is
another one that you want me to take care of.’’ (TE#1)

Followed by some wise words:

I just feel …[that] if teachers are not service oriented, whereby they don’t
see their role as service to humanity …then the children are
lost. You have to serve these children, you have to serve their character,
you have to make sure you are fulfilling your responsibility toward
humanity and that you are looking toward the future. (Sister Nuurah, FTF
#2)

Now, with story, remembrance and wise words in hand, we revisit our research
questions even while we situate ourselves in the center of an academic discourse on the
place and power of spirituality in education where the words of Hudak (1998) link the
writings of Delpit (1995) with the insights of Thich Nhat Hanh (1996). Hudak credits Delpit (1995) with helping him tie together “loose ends” in his thinking. Delpit’s writing about her concern with training teachers to teach “other people’s children” reflects an alternative way of relating to others where the drive to connect rather than dominate moves the teacher to become a student of her students and the universe as a whole. Hudak notes that the dominant ways that academics “go about teaching teachers with our rational, dualistic, Cartesian epistemologies serve most often to create disconnection rather than connection, disequilibrium rather than balance, fragmentation rather than wholeness, pathology rather than health among ourselves as faculty as well as with the students we teach” (p.43). On the other hand, Hudak found “inspiration, insight, and understanding from non-Western epistemologies. …especially the work of Zen Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh” (p.43). Our research project offers yet another location for harvesting “inspiration, insight and understanding” from the knowledge products of non-Western epistemologies.

Research questions, lessons and implications: From service learning to servant leadership

What do Muslim teachers using Godcentric/spiritual approaches to education understand about teaching and learning in Muslim contexts that might be generalizable to public schools and to the discourses around service learning? How can Muslim teachers inform current discourses around service learning? Are the current models of service learning culturally relevant—what are their social, historical, and political roots and epistemologies? What processes, if necessary, must be engaged and which variables must be considered to move service learning models toward cultural relevancy?
The story and the remembrance and wise words of Sister Nuurah, along with the insights of Hudak (1998) converge to underscore the most fundamental offering that Muslim teachers can make in response to the research questions.

Lesson #1. One's perception of and relationship to the Divine is of critical importance to the way notions of service, teaching and learning get constructed. The taboo against religiously charged discussion in academia and other public spaces hampers the ability of educational researchers and teacher educators to attend in, an all encompassing and deep way, to the whole of the epistemological ground out of which theory evolves and upon which practice is based. As Hudak (1998) notes, the current state of affairs in teacher education programs is rooted in epistemological assumptions that tend not to promote, even within teacher education faculties, the kind of ethos of community and service that novice teachers are told to cultivate in their K-12 classrooms. We must recenter ourselves and our concerns about education within a discourse that embodies and addresses the whole person, physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual.

Many Muslim educators model an ethic of service, teaching and learning that is rooted in their conscious deliberate decisions to attend to their relationship with the Divine. Sister Nuurah, as critical exemplar, opened up a window for academia to peer into so that it might observe a teacher way of being inspired by a God-centered worldview. Sister Nuurah, inspired by her faith and commitment to God, is inspiring to others. She shows us how a life grounded in religious soil can yet be fed with intellectual and communal concerns and pursuits. Her personal pursuit of excellence extends to every aspect of her being—not just the intellectual. She models a deliberate and focused way of
responding to societal inequities that changes things. And, her dynamism brings her into relationship. She establishes relationship with her self, her students, their parents and the community. Ought we not to be thinking about how we can bring ourselves into a healthy liberatory relationship with life in its multiplicity of expressions?

Like the favored son in our story, Sister Nuurah responded to Ben’s statement within the framework of a pervasive Godcentric worldview. Further, she situates her arguments about teachers in the context of a discourse on service. Although, spiritual language is not explicitly invoked when she speaks of teachers and service, her meaning is clearly couched in an implicit spiritual discourse. Sister Nuurah sees service as duty to God and she sees the role of the teachers as being to “serve their [student’s] character” such that students too, can fulfill their responsibilities as servants of God.

In the Islamic worldview, the creation is held to be orderly and purposeful. With this assumption in heart, the mind is led to reflect upon and receive inspiration from life events whether small or large. Sister Nuurah was not consciously thinking that Ben was a special trust to her from Allah until his words moved her to do so. Yet, she had already begun being a servant to him by teaching him what her experience and foresight suggested that he needed to know. The teacher is servant to her students, their parents and the community. And, given that the teacher’s role is inherently imbued with the responsibilities of leadership, Greenleaf’s term “servant leadership” can be aptly applied as the essential nature of the teaching role.

Lesson #2. The teacher’s role is to be a servant leader where servant leadership is defined as the “application of the philosophy of service to the practice of leadership” (Spears,
Teachers are to be both servants and leaders in their classrooms and communities. Service learning pedagogy provides an opportunity and a location where both preservice teachers and teacher educators can become critical exemplars of the embodiment, enactment and practice of servant leadership. In so doing they elevate the concerns of service learning programming to reflect awareness of the issue of a teacher's way of being. The concepts of servant leadership can add clarity, depth and focus to discussions on service learning and in the process blur the disciplinary boundaries between service learning and servant leadership.

No wonder then that Greenleaf's (1970) following description of the servant leader echoes the themes, sentiments and issues raised repeatedly in academic discourses on service learning:

The servant leader is servant first... It begins by the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant—first to make sure that other people's highest-priority needs are being served. The best test, and the most difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived (p. 7)?

Greenleaf goes on to describe servant leaders as possessing skills of "action,
listening, persuasion, practical goal setting and intuitive prescience” (Spears & Frick, 1996, p. 2) According to Spears & Frick (1996) servant leadership, with its dual foci on reflection, action, and being contain elements that are characteristic of non-Western epistemologies.

The research findings implicate the teacher's way of being as a critical factor in the implementation of a culturally grounded service learning practice. The family is the first site for the expression of the most fundamental service learning ethic and, as such it provides numerous opportunities for the practice and cultivation of servant leadership.

Lesson #3. Family, where members learn to care for, learn from and serve each other is the first and most basic service learning model.

Teachers who operate out of a religiously and culturally grounded ethic of care reestablish a sense of family in their classrooms and they do so, in part, by developing a common language that is rooted in the historical, political, cultural and social realities of the children and communities in which they serve. Language, according to Johner (1993) is the first agenda item for any discussion on building community. He asserts, “Any discussion of community must begin with the power of language. Language is a shared symbolic system that we use to extend unarticulated personal experience into the realm of interpersonal relationship and into personal expression. It is our first ‘power’ tool” (p. 7). In order to become servant leaders and effectively employ service learning pedagogy in their classrooms and communities, preservice teachers and their teacher educators need to be versed in the unvoiced cultural language of the people and communities where they seek to serve. There is power in the word, especially when we think of the “word” as not
simply vocal expressions but all those social, political, cultural and historical realities that have shaped and continue to shape the lived experiences of both individuals and groups. Inclusion of sustained and systematic exposure to diverse culturally grounded expressions of family, community, service and learning is an essential element of service learning teacher preparation.

Lesson # 4. For both public and private urban schools to be successful they need to metaphor themselves as training sites for liberation by creating multiple opportunities for students to address and serve their families and communities through the cultivation of servant leadership via service learning.

In the language of service learning and/or servant leadership students need opportunities where they practice putting service to people and ethical considerations above personal self-interest. In the language of Islam, students must be taught the ways of jihad and be encouraged to engage actively in striving in the way of Allah to eradicate inequity and injustice both internally and externally. After all, there is an ought to be and teachers, through various personal and pedagogical acts, ought to do whatever it takes within their power (and within the boundaries of a Tawhidi episteme) to bring it into being.

While lesson # 4 is principally expressed relative to the needs of the K-12 student, there are also implications for service learning in teacher education. Teachers need to model resistance to wrong doing and oppression and find ways to enlist their students with them. Teachers need to make explicit their own struggles to overcome certain character flaws (of course, discretion and modesty are due here). When students recognize that we
all struggle with issues of self improvement and personal growth and development they may be more likely to join with us in the Quest. Failure to provide and cultivate a servant leadership that boldly confronts societal injustices can have dire consequences for all involved. Two personal stories help illustrate this point.

Story #1

In a ritual that humored and amused me, I walked into the office just as bold as if I had a right to be there, it was the beginning of the school year and I needed to know. “How many days can a student be absent without failing”, I asked? The answer, which escapes me now, dictated how many days I would be absent from school. If they said the maximum was 25, I knew I could miss 24½ and still get by. And, that’s what I did. I missed as many days as I could get away with. This was my own private joke, I remained in the top classes and on the honor roll. In my classes I was respectful and actively engaged.

Story #2

In my journal I would write about how I was sick and tired of these young white teachers coming into our schools, acting like our saviors and wasting our time. But I would never say anything. Well, this one day something just clicked inside and I couldn’t help myself. So, I raised my hand right in the middle of Ms. ____’s monologue on how “some of her best friends were black people” and I said, “Ms. ____ we are not here to hear about how some of your best friends are black people, we are here to learn English”.

You can imagine what happened. First, she turned beet red and then she began yelling at me, her “favorite student”. She said that if there was any way that she could fail me she
would. But, of course, there wasn't anyway. I was a good student and I continued to do "A" work.

These stories paint a poignant portrait of opportunity unfulfilled not just for me as a student and a human being, but for the school and community where I could have served, and, in the case of the second story, for the teacher whose personal equilibrium I assaulted. I believe that whether expressed openly or held in the heart, there is a powerful drive in the human spirit to resist oppression. I lacked the tools to respond in meaningful ways, but the drive was so strong that I responded anyway. Cultivating an ethos of servant leadership through service learning can help to foster a sense of inner purpose and direction that might go far in helping other students avoid the pitfalls of aimless and undirected protest action that characterized my personal acts of resistance.

On the other hand, if Ms. ______ had stopped to reflect rather than responding so emotionally and with such venom, perhaps she could have engaged me and the entire class in a discussion about race relations and service. Perhaps, that small moment could have been the impetus for the development of student led forums on race. Perhaps, my act of resistance could have been placed within a larger historical context such as that of "talking back".

As I reflect upon this teacher story in particular, I feel a sense of loss for a relationship aborted and lessons delayed. I truly liked Ms._______ and thought she was a very good teacher. On many occasions she challenged me to think about things that I had never considered. Its too bad that neither of us had been exposed to the ideas of servant leadership. Educational research informs us that America’s teachers are increasingly
white, female and middle class (Dillard, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Delpit, 1995). Many of them will be confronted with scenarios similar in form and substance to the ones described above. A servant leader approach to service learning in teacher education can assist them in developing a teacher way of being that invites relationship while simultaneously honoring and productively channeling their student's spirit of resistance.

Lesson #5. A Godcentric approach to education and research can produce true alternatives.

This research endeavor represents my effort, along with the efforts of Sister Nuurah and other Muslim educators, to engage in a process of self definition and introspection that reflects our yearning for relationship with the broader educational community. Despite the obstacles, we chose to move through and negotiate our way in an educational world not of our making, a world that simultaneously invites and rejects—"this is a time of increased paradigm proliferation" where "subjugated knowledges are surfacing" and then in the same breath "religion has no place in academic discussions", "whose (white secular traditions) research do you use to substantiate your methodology and research claims?" All of this push and pull, back and forth is disconcerting and frustrating for us but we can handle it. Our faith in God and our passionate commitment to children and education gives us the strength to keep on keeping on. The greater issue is can the educational community hear us?

For example, can mainstream educators truly recognize the power of Sister Nuurah's approach to curriculum? Will her insights about a way to integrate subject matter such that each discipline can be expressed in the language of the other fall on deaf
ears? Can the educational community, out of commitment to children and education, move beyond the circle and comfort of its familiar and embrace true alternatives?
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APPENDIX A

Glossary of Islamic terms

**Allah**
The Arabic name for the Supreme being

**Ayat**
The Arabic meaning of Ayah is a miracle and a sign. The Qur'an is considered to be a miracle itself. Each verse or sentence is called an ayah or a miracle. The plural of ayah is ayaat which means signs or miracles.

**Du’a**
Supplication; Informal prayers

**Hadith**
Literal meaning is communication or narrative. It is the record of an individual saying or action of Muhammad (PBUH) taken as a model of behavior by Muslims. The sayings and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are called hadith. Hadith are considered authentic only after having met a rigorous systematic method of collection and recording.

The two most famous collectors of hadith were Imam Al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim. There are numerous others.

**Islam**
Islam is an Arabic word with the root “slm”. It literally means “submission” or “surrender” to the will of the Creator of the Universe: The religion of the Muslim. Islam is a monotheistic religion that affirms that there is only one God, Allah and that Allah alone is to be worshiped. Islam also affirms that the one God sent many messengers (in fact every people received a prophet) and that these messengers and their messages did not in their original forms contradict each other—One God, One Message, One Humanity.

**Masjid**
The place of worship for the Muslims. The plural form is masajid.

**Qur’an**
The Holy Qur’an is the holy scripture of Islam revealed by Allah to Muhammad (PBUH). There is only one Qur’an and it was revealed in the Arabic language. The Qur’an has been memorized in its entirety by millions of Muslims throughout different parts of the world.

The Qur’an is composed of 114 Surah (chapters). It is read and recited following
specific rules of recitation. It is to be touched when in a state of cleanliness and purity.

The Qur'an can not be translated at all as the Qur'an is the exact word of Allah. Any translation is considered to be an approximation of the explanation of the meaning of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an was transcribed as it was revealed and was compiled in its current form under the specific instructions of the Prophet (PBUH).

**PBUH**

When the name of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned or written a Muslim, to indicate respect, invokes the statement peace be upon him meaning May the blessings and the peace of Allah be upon him (Muhammad).

**Salah**

Salah means a spiritual relationship and communication between the creature and his/her Creator. Salah is one of the five pillars of Islam. A special communication is (Salah) to take place five times a day for a Muslim: Fajr (Dawn), Zuhr (Noon), ‘Asr (Afternoon), Maghrib (Sunset) and ‘Isha’ (Late Night).

Salah is to be performed with mental concentration, verbal communication, vocal recitation and physical movement to attain the spiritual uplift, peace and harmony. There is a congregational prayer on Friday noon (Salatul Jumu’ah) with a sermon (Khutbah) to be delivered by a religious leader (Imam).

**Sunnah**

In general, the word Sunnah means habit, practice, customary procedure, or action, norm and usage sanctioned by tradition. Here it means the sayings, practices and life habits of the Prophet (PBUH). Thus, hadith are part of the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH).

**Surah**

The Qur'an is composed of 114 chapters, each of which is called a Surah.

**Tawhid**

The belief that there is but one Allah and that Allah exists without assistance or partnership, similitude or rival.
APPENDIX B

The Muslim Population in the United States (an excerpt)
By Fareed H. Numan (http://www.amerimuslim.org/publications.html)
December, 1992

Geographical Distribution:

The table below represents a breakdown by states of the largest Muslim communities in the United States. It shows that there are an estimated 3.3 million Muslims in these states. The figure represents 62 percent of the estimated 5 million Muslims living in the United States.

**Muslim State Population Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Muslim Population by (1,000)</th>
<th>Percentage Total Muslim Population</th>
<th>Percent of Total State Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<td>Texas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
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<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Estimates under column 2 have been rounded to the nearest even number.

The list below shows the number of facilities used by Muslims for religious activities and community affairs.

- Mosques/Islamic Centers: 843
- Islamic Schools: 165
- Associations: 426
There are 165 Islamic Schools in the United States, of which 92 are full time. Figures here for Masaajid/Islamic Centers are based on our directory listings.

Note: The exact number of businesses owned and operated by Muslims is unavailable, but they are estimated in the thousands. These preliminary findings represent data collected during 1986-1992.