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Muslim, Jewish, and Christian Women Living with Resilience Amidst Microaggressions and Macroaggressions in King County

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MUSLIM, JEWISH, AND CHRISTIAN WOMEN LIVING WITH RESILIENCE AMIDST MICROAGGRESSIONS AND MACROAGGRESSIONS IN KING COUNTY

BY

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I wrote this project with great reverence and gratitude for all my relations who came before and those who are here now, courageously opening the door for others to walk through in the daily striving for greater love and less hate.

Dr. Callahan, Committee Chair and former Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, made it possible for me to join this privileged path of study; her unwavering commitment provided tremendous support throughout the entire research process. Dr. Christie Eppler and Dr. Linda Smith graciously agreed to be on the committee and advised me from their rich experiences and vast knowledge.

My dear community of loved ones, including my partner, family and friends; my School of Mystics sisters; and the Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life team, gifted me with endless grace and encouragement for which I am deeply grateful.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to the Divine Spirit that spurs and nurtures reflection, fortitude and transformation and attends to our human capacity for both othering and being othered with unconditional love.

I dedicate it to the women who allowed me to sit across from them—in their homes, libraries, prayer spaces, and classrooms—and hear their stories; witness their power; and learn from their wisdom, love and courage.

I also dedicate this work to the late Amina Ahmed, newly elected SeaTac City Council Member, leader in her Somali community, tireless advocate for human rights and justice, and friend to all. She was killed in a car crash on December 8, 2018. I would have cherished the opportunity to hear and learn from her story and hope this research will contribute to the foundations of resilience that she was already nurturing.

ABSTRACT

MUSLIM, JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN WOMEN LIVING WITH RESILIENCE

AMDIST MICROAGRESSIONS AND MACROAGGRESSIONS

IN KING COUNTY

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This qualitative research project explores how Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women with intersecting identities (*social locations*) of race, gender, religion, ethnicity, national origin, indigenous heritage, social class, age, and ability live with amid micro and macroaggressions. Existing research on trauma and resilience and the theological frameworks that undergirded the project are presented. Additionally, hate crime statistics and a brief history of hate crime legislation are discussed to illustrate patterns and trends and to expose knowledge gaps caused by unreported and underreported hate crimes (Anti-Defamation League, 2018a, p. 1). Furthermore, this project illuminates the impact of non-criminal micro and macroaggressions—either intentional or non-intentional—on individuals who do not belong to the local or global dominant groups.

Through a process of semi-structured interviews, eleven diverse women—representing the three Abrahamic faiths—were invited to share about the best and hardest aspects of living in King County, WA; their relationship with God; how they respond to harm and adversity; how their faith informs their response; and symbols that for them mean all will be okay.

After transcribing, coding, and analyzing the results, the researcher developed a definition of resilience that integrates and builds on existing concepts of resilience. For the purposes of this research, resilience is defined as: living and loving amidst adversity.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

It is difficult to imagine a human experience that does not include some form of suffering and striving. Human history is replete with harmful dynamics of discrimination and "othering" related to gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, indigenous heritage, social class, age, and disability (collectively referred to as *social location* throughout this project). Most commonly, marginalization is directed by agent groups who are "overvalued and receive unearned advantage and benefits" (Neito, Boyer, Goodwin, Johnson & Smith, 2010, p. 29) at target group members defined as "social groups that are devalued and 'otherized'" (Neito et al., 2010, p. 30) or seen as "strange(r)." From a Critical Race Feminism (CRF) lens, particularly for women of color with a "multiplicative identity" (Wing, 2003, p. 7), an intersection of more than one target identity (Crenshaw, 2003) increases their vulnerability to being placed on the margins of society (Wing, 2003) as well as exposed to trauma.

While the term "trauma" means *wound* in Greek, which connotes physical injury, we have come to also know the emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of such injury and the many sizes and forms trauma can take ("trauma," n.d.). As with acts of discrimination and othering, trauma can be a single or an ongoing occurrence, vicarious or participatory, as well as individual or collective-societal (Eastern Mennonite University, 2017, p. 12). Collective or societal trauma represent policies or events in which a whole society or group are impacted. They include historical, generational trauma such as slavery in the United States; religious conflicts in Northern Ireland, Pakistan, and India; cultural trauma

of Jews during the Holocaust and oppression of indigenous peoples; and structurally-induced trauma in which the dignity and practices of a culture are violated. Collective traumas often combine any of the variations above and may include "colonization, gender-based violence, racism" (Eastern Mennonite University, 2017, p. 13).

Buried within, and sometimes disguised, in these layers of individual and collective experiences of trauma are exclusionary acts which may or may not intend harm. Macroaggressions are expressed on structural and systemic levels, whereas microaggressions occur in one-on-one interactions embedded with subtle and sometimes blatant insults. Psychologist Derald Sue (2010) categorizes them as intentional or unintentional insults, assaults, and invalidations.

As a white, heterosexual, middle class, Christian woman, with unearned social advantage, I was compelled to study how local Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women of intersecting identities overcome micro and macroaggressions within King County, Washington. I sought to learn how they continue to live with resilience and tap into the "everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources" (Masten, 2001, p. 235).

At the inception of this study and during my initial research, I pondered whether my privilege would presume that women would like to share their stories with me. I also asked myself if I would be able to truly hear and enter their stories without the bias of a colonized oppressive consciousness (Nieto et al., 2010, p. 121) and agent-target narratives. The first step in the field study was to ask for permission and the privilege to be entrusted with the "tapestries or quilts, we are all sitting putting these pieces together," as conveyed by a participant in this study.

Before pursuing my qualitative research and answers to the driving questions outlined in this chapter, I drew on diverse studies and scholarly explanations of trauma and resilience to create a theoretical scaffolding. Personal reflection and experience; accounts from Scripture, theologians and noteworthy individuals from modern history; and insight from current world and local events supplied theological frameworks from which to further explore the concept of resilience. Together, those components aided in the development of my research questions and subsequent questions asked of the research study participants. The results of those interviews, combined with the other components described above, enabled the construction of a distinct definition of resiliency.

Statement of the Problem

Individuals in the United States who are not members of agent groups experience micro and macroaggressions in many forms and at increasing rates. Such discrimination and "othering" are part of a spectrum of behaviors ranging from non-criminal bias to civil acts of hate to criminal acts of violence (Pyramid of Hate, 2013, Ryan). The following section illuminates the complexity and interdependence of such acts. First, it presents the history of hate crime in the U.S and the progression of legal protections for victims of hate crimes. Next, it explores changing trends and patterns regarding hate crimes and hate crime prevention. Lastly, it discusses the impact of micro and macroaggressions on members of target groups.

The 1964 Federal Civil Rights Act "prohibited discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion and gender (but not sexual orientation) and made any attempt to interfere in a person's ability to engage in constitutionally protected activities, like voting, a federal offense" (Blazak, 2011, p. 245). Other protected activities included

"attending school, applying for jobs, using any facility of interstate commerce, participating in public activities, patronizing a public place/facility, voting or serving as a juror in a state court" (Cheng, Ickes, & Kenworthy, 2013, p. 761).

Tragically, the Civil Rights Act did not eradicate actions against populations who were being negatively othered. Further legislation would be necessary to combat oppression and crimes of hate. The 1980 Increasing Violence Against Minorities house committee hearing and the 1983 United States Commission on Civil Rights publication of the "Intimidation and Violence: Racial and Religious Bigotry in America" both pointed to "organized white supremacy as the cause of the nation's epidemic of racial intimidation and violent bigotry in the late 1970s and early 1980s" (Leung, 2018, p. 39).

Later, the flawed, yet significant, bipartisan 1990 Hate Crimes Statistics Act (Leung, 2018) mandated national reporting of bias-based crimes collected from local and state police departments (Blazak, 2011). In 2009, the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Junior Hate Crimes Prevention Act, named after victims of violent hate-based murders, extended civil rights protection to sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and disability (Blazak, 2011).

As currently defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (n.d.), a crime of hate is a "criminal offense committed against a person or property which is motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against race, religion, disability, ethnic/national origin group, or sexual orientation group." Expanding on this definition, "hate crime laws actually reflect a broad category of offenses that cover prohibitions against cross burnings, desecration to houses of worship, Ku Klux Klan antimasking laws, penalty enhancements, and stand alone civil rights or intimidation statutes" (Levin, 1999, p. 8).

All states, except Wyoming, have constructed their own definitions of hate crime (Shively & Mulford, 2007, p. 2). The geographic focus of this project is King County, so it is relevant to note that Washington state's definition includes, "reasonable fear of harm to person or property" (RCW 9A.36.080, n.d.) that would be experienced by an individual from a similar group. The law further specifies the following actions that constitute a hate crime:

- burning a cross on an African American's property
- vandalizing a Jewish person's property with a swastika
- defacing a person of faith's property with denigrating symbols, words, or other items
- placing a noose on the property of an individual "perceived" to belong to a target racial or ethnic group

Spoken words are considered a hate crime only when associated with a threatening circumstance (RCW 9A.36.080, n.d.).

Despite federal and state laws, crimes of hate are often unreported or not reported at all to the FBI by city law enforcement agencies (Anti-Defamation League, 2018a). Further impeding statistical accuracy, is the high percentage of classification errors that occur when the level of bias is unclear (Nolan, Haas, Turley, Stump & LaValle, 2015). However, disparities and inaccuracies notwithstanding, statistics can still elucidate trends and patterns pertaining to hate crimes; for the purposes of this project, they provide a foundation from which to begin the focused research on resilience related to non-criminal prejudice, namely micro and macroaggressions.

FBI hate crime data from 1996-2008 revealed varying rates and reasons for hate crimes against individuals or property, crime related to race and sexual orientation, and crime targeted at specific religious groups; however, the greatest number of crimes against religious groups during that time fluctuated between Muslims and Jews (Kenworthy et al., 2013). Citing "the recent rise in the crime against Muslims, Arabs, South Asians and Latinos in the U.S.A. from the beginning of the 21st century," Sherr and Montesino (2009) note that "this phenomenon, throughout history, has affected Jews, Catholics, Irish, Italians, Chinese, Japanese, and other immigrant communities in the country" (p. 23).

FBI Hate Crime Statistics from 2016 include "6,063 single-bias incidents involving 7,509 victims" (FBI National Press Office, 2017, para. 3), the term *victim* representing an "individual, a business/financial institution, a government entity, a religious organization, or society/public as a whole" (Criminal Justice Information Services Division, 2016). Reported at a rate per 100,000 people (Flesher, 2018), the statistics comprise the following:

> Nearly 59 percent of the victims were targeted because of their race. A further 21.1 percent were targeted because of religion, and 16.7 percent because of sexual orientation. Of the race-related incidents, more than half were anti-black, while some 20 percent were anti-white. More than half of the religious-related crimes, the statistics show, were anti-Jewish, while a quarter were anti-Muslim. In cases where law enforcement was able to identify the perpetrator, 46.3 percent were white and 26.1 percent were black. (Lucas, 2017, para. 11-13; see also FBI National Press Office, 2017)

Notable from the figures is that "Christians are not frequently the targets of anti-religion hate crimes," and "Christians and their churches were victims of anti-religious hate crimes in only 11 percent of the incidents" (Flesher, 2018, p. 1).

Narrowing the focus further for this study, the national 2016 Hate Crime Statistics report includes 387 reports filed in Washington state, population 7,294,680 (World Population Review, 2020). Table 1 illustrates this increase from 275 reports documented in 2015, based on a population of 7,163,543 (World Population Review, 2020; Anti-Defamation League, 2018a). The increases were extensive across nearly every category of social location.

Table 1

Comparison of Washington State Hate Crimes, 2015 and 2016

Type	2015	2016	% Increase/Decrease
Religion	43	61	42%
Anti-Jewish	12	18	50%
Anti-Muslim	17	22	29%
Race	160	239	49%
Ethnicity	N/A (27 in 2014)	N/A	N/A
Sexual Orientation	57	70	23%
Disability	3	2	-33%
Gender	3	3	0%
Gender Identity	9	14	56%

Note: Ethnicity was included with Race beginning in 2015. Data retrieved from World Population Review, 2020; Anti-Defamation League, 2018a, p. 1.

Table 2 shows the percentage of hate crimes reported in 2016 by Kent, Renton, Seattle, and Bellevue—major cities in King County, whose population at the time was 2,166,602 (Anti-Defamation League, 2016; World Population Review, 2019). Apart from Bellevue, race related hate crimes in these cities were highest, followed by those related

to religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Among all four cities, no hate crimes were reported for disability, ethnicity, or gender.

Table 2

King County, Washington Hate Crimes, 2016

City/ Population	Religion	Anti-Jewish	Anti-Muslim	Race	Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Disability	Gender	Gender Identity
Kent 128,316	3	0	1	8	N/A	5	0	0	0
Renton 101,638	1	0	1	5	N/A	2	0	0	0
Seattle 710,510	12	5	2	64	0	33	0	0	9
Bellevue 141,927	13	3	9	2	N/A	3	0	0	0

Note: Data retrieved from Anti-Defamation League, 2016; World Population Review, 2019; World Population Review, 2020. Ethnicity was included with Race beginning in 2015.

As hate crimes in King County increase, so do media coverage and public awareness. Seven days after the 2016 United States presidential election, Nasro Hassan, North Dakota born Muslim student, was leaving the University of Washington campus in Seattle when a man hit her face with a bottle (Hyde, 2016). She shared with KUOW, "Was it because I was wearing a hijab? Was it because of the color of my skin?" (Hassan, 2016, para. 16). The next day, a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipient named Jose received a call from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) requesting his presence at his property management site in South Seattle, the neighborhood where he grew up. Upon arriving, he found ICE surrounding the building in preparation to arrest a suspect. Thanks to a "Know Your Rights" training he attended and the quick aide of Washington Immigrant and Solidarity Network, the threat to Jose

and his tenants was averted (Jones, 2017). A few months later, the Seattle Times (Carter & Bush, 2017) reported that Deep Rai, a Sikh male from Kent, was working on his car in the driveway when he heard, “Go back to your own country” (para. 8) and was shot in the arm. Within the same week, the Temple de Hirsch Sinai on Capitol Hill was graffitied with the words, “Holocaust is fake history” (Oxley, 2017, para. 4), leading to an increase in the temple’s already existing security (Oxley, 2017).

After the first few of these events, Q13 Fox News (“Hate Crimes on the Rise,” 2017) covered Seattle’s rise in hate crimes, which police attributed to an increase in reports filed: “So far this year there have been 50 reports of bias crimes in the Seattle metro area” (para. 3) with the highest occurrences downtown, succeeded by Capitol Hill and Northgate.

The same article featured an interview with Tali Hairston, director of the Seattle Pacific University John Perkins Center for Reconciliation, Leadership, Training and Community Development. Insights from the article include: “Data would show that there are more people who harbor these biases that have a particular logic about identity” (para. 4) and “The political climate may also be bringing out certain feelings some people have been harboring for quite a while” (para. 5). Hairston (2017) shared, “This big idea that one can hate the other and be OK with it—that is socially acceptable” (para. 6). Regarding how to end violence, he reflected, “If Seattle is going to be a place that gets this and gets this well, it’s going to be intentionally listening to each other’s stories” (para. 8).

In my human service work in King County, I hear words of concern and suffering from consumers who are not accessing medical and mental health care due to fear and

uncertainty related to immigration policies. Others are grieving separation from loved ones living in war-torn areas and unable to travel to the United States due to federal bans. Public insults, invalidations, and assaults from our nation's leader stoke the flames of fear and oppression further and contribute to a climate of hostility for members of devalued social locations. Though not considered criminal exemplars of hate, these scenarios represent the traumatic impact of collective and individual discrimination and "othering," which can occur concurrently.

Discriminatory acts and othering can be categorized as macroaggressions, depicted as large-scale aggression manifesting as prohibitive actions toward marginalized groups (Boske, Newcomb & Osanloo, 2016). Explained in the context of "intercultural interactions" (Boske et al. 2016, p. 10), microaggressions transpire when individuals are deemed not normal, acceptable, or fit to belong because of skin color, gender or religious preference. Under the term microaggressions, as referenced in the introduction, Sue (2010) distinguishes between microinsults, microinvalidations, and microassaults. It is important to note that the prefix "micro" should not be confused with *small* or *insignificant*, but rather represents an individual encounter that in some cases may grant the offender privacy and protection. Whether intentional or not,

> Microaggressions create sometimes subtle and sometimes not so subtle, but real and damaging social interactions. When a person experiences an onslaught of derogatory comments, invalidations, avoidance behaviors, and deficit-laden comments, the experiences may weigh heavy on an individual's spirit, self-worth, and sense of self. (Boske et al., 2016, p. 5)

The Anti-Defamation League's (2018b) Pyramid of Hate provides an illustration of the harmful impact of discriminatory-based behaviors, often negatively reinforced by society's acceptance. As behaviors increase in acceptance and severity in the pyramid so, too, do the consequences. As illustrated in another Pyramid of Hate (Ryan, 2013), scapegoating, a form of microaggression, is categorized as an act of prejudice that eventually leads to genocide (as was executed against Jews during the Holocaust).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to learn how diverse Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women in King County continue to cope and thrive amidst myriad forms of aggression.

Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the rise in hate crimes in Washington state and King County related to social location and offer a foundation from which to comprehend broad patterns and trends. Of further importance are studies demonstrating that an intersection of identities and membership to more than one undervalued social location increase an individual's vulnerability to implicit and explicit forms of hate (Wing, 2003). The influence of intersectionality is not addressed in the single-bias crime figures; however, it is a critical component of research regarding trauma and resilience in devalued individuals and populations. Furthermore, data of micro and macroaggressions, also absent from reports, is critical to developing greater understanding of the effects of trauma on the ability of individuals, populations, and communities to achieve resilience.

This project expands on current research by exploring the concept of resilience among women of all three Abrahamic faiths with diverse intersecting identities. The narratives of the multi-faith women interviewed for this project highlight the intricacies

of their social location, and how they weave their lives together amidst the complexities and adversity of life. Building on the statement of the problem, examination of hate crime definitions and statistics, and definitions of micro and macroaggressions, the next sections outline the theoretical and theological foundations for the project. The expectation is that this exploration will support ongoing wellness and resilience in King County and possibly beyond.

Theoretical Frameworks

Human development theories provide frameworks from which to conceptualize growth over the course of a person's lifetime. While various theories bear distinct strengths and contributions, this project relied on moral and psychosocial models to explore one's relationship with self, one's relationship with the other, and responses of resilience.

Lawrence Kohlberg (1981), moral development theorist and Harvard University psychology professor, delineated our lives and interpersonal interactions into three discrete stages. "Well-behaved" (p. 16) defines the first pre-conventional stage and consists of a focus on "me" (Nieto et al., 2010, p. 220); care is extended to another so far as it does not inhibit one's own interests (Nieto et al., 2010).

The conventional "conformist" (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 17) stage represents a value of "mine" (Nieto et al., 2010, p. 220) and giving care and attention to one's own group(s) similar to oneself (Nieto et al., 2010, p. 217). Nieto warns, "When we use conventional consciousness, we are vulnerable to perceiving people outside of our group as 'other,' with less intrinsic value or worth" (Nieto et al., 2010, p. 216).

Jewish philosopher and theologian Martin Buber, othered by the Nazi regime who prohibited him from public speaking and teaching from 1933-1935 ("Martin Buber, [1878-1965]," n.d.), might apply the concept of "I-It" (Buber, 1923/1996, pp. 80-81; Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 46), or "mismeeting" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 47), to connote interactions of the conventional stage. An encounter in this stage involves viewing the other with detachment, as an object, rather than a fellow human being. According to Kenneth Paul Kramer, Professor Emeritus of Comparative Religious Studies at San Jose State University, and Mechthild Gawlick (2003), the following words and phrases summarize the stages in an "I-It" (p. 46) interaction:

- "dismissing the other," "labeling," and "misrepresenting"
- "misrecognizing," or "judging the other," resulting in "culturally induced stereotypes"
- "miscommunicating with the other," "distorting," and misunderstanding" (p. 47)

The act of othering that can occur in the conventional stage can also be characterized as scapegoating, which is perceived as a negative act when committed by others, but often justified when it relates to ourselves. Philosopher Rene Girard and co-authors Burkert and Smith (Burkert, Gerard & Smith, 1987), theorize,

> To us, our fears and prejudices never appear as such because they determine our vision of people we despise, we fear, and against whom we discriminate….Whether physical or psychological, the violence directed at the victim appears to be justified—justified by the responsibility of the scapegoat in

> bringing about some evil that must be avenged, something bad or harmful that must be resisted and suppressed. (p. 79)

Philosopher Richard Kearney (2003) reflects, “Letting the other be other in the right way is of course no easy task” (p. 8).

The post-conventional stage constitutes movement toward morals reflective of one’s own personal authority and departure from the authority of groups to which one belongs (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 17). Kohlberg and research assistant Carol Gilligan (who later broadened male-only research populations to include females) might describe this stage as an extension of care toward “everyone, all people, perhaps all beings everywhere” (Nieto et al., 2010, p. 220). Rather than an “I-It” (Buber, 1923/1996, pp. 80-81; Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 46) status, Buber’s concept of “*I-Thou”* (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 16; see also Buber, 1923/1996) relating could be considered in this stage. “In *I-Thou* relationships…the other (friend, family, stranger) is invited to meet me where I stand, in open, mutual reciprocity” (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 16; see also Buber, 1923/1996).

The human development theory of psychologist Erik Erikson, who worked alongside Gilligan, presents life as eight lifelong psychosocial phases, in which crisis propels an individual into the next step of growth (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). The stages consist of trust versus mistrust; autonomy versus shame, doubt; initiative versus guilt; industry versus inferiority; identity versus confusion; intimacy versus isolation; generativity versus stagnation; and integrity versus despair (Erikson, 1971, pp. 262-265; Slater, 2003, pp. 54-57). Curtis S. Dunkel and Colin Harbke (2017) note that such a

model reflects the influence of environment and genes, and the impact from family to culture represented in the various micro and macro levels of the environment. An equilibrium of stability and growth foster passage into a new set of trials, forging "new personal adaptations and even reassessments of past achievements and failures" (p. 58).

Judith Herman (1997), trauma researcher and Harvard University's professor of psychiatry, contends that when events exceed what we would consider growth and development they "overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection and meaning" (p. 33). She defines this circumstance as traumatic.

Responses to trauma and definitions of resilience are as diverse as the individuals, social locations and communities they reflect. Overcoming adversity (Walsh, 2003; Brown, 2010), not exclusive of vulnerability or loss, is one definition (Walsh, 2009) of resilience uncovered during this project's study of the literature. Other definitions germane to this project will be discussed in the following pages; together with this study's findings, they contributed to the emergence of a unique definition of resilience, which will be presented and discussed throughout the following chapters.

Although previous studies provide invaluable insight into the concept of resilience, many denote a Western-based, agent group lens as evident in the lack of diverse sample groups. The role of religion and spirituality in coping with adversity (Duncan & McIntire, 2013; Bhui, Dein, King & O'Connor, 2008) is another area in need of more attention. Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women were the foci of this project, so care was taken to identify existing research inclusive of voices from intersecting and non-dominant identities (Harvey, 2007; Tummala-Narra, 2007; Bottrell, 2009). In

addition to the multiplicity of subjects presented in this review of the literature, resiliency themes that emerged represent a biopsychosocial-spiritual model reflective of relationships and environment, interior and biological resources, and faith and spirituality.

For the diverse groups of research participants in the studies cited throughout this section, attachment within relationships and community provided a strong source of support and resilience (Masten & Curtis, 2000; Werner & Smith, 2001; Masten & Shaffer, 2006; Brown, 2010; Masten, 2007; Carter, 2010). Unconditional acceptance by at least another individual was found in the life of each resilient child participating in Werner and Smith's (2001) Kauai Longitudinal Study, which examined the effects of risk-related biopsychosocial dynamics, life stressors, and protective factors in the lives of its subjects. After 9/11, and the surfacing of pre-existing stereotypes about Muslims, a study of Muslim American couples reported that partnership and community helped the individuals stay true to themselves and their religion (Carter, 2010). Suggestive of Buber's "*I-Thou*" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 16; see also Buber, 1923/1996) relating, secure attachments have been found to foster stability and assist with adjusting to life (Bowlby, 1988; Seigel, 2012; Bloom & Farragher, 2013; Van der Kolk, 2014; Walsh, 2016).

A sense of personal competence and in some cases personal will (Wolin, Muller, Taylor & Wolin, 1999; Werner and Smith, 2001; Masten, Burt & Coatsworth, 2006; Masten, 2007; Van der Kolk, 2014) also contributed to resilience among the men and

women studied. Psychologist Sybil Wolin (Wolin et al., 1999) reflected:

> Jewish spirituality does not transport us away from life's troubles. Rather, its wisdom is that is that we are shaped by our troubles…Judaism tells us that we are all holy and that all of us are capable of achieving freedom. The religion places a heavy burden on the individual by making resilience a moral obligation, locating its source in the will, and naming action as the channel through which it is expressed. (pp. 133-134)

Research of resilient leaders revealed qualities such as the ability to be with one's own vulnerability as well as inquisitiveness about one's emotions, thoughts and behaviors, and their impact to relationships (Brown, 2010). In the final stage of Werner and Smith's (2001) study, resilient forty-year old women and men named their strengths as being compassionate, caring, hardworking, creative, and humorous; possessing an optimistic outlook; and being adept at planning and solving problems. Harvey (1996), pointing to the complex nature of suffering and surviving, surmised that posttraumatic healing and growth necessitate that the trauma survivor draw from the inner resilience endowed to them.

Existing research illuminates the impact of both biology and environment on resiliency. Harvey's (2007) research noted the importance of social location and the qualities of the communities to which one belongs. Furthermore, the most recent (fourth) wave of resiliency studies determined that genes impact behavior and relationships assist with regulation (Masten & Curtis, 2000; Masten, 2007). Erikson's human development theory also suggested genetic and environmental influences on stability and growth (Dunkel & Harbke, 2017).

Finally, current research displays the role that faith and prayer, and/or a connection with the transcendent plays in resilience for individuals of various faiths, races, ethnicities, gender, sexual orientations and ages (Wolin et al., 1999; Werner & Smith, 2001; Bhui et al., 2008; Ali, Mahmood, Moel, Hudson, & Leathers, 2008; Walsh, 2009; Brown, 2010; Manning, 2014; Shilo, Savava & Yossef, 2016). Connecting with one's "inner light…Buddha-nature" (Wolin et al., 1999, p. 135) and accessing the emotional capacity to love others as Jesus did (Wolin et al., 1999) were specific images given for resilience. Among Jewish male participants, "a safe connection with God" (Shilo et al., 2016, p. 1552), combined with social connections within the LGBTQ community and acceptance from friends, contributed to positive coping and resilience (Shilo et al., 2016). One Muslim participant in another study received support from her religion, despite feeling scared to attend the Mosque as often as she liked following 9/11 (Ali et al., 2008).

Amid separateness and lack of connection, spirituality can provide a "transcendent sense of kinship" (Walsh, 2009, p. 126) with fellow humans and community, and provide connection with others of faith (Walsh, 2009). As portrayed in previous research, spirituality also plays a valuable role in resilience and wellness. Froma Walsh (2009), family resilience scholar, writes:

> Resilience is forged by tapping personal, relational, cultural, and spiritual resources for coping and mastery, and over time integrating the full loss and recovery experience—the suffering, struggle, and strengths that were gained—into the fabric of individual, family and community life. (p. 96)

Though it is inferred within other references to spirituality, Bessel Van der Kolk (2019), psychiatrist and founder of The Trauma Center, explicitly includes the attribute of love in his description of resilience:

> the power of love, the power of caring, the power of commitment, the power of commitment to oneself, the knowledge that there are things that are larger than our individual survival.…I don't think you can appreciate the glory of life unless you also know the dark side of life. (para. 3)

Amid suffering, a relationship with God can be a source of love and strength (Walsh, 2009). For Buber, any real experience of "*Thou"* (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 16; see also Buber, 1923/1996) in one's relationships provides a mirror of the I-"eternal *Thou*" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 24) and one's relationship with God.

Existing research outlines the interplay of biopsychosocial-spiritual themes in response to challenge or trauma. More specifically, relationship and the environment, internal resources, and faith play central roles regarding resiliency. Upon reflection of lessons learned in their study, Werner and Smith (2001) cited, "respect for the self-righting tendencies in human nature and for the capacity of most individuals who grew up in adverse circumstances to make a successful adaption in adulthood" (p. 166). Their insight and the other studies presented in this section inspired me to further explore human responses to adversity and to broaden the focus to include coping among all three Abrahamic faiths. For this qualitative study, the researcher defines resiliency as living and loving amidst adversity.

Research Questions

This project consisted of one overarching research question and four others that naturally followed:

1. How do Muslim, Jewish and Christian women stay resilient amidst microaggressions and macroaggressions?
2. What is their experience of living in King County with their intersecting rank memberships related to gender, race, sexual orientation, religious culture, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, social class culture, age, education background, and field of work?
3. How do they interact within their community amidst challenges and discrimination in daily life?
4. What internal resources foster resilient living?
5. How does their faith and relationship with God inform their response to adversity?

Overview of Methods

This phenomenological qualitative study consisted of five interview questions to support reliability and deep sharing (Sensing, 2011). Through community networks and an approach reflective of a "purposeful, representative sample" (Creswell, 2016, p. 139), interviewees were selected based on their model of resilient living; their social location to promote as much diversity as possible; and their readiness, interest, and comfort with describing their experiences. The interviews were situated in the location of each interviewee's choice: her home, the library, a place of worship, an academic setting, or

this writer's home. Interviews were facilitated using a Rogerian person-centered approach (Rogers, 1980).

Importance of the Study

This study offers an in-depth description of eleven women's experiences of aggression and trauma stemming from the intersecting identities each possesses. The results shed light on their resilience and provide a foundation for further research. While the sample size was small, the findings contribute to a growing body of research regarding trauma and resiliency in individuals and groups, particularly those with intersecting and marginalized identities. This research has the potential to inform direct services, decision making, policies and procedures, and leadership on local and global levels in the fields of human and community services, religion and spirituality, academia, and government.

Specific initiatives for exploration include:

- increased integration of a spiritually inclusive resiliency model within community-based direct services
- integration of a spiritually based resiliency model and the theory of divine attachment into pastoral care, counseling, and seminary settings
- increased use of trauma-informed leadership, decision making, policies and procedures, such as the Sanctuary Model (Bloom and Farragher, 2013), in community-based organizations and services, places of worship, academia, and government.

Background and Role of the Researcher

I describe my background and social location in the Introduction and the Theological Reflection in Chapter 2. It exemplifies an influence of pre-conceived ideas, expectations, and bias, which necessitated keen reflexivity and self-reflection (Creswell, 2016). Self-awareness, of both countertransference and the potential for stories to trigger personal reactions, was imperative to ensure focus on the unique experience of each participant (Sensing, 2011). Awareness was also needed to decrease bias, increase transparency, and achieve confirmability of each participant's life experience of coping and accessing resilience in response to macro and microaggressions.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

Adult women were the foci of this research; the inclusion of additional voices could enhance future studies on resiliency. The location of the participants was narrowed to King County, WA, which provided some level of diversity and enabled in-person interviews to occur. In addition to promoting the relevance of the research, these limitations supported achievable and realistic goals.

Sensing (2011) notes, "another limitation in qualitative studies is connected to the relationship that is established between the researcher and the participants" (p. 21). While the familiarity between the participants and this researcher cultivated greater authenticity and breadth, the limitation naturally influenced what and how responses were shared. The argument could be made that if participants had been chosen from a random sample, the potential lack of emotional safety would be a limitation; therefore, this researcher chose to prioritize safety and comfort for the participants. Although the interviews were

established to be as objective as possible, hospitality was integrated to foster safety and rich encounters, representative of another limitation and possible bias.

Finally, this researcher possessed the pre-established belief that the participants were already practicing resilience, an assumption reflective of their engagement with life through work, school, relationships, worship, and or other activities.

Delimitations

Sensing (2011) points out that "delimitations help you avoid over generalizing your conclusions" (p. 20). The choice to interview eleven women for this study, as opposed to surveying an entire community, presents a delimitation supporting research grounded by in-depth descriptions. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the interview questions, the research sample included only young, middle and older adults. Recruitment relied on trusted human service connections and social networks rather than, for example, an invitation posted to a public site or platform. This supported the collection of an authentic and diverse sample of voices, some of which lie outside dominant boundaries and are not always heard.

Definition of Terms

Hate Crime. A hate crime is a "criminal offense committed against a person or property which is motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against race, religion, disability, ethnic/national origin group, or sexual orientation group" (FBI, n.d.).

Macroaggression. Macroaggressions involve larger scale aggression toward marginalized groups manifesting in exclusionary actions (Boske et al., 2016).

Microaggression. Microaggressions include insults, assaults or invalidations, which may intend harm or not. They "create sometimes subtle and sometimes not so subtle, but real

and damaging social interactions. When a person experiences an onslaught of derogatory comments, invalidations, avoidance behaviors, and deficit-laden comments, the experiences may weigh heavy on an individual's spirit, self-worth, and sense of self" (Boske et al., 2016, p. 5).

Othering. Othering is a form of devaluement that can occur by agent groups who are "overvalued and receive unearned advantage and benefits" (Nieto et al., 2010, p. 29) toward target group members defined as "social groups that are devalued and 'otherized'" (Nieto, 2010, p. 30) or seen as strange(r).

Resilience. Existing research defines resilience as overcoming adversity, which does not preclude vulnerability or loss (Walsh, 2003; Brown, 2010). A more comprehensive definition indicates that "resilience is forged by tapping personal, relational, cultural, and spiritual resources for coping and mastery, and over time integrating the full loss and recovery experience—the suffering, struggle, and strengths that were gained—into the fabric of individual, family and community life" (Walsh, 2009, p. 96). Van der Kolk's (2019) understanding of resilience includes an element of love and is defined as: "the power of love, the power of caring, the power of commitment, the power of commitment to oneself, the knowledge that there are things that are larger than our individual survival." For the purposes of this research, resilience is conceptualized as living and loving amidst adversity. Following the research, this definition will be expounded on in Chapter 5.

Trauma. Trauma is an injury whose effects can be physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. It can be "a single or an ongoing occurrence, vicarious or participatory, as well as individual or collective-societal" (Eastern Mennonite University, 2017, p. 12).

Traumatic events exceed concepts of growth and development and "overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection and meaning" (Herman, 1997, p. 33).

Summary

This Chapter reviewed existing research regarding human development, trauma, and resilience. Hate crime statistics were analyzed, and the dynamics and repercussions of micro and macroaggressions were discussed. Next, the research topic of resiliency among diverse women, representing multiple faiths and residing in King County, was introduced. Lastly, the background and limitations of this researcher and research were outlined, and key terms were defined.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

Introduction

This chapter presents the theological reflection and frameworks that inspired this project, and which were refined throughout the study. The frameworks integrate the researcher's personal experience, accounts from Scripture, and profiles of theologians and models of human reason. Together, they illustrate the layers of othering contained in overvalued structures and systems from ancient societies to current culture. Embedded in the frameworks are exemplars of resiliency, which underscore the impact of faith, strength, and love.

Experience

My Northern European great-grandparents landed in Monroe and Centralia, Washington three generations ago, handing down an ancestry that, combined with my middle-class status and heterosexual identity, assumes membership to dominant and overvalued clubs of privilege. While undervaluing of my female gender—and at times Christianity—exists, it is discrimination that cannot be generalized to represent the experience of all women, including women of color. Rather, it is the whole of our individual and collective identities and memberships—our intersectionality—that influences our experiences in our homes, communities, states, nations, and world each day.

Growing up in King County, Washington, I was raised within a different set of structures, systems and experiences than many individuals I later developed relationships with while working and living locally, nationally, and internationally. My social location

afforded me security and comfort, education and health, and employment opportunities not available to women in other social locations or regions. As a young woman of faith, with many advantages and opportunities, I was affected by the commitment and strength of African girls holding fast to their educational goals despite the constraints of gender roles, cultural structures, and, often, lack of resources. Inspired and enraged, I filled my prayer space with their stories and photos in hopes of being in solidarity with them and their courageous girlhood journeys.

Travels led me to faith-filled Guatemala, grounded in Mayan spirituality and Christian practices, where I witnessed resilient families living under dusty cardboard shelters with little food to eat and few opportunities. My multifaith English Language Learner students—originating from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Mexico, Bhutan, India, Vietnam, and Iraq—taught me subtle lessons in grace and generosity through their smiles, attentive presence, and sharing of snacks, when later that day they might be seeking shelter, jobs, or additional food for their own family. During the daily class breaks, my female Muslim students would find a private space where they could set their prayer rugs and recite their prayers.

My dear Palestinian and Lebanese Christian friends fled war-torn Beirut to eventually settle in Seattle, Washington and gain employment in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. Despite experiencing discrimination in King County, they invited me into their families and shared love, humor, acceptance, and faith.

I currently serve in a community center consisting primarily of Muslim and Christian humanitarian migrants who greet me with respect, gratitude for life, and joy-like confidence in God’s unconditional and unwavering support. They are brothers

and sisters surviving and intent on thriving amidst housing challenges, scarcity of food, transportation difficulties, employment needs, language and culture differences, threats of deportation, memories of trauma, and separation from loved ones. Compounding these burdens are insults, invalidations, and assaults in which "the intent of the message is to threaten, intimidate, and make the individuals or groups feel unwanted and unsafe because they are inferior, subhuman, and lesser beings that do not belong on the same levels as others in this society" (Sue, 2010, p. 28). Such aggressions are carried out by individuals and groups, both locally and nationally, whose social location entitles them to varying degrees of power.

These personal and professional encounters with resiliency demonstrated in the face of aggression moved me to explore how local women—with intersecting identities of color, non-normative sexual orientation, faith, ethnicity, national origin, indigenous heritage, social class culture, age and ability (collectively referred to as *social location* throughout this project)—tolerate various forms of harm.

My interactions with the research participants built upon my previous experiences and uncovered my assumption that the women—many of whose journeys resemble those of refugees, asylum seekers, or immigrants—would express comparable levels of care, joy, strength, and faith. The interviews also revealed that, to my knowledge, I have not had the opportunity to serve clients or students who are Jewish, a religion and culture represented by one-third of the women I interviewed. Moreover, my exploration of the literature regarding trauma and resilience exposed a part of me that has felt like a victim to different forms of aggression. This illuminated an unexamined assumption that many other women may feel like victims of their circumstances, lead with underlying fear, and

experience accompanying emotional isolation. I was startled and embarrassed by the personal and collective implications of this revelation, which underscores Kwok Pui-Lan's (2005) cautionary observation that "the notion of saving brown women becomes deep-seated in white women's consciousness and resurfaces in feminist religious discourse" (p. 63).

The following sections outline the Scripture accounts, as well as profiles of theologians and exemplars of human reason, which contributed to the theological reflection ungirding this project.

Scripture

The systems and rules of antiquity reflected a patriarchal structure (Crossan, 1992) in which distinct positions of rank, power, and status (Neito et al., 2010) inherently enabled "I-It" (Buber, 1923/1996, pp. 80-81; Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 46) relationships and othering arrangements. Despite the appearance of established societal structures, personal narratives imply the coexistence of othering and being othered, at least for those with some form of privilege. Reflective of the challenge in honoring the sovereignty of another, Kearney postulates, "Time after time one witnesses the role of scapegoats reverting to human figures known variously as Canaanites, Gentiles, Jews, heretics, witches, infidels and—after the discovery of new continents by colonial empires—unregenerate" (2003, p. 28) barbarians.

Scripture enlightens us that Hagar, Sarah, Abraham, and Jesus—each with their unique social location and accompanying power or lack of power—responded to fear, suffering and adversity with the particular internal and external resources each possessed.

Their stories are profuse with structures of othering (Kohlberg, 1981; Kramer & Gawlick, 2003; Kearney, 2003) and filled with complex multi-faith relationships of overvalued agent and undervalued target memberships (Nieto et al., 2010). Such memberships acted as microcosms of the sanctioned oppression and aggressions enabled by laws and society. Though each bore distinct identities and circumstances, the common thread of faith and a relationship with God provided support and a source of resilience to each of them.

We first read about Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah in the Tanakh, also known as the Hebrew Bible in Judaism and the Old Testament in Christianity. Later their story appears in Christianity's New Testament and then in Islam's sacred Scripture the Qur'an (Russell & Trible, 2006).

Sarah, a white freed woman married to a rich patriarch, was still the property of her husband Abraham who sacrificed her to Pharaoh's harem to protect his own life. Hemchand Gossai (2010), professor of Hebrew and religious studies, writes, "It is Abraham's personal 'barrenness' in his view of the 'other' that shapes his decision to focus entirely on his personal well-being and safety at the expense of the 'other'" (2010, p. 19). Conversely, in the Genesis story 18:16-33 (New International Version), indicative of humans' dialectical and complex nature, Abraham boldly advocates to God on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah, asking that the lives of the righteousness and unrighteous be saved. On behalf of the other, he undergoes a process of wrestling with himself and wrestling with God (Gossai, 2010).

Following Sarah's captivity, plagues ensued and Pharaoh discovered Sarah was not Abraham's sister, as he had been led to believe, but his wife. Sarah was returned to

Abraham with Hagar, an Egyptian slave intimate with the structures of othering and oppression having been enslaved upon the murder of King Maghreb, her father.

Fertility was viewed "not only as the basis of a woman's identity but also a sign of divine approval" (Russell, 2006, p. 188). Sarah, aged and barren, suffered in her inability to comply with her womanly role ascribed by society as well as God's promise of descendants; accordingly, she enacted her lawful right to give Hagar to Abraham as a "second wife" (Russell & Trible, 2006, p. 2) to produce a child on her behalf. Once privileged with conception, Hagar's status increased, resulting in an altered dynamic with Sarah. Conflict and affliction followed, and Hagar fled to the wilderness for refuge. There the Spirit confirmed that Hagar would give birth to a son named Ishmael, meaning, "God hears," and told her to return to Sarah. As assured by God, Hagar gave birth to Ishmael and later Sarah gave birth to Isaac. With her security and that of Isaac's inheritance in question, Sarah demanded that Abraham expel Hagar and his son into the desert (Russell & Trible, 2006), which he did, leaving Hagar and Ishmael homeless, hungry, poor, alone, and afraid. Womanist theologian Delores Williams (1993) reflects, "Hagar, like many black women, goes into the wide world to make a living for herself and her child, with only God by her side" (p. 31). Ultimately, in fulfillment of God's promise, the Arab nation— and Islam—was birthed through Ishmael, with Hagar revered as the "matriarch of the Arab people" ("Sarah and Hagar," 2009, para. 1). Through Isaac, the nation of Israel—and Judaism—was born, with Sarah looked up to as the "matriarch of the Jewish people" ("Sarah and Hagar," 2009, para. 1).

Reflecting on the realities of Sarah and Hagar, including their complicated and challenging relationships, Letty M. Russell and Phyllis Trible (2006) comment:

> Completely unresolved throughout the entire account is the conflict between Sarah and Hagar. This troubling and haunting situation involves nationality, ethnicity, class, gender, progeny, and the struggle for inheritance and land. Unlike their husband and their sons and unlike the relationships to their husband and sons, these women have no place in the text as it stands for resolving their plight. Both are caught within patriarchy but in different places. Both are covenant controlled but with different outcomes. Both exercise power but indifferent degrees and different contexts. Both 'see' but from different perspectives. Living in similar yet different worlds, they struggle with each other—and that struggle persists throughout centuries to this day. (p. 61)

Holy texts reveal the faith of Sarah and Hagar, intertwined with struggle, and their dependence on God for resilience in the form of comfort, strength, and belonging. Hebrews 11:11 tells us, "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised." Following the Angel's message to Hagar announcing she would give birth to Ishmael, Hagar became the only person in the Bible with the privileged status of naming God. She courageously "gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me'" (Genesis, 16:13). "In a sense, this God is her God, and possibly not the God of her slave holders Abraham and Sarai." (Williams, 1993, p. 97). Gossai (2010) suggests, "As we have witnessed in God's encounter with Hagar, God gives a voice to the 'other' that Abraham has cast

aside" (p. 19). Hagar is not in an "I-It" (Buber, 1923/1996, pp. 80-81; Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 46) paradigm but part of an I-"eternal *Thou*" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 24) relationship in which she feels seen and heard.

Moreover, Hagar was not a victim but a survivor who found a way out of the desert. Reverend Coralie Ling (2009), panelist for the Parliament of World Religions, articulated Hagar's role as "a theologian and a survivor of patriarchy and somebody who could see a new way through the desert." Hagar is seen by some as the first freed slave, the first "divorced" wife, the first individual in the Bible to be visited by an angel, the first to receive a birth annunciation, and the only woman to be given a promise of descendants. "Like the Muslims, African-American 'womanists' have redeemed Hagar" (Klein, 2008, para. 14).

Protected and privileged—and also oppressed and discriminated against—Sarah found strength through laughter, as depicted by Ling (2009). She points to Sarah's son Isaac, "the child of laughter," and the times that Sarah embodied laughter in its most positive forms. Ling (2009) states, "that's been seen as really important in feminist theology because laughter has often been condemned and dismissed as not being appropriate for religion" (para 32). Also notable is the symbolism of Sarah's older age, that life—newness—could still be created (Ling, 2009). Muslim feminist Rachel Woodlock (2009), provides an Islamic perspective of Sarah and her faith: "In Islamic tradition, Sarah was the first believer in Abraham's message, so she is viewed quite positively, despite the tensions that occur in the text in the Biblical stories" (para. 20).

Though the status of and dynamic between Sarah and Hagar are not always clear, both of these women belonged to an undervalued gender group and sought relief and hope through their relationship with God (Walsh, 2009).

Generations later, Jesus was born amid ongoing conflicts of power, control and privilege. Historian and Jesus scholar Dominic Crossan (1992) portrays Jesus with "a religious and economic egalitarianism that negated alike and at once the hierarchical and patronal normalcies of Jewish religion and Roman power" (1992, p. 422). Indicative of threats to power, equilibrium, safety, and belonging—associated with tribal or group membership—Jesus was a receptacle for hate, fear, aggression, and violence. His slow, public torture on the tree was the epitome of othering and scapegoating. Remarkably, amid excruciating suffering in the final time of his life, Jesus stayed in relationship with his God and in the face of hate continued to love back. In some of his final words he uttered, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Theologians

Throughout their individual experiences of struggle and trauma, Hagar, Sarah, and Jesus persisted. Amidst fear and despair, they clung to God and hope and found resilience. Sister Joan Chittister (2003) relates this to times in which the only choices are to live from one's fullness or let the wounded part lead: "One way is depression; the other way is new life. One way is defeated, the other way is hope" (2003, p. 19).

The late Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (King, 1963/2010) wrote of resiliency in terms of love. He called out fear as the root of hate and professed that only love, in all of its resiliency, could heal it: "Love confronts evil without flinching and shows in our popular parlance an infinite capacity 'to take it'" (1963/2010, pp. 124, 126). As in the

narratives of Hagar, Sarah, and Jesus, faith does not imply an absence of hurt or adversity; instead, it offers internal equanimity to confront and withstand hardships that are bound to come. Despite the uncertainty of life, King's writings assure us that we have support from something bigger than ourselves and our plight is not invisible to God. He states that the "universe is trustworthy and that God is concerned" (1963/2010, pp. 127, 129).

Reason

Etty Hillesum was a twenty-seven-year-old Jewish woman with a law degree, a student of Slavonic Studies at the University of Amsterdam, and an aspiring writer when the Nazi's invaded the Netherlands. Her diary entries from 1942 documented the othering propagated by the Nazi's as they forced Jews to wear yellow stars and obey enforced curfews. She also documented the renaming of the refugee camp outside of Amsterdam to Transit Camp Westerbork, the site from which her brother and her parents, and later Hillesum herself, were deported to Auschwitz death camp, where they would ultimately die (Flinders, 2005; Hillesum, 2002).

Earlier diary entries reflect Hillesum's clear-eyed recognition of the effects of othering. She observes, "Nazi barbarism evokes the same kind of barbarism in ourselves, one that would involve the same methods if we could do as we wanted….We must not fan the hatred within us, because if we do, the world will not be able to pull itself one inch further out of the mire" (2002, p. 21). In 1942, responding to the rampant violence and hatred, she writes,

> The threat grows ever greater, and terror increases from day to day. I draw prayer around me like a dark protective wall, withdraw inside it as one might into a

> convent cell and then step outside again, calmer and stronger and more collected again. (p. 364)

The terror escalates to the point that Hillesum anticipates praying on her knees for days until the walls of prayer have the strength to protect her from absolutely losing herself (Flinders, 2005; Hillesum, 2002). In the face of unfathomable hate and violent acts of scapegoating, she resists hating back and resiliently cleaves to her God and her faith. Courageously, she lives through each second, minute, hour, and day, not knowing when the last one will appear.

Muslim Malala Yousafzai (theirworld.org, n.d.), survivor of the Taliban shooting in Pakistan and youngest recipient of the Noble Peace Prize, spoke of faith, forgiveness, and love to the United Nations in 2013. She stated that she has no hate for the Taliban members responsible for shooting her, and if given the opportunity would not shoot them back. She contributes her compassion to spiritual teachers—the prophet of Mercy Muhammad, Lord Buddha and Jesus Christ—and she acknowledges Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Muhammad Ali Jinnah for passing down the inheritance of change to her. Embracing non-violence learned from Mother Teresa, Bacha Khan and Gandhi Jee, and forgiveness instilled by her parents, Yusafzai does not seek revenge but stays grounded in a belief system and relationship residing outside the authority of the Taliban. Despite her close experience with death, she shares, “This is what my soul is telling me, be peaceful and love everyone.” (theirworld.org, n.d., para. 15). Yusafzai’s actions, led one step after another by love and peace, are a living example of resilience.

Catholic Sister Helen Prejean (2019) is a minister for individuals on death row and a persistent proponent of banning the death penalty. In alignment with the mission of

her Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, she resists and withstands society's violent systems and actions by serving each person she encounters as a "dear neighbor" (p. 123). Like Yusafzai, Prejean (2019) is guided by her soul and, according to the "Jesus Way," (p. 284) extends her love to others as abundantly as she can. Her daily meditative practice, which attunes her to God's movement and what is "happening on the river" (p. 284) of life and the world, nurtures her care of the human community as well as herself. When her own soul needs "confidence and peace" (2019, p. xv) or extra tending, she rests into quiet time with God to "simply be and let God, my Creator, gaze upon me" (p. 285). Time for play is just as valued (2019, p. 285), and Prejean looks to laughter to loosen ingrained ways of thinking (Flinders, 2006). The victim advocacy group Prejean helped launch in 1998, named Survive, is another source of strength and an example of the resiliency that can be experienced in relationship and community. Prejean (1994) reflects,

> All the sorrow and loss is overwhelming, yet I don't feel devastated. There's something in the women themselves that strengthens me. I think of the rallying cry of black women in South Africa, 'You have struck the women; you have struck the rock.' (p. 241)

Hillesum, Yusafzai and Prejean extend(ed) their love not only to those who may seem easy to love; they also embrace murderers and terrorists—considered "other" by many—as brothers and sisters. Regardless of external threats or challenges, their faith, practice, and relationship with God form a Divine attachment that allows these resilient women to endure, thrive, and love.

Father Michael J. Garanzini (1988) reflects on the human-Divine relationship and its important role in navigating challenges in life:

> The Judaeo-Christian tradition has long stressed the fundamental problem in life as that of connectedness vs. estrangement in relationship, relationships between and among humans and those of the human with the Divine. It might be said that the business of theology is the business of elucidating the relationship of God with the creation and creatures among themselves. From a different point of view, theology seeks to illuminate the nature of God through a reflection of the presence of the Divine in human relationship. (pp. 11, 12)

Gossai (2010) elucidates that God is a God for those on the margins and those in the center, including Hagar, Sarah, Abraham, and Jesus. Felicitous to this project's theological frameworks, he writes, "The God of barren Abraham and barren Sarah is the God of the 'others,' and the God who spans the spectrum of creation" (p. 22).

Summary

This Chapter drew on the researcher's personal experience, Scripture, theologians and faith figures, and reason to inform a reflection on othering, which manifests in murder as well as micro and macroaggressions. Attention was called to patriarchy and other forms of discrimination, and models of resiliency were reviewed to accentuate the role that faith, strength, and love play when one is living amidst multiple forms of aggression and violence.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOLODOGY

Introduction

This section delineates the methodology used to support the study. First it describes the qualitative phenomenological study and the interview process used to collect data. Next it outlines the sampling which was purposeful and stratified. For the conclusion, it explores limitations and delimitations.

Overview and purpose of research questions

This project is driven by one overarching research question, from which four others derived:

1. How do Muslim, Jewish and Christian women stay resilient amidst microaggressions and macroaggressions? Questions that naturally followed include:
2. What is their experience of living in King County with their intersecting rank memberships related to gender, race, sexual orientation, religious culture, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, social class culture, age, education background, and field of work?
3. How do they interact within their community amidst challenges and discrimination in daily life?
4. What internal resources foster resilient living?
5. How does their faith and relationship with God inform their response to adversity?

Analysis of previous resilience studies and the theological scaffolding provided in Chapter 2 led to the following definition of resilience, which guided the data collection process: the ability to live and love amidst adversity.

To build on the esteemed studies outlined in Chapter 1, and further integrate intersectionality and implications of microaggressions and discrimination (Nadal et al., 2015), the driving research question of this study involved women of all three Abrahamic faiths. While religious identity undergirded the participant selection process, the overarching goal was to recognize the intersectionality of participants and the full dimension of their social location. Core to this study was the knowledge that "people tend to experience discrimination based on their whole selves"; therefore, "it is necessary for researchers to take all of these identities into consideration" (Nadal et al, 2015, p.160). Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw founded the Columbia City Law School's Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies. Specifically related to women who are black, representative of nearly half of the women interviewed in this study, Crenshaw (2003) stresses, "because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black woman are subordinated" (2003, p. 24).

Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their experiences of and reactions to micro and macro aggressions. The interviews resulted in rich responses from which themes could be drawn.

Methods

A phenomenological qualitative study approach was the primary methodology of this research. As stated by Edmund Husserl (1931/1992), the founder of phenomenology, it is a practice of "going back to the things themselves" (p. 14). Sociology professors Hermilio Santos and Jochen Dreher (2017) distinguish phenomenology as a methodology that "concentrates on how reality is constituted on the basis of general structures of experience depending on consciousness activities. The phenomenological discipline investigates how appearances of reality present themselves in space and time to our subjective consciousness" (2017, p. 385). More distinctly, within transcendental phenomenology, meaning is the essence. In this research, data was gathered from the multi-faith interviews to better understand the centrality of each woman's experience and their unique intersection of identities. Drawing from John W. Creswell (2016), founder of mixed methods research, the following phenomenological aspects were included in this research:

1. Study one core concept with individuals who have experienced it.
2. Learn about the context in which the phenomenon is experienced by participants.
3. Integrate the subjective and objective perspective of the interviewee as she not only reflects on her personal experience but also reports it to the researcher.
4. Set aside personal experience in order to be as fully present as humanly possible to the participant's experience.
5. Ultimately reach the essence of the participant's experience.

Design

Participant recruitment occurred through community networks, colleagues and former colleagues, peers, professors, friends, and friends of friends. The recruitment process is discussed in detail in the following section (Sample).

Interviews were used for data collection and consisted of open-ended questions, which are critical in qualitative research to "yield important detailed information from individuals" (Creswell, 2016, p. 136). Of the varied forms in which interviews may be conducted ("one-on-one interviews, telephone or cell phone interviews, focus groups, and Internet interviews" [Creswell, 2016, p. 136]), I had the privilege of meeting one-on-one with participants. Holding space together nurtured rapport and trust building; moreover, it allowed me to holistically experience the fullness and complexity of the responses. Participants were given their choice of location (listed in Chapter 1) to cultivate feelings of safety and comfort.

Sensing (2011) explains that semi-structured interviews are "somewhere in between the structured and free-flowing interview style…specific themes, issues, and questions with predetermined sequence are described in the protocol, but you are free to pursue matters as situations dictate" (p. 107). This may have been the first, second, or one hundredth time each participant had shared her story. Therefore, in contrast to results that might have stemmed from spontaneous questions, semi-structured interviews generated greater reliability and deeper sharing, in turn enabling deeper understanding by the researcher (Sensing, 2011).

Akin to the sacred experience of a warm, welcoming kitchen where conversations unfold the world over, I attempted to integrate within each interview the following principles from Carl Rogers (1980):

- unconditional regard
- a quality of realness and congruence as an interviewer with consistent body language and expressions
- openness
- empathic listening
- paraphrasing and reflection of participants' feelings and thoughts

The intent was to communicate safety and acceptance and allow the tender, strong, loving, joyful, sad, fatigued, and fearful thoughts of the participants to be voiced and understood. These principles also fostered support for each participant to decide how much or little she would express, a crucial component in maintaining trust throughout the interview process. Furthermore, as an interviewer I remained neither passive nor highly involved but moderately engaged to nurture spaciousness and plenty of silence (Creswell, 2016, p. 134) for all in each woman that wanted to show up.

Research on micro and macroaggressions and intersectionality, combined with my desire to broaden the body of research to include religious coping within Abrahamic faiths, informed the construction of the research questions outlined at the beginning of the chapter. From those driving questions, the interview questions asked of each participant were developed. Creswell (2016) recommends using five to ten interview questions, and Sensing (2011) emphasizes eight to ten questions. This project entailed five primary questions to ensure ample reflection and response time and explore resilience in each

woman's life. The interviews plumbed the participants' experiences of living and loving amidst adversity through open-ended, non-leading questions related to cognitions, feelings, interpersonal relating, and faith. The questions, listed below, were designed to be relatable and relevant to the women's lives and conducive to sharing about their experiences:

1. What has been the best and hardest part of being a woman with your particular religious culture, ethnicity, national origin, race, sexual orientation and social culture here in King County?
2. What do you tell yourself when there is hardship, joy or both? How do you feel?
3. What is your image of God? What sort of qualities does God have or not have?
4. What does your relationship with God and faith tradition say about how to respond when someone else seems to hurt you- either on purpose or by accident?
5. You were invited to bring something that you can hear, see, touch, taste or feel that means you will be okay and life will be okay when times are painful or hard. Or in other words, an item that helps you keep living and loving during difficulty. Please tell me about it.

At the conclusion of the interviews, I thanked each participant and invited her to ask questions regarding the project and next steps. The conversations then shifted to lighthearted and future oriented small talk to support grounding before each participant left the interview and stepped back into her life.

After each interview, audio recordings were transcribed through several stages of rewinding and forwarding to ensure accurate understanding of the responses. Completed transcripts were sent to each interviewee to check for precision. In some cases, questions

about religious terms and words that were less audible were sent with the transcripts, and revisions were made as needed. Once the accuracy of each transcript was confirmed, responses were coded and analyzed to develop the themes outlined in Chapter 4.

Sample

Creswell (2016) writes about interviewing participants from marginalized groups and the necessity to "recognize that inequality exists as a result of multiple factors" (2016 p. 138). He advises avoiding assumptions that all individuals from undervalued groups are homogenous. Creswell also emphasizes the importance of a "purposeful, representative sample" (p. 139), stressing that a possible lack of trust from individuals in target group membership—due to fear of legal ramifications, stigmatization or past trauma—could naturally impact creation of such a sample. Accordingly, he suggests interviewing participants who will feel comfortable being open and authentic with their story to nurture a rich description (2007, p. 133). One approach is to spend time in the community prior to inviting interviewees.

Paramount to this study was the inclusion of voices from all three Abrahamic faiths and, within those, a diverse range of social locations. During many years of living and working in King County, I have had the privilege to spend time with colleagues and staff, professors and students, workshop and worship peers, friends, friends of friends, and friends of family from the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities. These relationships formed a deep well from which to draw authentic and diverse perspectives for the project. Furthermore, local community-based organizations, multifaith worship leaders and members, and The Church Council of Greater Seattle, with its ecumenical and interfaith work, provided invaluable assistance with finding participants.

While the depth and duration of the relationships described above varied, they enabled a personalized recruitment process. As a result, I was able to successfully share this research project with women exemplifying the phenomenon of living and loving amidst adversity and with those recommended to me by community members I trust.

The first set of contacts were made via emails, texts, and pre-arranged phone calls or meetings. I provided a written and verbal summary of the project; the interview questions; and a copy of the consent letter to facilitate full disclosure of the research, its parameters, and safeguards for confidentiality. In turn, the women shared responses to the project, asked questions, and in most cases volunteered some information about their lives, all of which supported greater understanding of them and how their lives appeared to resemble the phenomenon of resilience.

This study sought to include 9-12 participants. The project was discussed with fifteen potential interviewees, of which one did not meet the religious membership requirement for the sample and two declined to participate. Later, one of the twelve committed participants excused herself due to a separate and unforeseen issue. The eleven women confirmed to be interviewed represent the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian faiths. By virtue of their engagement with life through work, school, volunteerism, politics, community, or other relationships, a presumption was made that they were demonstrating the phenomenon of resilience being researched (Creswell, 2016, pp. 109, 110). Together, as displayed in Table 3, they established a purposeful and stratified sampling.

Table 3

Participant Demographic Data

Participant	Religion	Ethnicity and Heritage	Work	Age	Education	Gender and Pronoun	Sexual Orientation	National Origin and Status	Race	Social Class Culture
One	Muslim: Sunni	Somali American	Advocacy	40s	BA	Female She/Her	Heterosexual	Somalia; Immigrated here; Citizen	Black	Middle
Two	Muslim: "Not Sunni Not Shia"	Tanzanian American	Healthcare	50s	PA equiv.; USA: AA	Female She/Her	Lesbian	Tanzania; Immigrated here; Citizen	Black African	High
Three	Muslim: Sunni	Kurdish	Education	40s	BA	Female She/Her	Heterosexual	Kurdistan of Iraq; Refugee	White	Middle
Four	Muslim: Sunni	German ancestry	Social justice	30s	BA	Female She/Her	Heterosexual	USA; Family member came to US as refugee; Citizen	White	Middle
Five	Jewish: Conservative as child; Reform as adult	Eastern European	Academic research	30s	MSW MPH	Female She/her	Heterosexual	US; 2 generations from immigrants; Citizen	White	Middle
Six	Jewish Reform; attends spiritual center with partner	European American, Ashkenazi Jewish; Ancestors from Hungary and Russia	Healthcare; Social justice	50s	BA	Female She/Her	Lesbian	USA; Citizen	Human	Middle
Seven	Jewish Reform	Jewish parents and grandparents from Romanian, Lithuanian, Russia, and Sweden	Ministry; Arts	60s	BA	Female She/Her	Heterosexual	USA; Citizen	Middle Eastern; White	Middle
Eight	Christian Scientist; Jewish: Progressive Reform; Bi-religious	Jewish, Russian, and Romanian; German Ancestry	Education; Community activism	70s	PhD	Female She/Her	Queer	USA; 2nd generation from immigrants; Citizen	White	Middle
Nine	Christian: Protestant	Congolese American	Social Service	40s	HS; USA: AA	Female She/Her	Heterosexual	DRC; Came as refugee; Citizen	African	Low
Ten	Christian: Non-denominational	Jamaican American	Finance; Accounting	20s	BA	Female She/Her	Heterosexual	USA; Citizen	Black; Brown	Middle
Eleven	Christian: Baptist	African American	Ministry	80s	DMin	Female N/A	Heterosexual	USA; Citizen	African American	High

Data Collection

Data collection entailed preliminary communication of the project's purpose and protocols with each participant. A consent form (Appendix A) was provided to each interviewee for review and consent to participate in the research. The interview questions were included with the consent form so the participants could reflect on them privately in advance of the interview.

Sensing (2011) advises, "Use photos and other concrete objects on occasion, if necessary, as stimulants to conversation" (p. 112). So, to honor different forms of communication and storytelling, participants were invited to bring something to the interview that reminds them they will be okay and life will be okay, something that is seen, held, smelled, heard, and/or tasted to help them live and love during difficulty. To emphasize the priority of safety in all interactions, participants were encouraged to raise comments, questions, or concerns before, during, and after the interview process.

As a white woman of privilege with an inherited history of colonizing, transparency during the entire process was essential. Extra attention was given to ensure that language represented inclusivity, trauma-informed care, and cultural competence; as previously mentioned, participants were encouraged to choose a meeting place that would feel safe and comfortable. To create an open sacred space and express respect for all relations, I brought to each setting my great grandmother's wooden bread bowl with a candle in its center. To instill in each participant her role as honored guest and highlight my humble task to listen and serve, I also provided a beverage and snack. Sharing drink and food, or breaking bread, joins individuals in the ancient and familiar ritual of talking

and sharing. Qualitative reliability was fostered through my intention to consistently share these values with each participant.

Each interview lasted approximately one and one-half hours with some finishing before that time and others extending beyond it. Interviews were audio recorded to assist with post-interview coding and analysis. After the doctoral project is complete, the information will be deleted and shredded to honor confidentiality. Each participant file, including field notes and observations as outlined next, was assigned a non-identifiable code word and secured in cloud storage. After three years, the data will be destroyed.

Data Analysis and Procedures

This researcher established the following protocols to promote relevant and accurate research findings: at least three forms of contact with each participant; open-ended questions to facilitate rich sharing; reflection of this writer's bias and assumptions; and a safe meeting place, chosen by each participant.

Throughout the research and interview process this researcher took field notes on implicit and explicit information and observations for use in coding and analysis. The process included a mixture of hermeneutical and descriptive interpretation to support wisdom and intuition of the heart and knowledge of the mind. To ensure accuracy, participants were informed that their interview responses would be emailed to them following the interviews to edit or revise as needed. Participants were welcomed and encouraged to ask questions before and after the interviews.

Following confirmation of the information gathered, manual coding and "recoding" (Saldana, 2016, p. 11) were applied to the text of each interview's transcript. Coding similarities and differences were analyzed related to resilience of the Muslim,

Jewish, and Christian women. Codes were organized into “categories” (Saldana, 2016, p. 218) and broader “themes” (Creswell, 2016, p. 153) then developed. In the final stage, hard copy results were transferred to Microsoft Word (software was not utilized for coding and analysis purposes). With qualitative validity in mind, “triangulation” (Creswell, 2016, p. 191) sources were researched to build support for or disconfirm the findings. As the Research Review in Chapter 4 will show, research of women representing all three Abrahamic faiths in the United States, namely King County, was not discovered in the studies reviewed.

Summary

This section delineated the process used to secure data in response to the research question studying how women of Abrahamic faith traditions survive and thrive in the face of ongoing micro and macroaggressions. It described the purpose of the qualitative methodology of phenomenology. Next, it described the research interviews, including recruitment of participants and interview process. Lastly, it addressed the data analysis process, from which emerged the themes outlined in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The results of this research, based on semi-structured interviews, represent the privilege of sitting with each woman and being entrusted with her experiences related to the following research questions:

1. How do Muslim, Jewish and Christian women stay resilient amidst microaggressions and macroaggressions?
2. What is their experience of living in King County with their intersecting rank memberships related to gender, race, sexual orientation, religious culture, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, social class culture, age, education background, and field of work?
3. How do they interact within their community amidst challenges and discrimination in daily life?
4. What internal resources foster resilient living?
5. How does their faith and relationship with God inform their response to adversity?

The women's responses are viewed from an in-depth perspective with an intention to be culturally sensitive and aware. Each participant's voice and unique social location were invaluable toward gaining a deeper understanding of resilience.

Thorough qualitative data analysis of the responses enabled one overarching theme and six supporting themes to develop. The themes are discussed in detail throughout this chapter, and tables are interspersed to further highlight words and phrases

representative of the themes. Detailed tables are provided in Appendix C to further elucidate each woman's experience and intersectionality. The demographics affiliated with each participant's code can be found in Chapter 3 (Table 3).

Following a discussion of the outcomes of this research, the findings will be analyzed alongside previous research on resilience with individuals of intersecting and multi-faith identities.

Findings

Responses to the five interview questions required careful coding and deep reflection from which one underlining theme and six supporting themes emerged.

Primary theme: God's love begets self-love and compassion for others

Amid a backdrop of discriminatory words, gestures, systems, and policies targeting those with undervalued social locations, love and compassion emerged as an underlining theme in this study. God, Creator, was characterized as loving, compassionate, and forgiving. The findings show that most women experience a positive relationship with God, whose presence is felt during hardship and joy. Moreover, a supportive Divine connection engenders lovability and self-compassion and, in turn, fosters compassion towards others. This primary theme resonates throughout the findings in this chapter and underlies each of the supporting themes regarding living and loving amidst adversity, or *resilience*.

First supporting theme: positive relationship with self defies discrimination and builds resilience

Each Muslim, Jewish and Christian woman carries a multitude of overvalued and undervalued identities, and an experience of discrimination related to gender, race,

religion, sexual orientation, and or immigration. Amidst the othering and scapegoating, and the trauma and loss that can accompany it, most women described living and leading from a strong identity as the best aspect of living in King County. This theme depicts the participants' accounts of micro and microaggressions in King County, followed by descriptions of their self-images, each defined not by externalities but by her interior virtue as a child of God.

Patriarchy—viewed by participants as overbearing maleness and a pressing down of femininity—was described as the most difficult aspect of living as a woman in King County. For the African American participants, gender bias is embedded in the "black church" in the form of superiority and "social conditioning that women are to be subservient to men and that men are in charge." One interviewee lamented:

> I don't experience…acceptance in Christianity; they don't seem to accept women and the general sense of how the dogma is formed and leadership…Being a black woman I feel like that is the bottom of the pedestal, that just doesn't have a lot of respect either.

One participant of the Muslim faith reported on the superior attitude of some men who view themselves as the "gatekeeper of the nation or religion." She elaborated, "It's not the religion, it's not Islam," adding, with words of the Prophet Muhammad, "I was sent to free the women slaves and empower children and orphans. The Prophet gives women the right to own properties, the right to inherit. The right to freedom and seek divorce if they want." A participant of the Jewish faith noted that within the synagogue, patriarchy is disguised in some of the female rabbis' "corporate," more authoritarian style of worship, rather than a model of "innate, feminine virtues" of "love and cooperation."

Discrimination associated with religion rated second highest among the Muslim and Jewish women interviewed but was not named by any of the Christian participants, members of an overvalued group. Most of the Muslim women reported an experience of stares, glares, ignoring, and/or harassment at some point when wearing their hijab. One of the women relayed an experience of walking through town wearing her hijab when a stranger gestured to shoot her; she contrasted the incident with the lack of aggression she experiences when not wearing hijab—a religious identifier. She elaborated that the pain of losing her loved ones in the Somali civil war far exceeded that incident. Another interviewee feels more comfortable wearing her hijab in South King County, where her neighbors are accepting and helpful, versus downtown where she experienced an insulting look and lack of response while asking about the bus schedule. She reflected, "Most are good towards a Muslim woman wearing a hijab. But even some people don't like women who wear hijab, that's the hardest part." One participant, who converted to Islam as an adult, experienced social anxiety the first year or two of wearing her head scarf. Though her neighborhood is more diverse than Eastern Washington, she noted, she is one of its few Muslim residents and usually the only person wearing a head scarf at rallies, events in which elected official are present, and press conferences. Rather than provide privacy as intended, the head scarf draws attention.

Hate crimes at holy sites, including the October 7, 2018 Pittsburgh Tree of Life shooting during the Shabbat service (Mele, Robertson & Tavernise, 2018), increase fear and unrest for two participants when they are worshipping with their communities. Anti-Semitic graffiti in one participant's neighborhood compounds her anxiety. As the other experiences a "rise of anti-Semitism," she anticipates the possibility of another

Holocaust. When reflecting on how she would respond to such a horror and how she would define herself, she stated, “I want to be Jewish, that is who I am.”

Harassment for being Muslim and lesbian is a daily struggle for one woman interviewed. Non-verbal microaggressions—communicated through eye rolling and “looks”—cause isolation and pain her more than any spoken words or explicit actions. Another participant carefully discerns when it is safe or not to refer to her partner as her wife. She shared an example of what she thought was a friendly conversation with an older gentleman in a store checkout line that turned into an uncomfortable and disheartening experience of harassment. Heteronormative and restrictive roles, opportunities, and structures extend into academia, resulting in “sexism,” “sexual harassment,” and assault.

One research participant, a former refugee from Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), did not refer to discrimination related to gender, religion, or sexual orientation; rather, she expressed the hardship of restrictions and bans on refugees entering the country. She disclosed, “It’s very hard because I am like those people who are not allowed to come. We are the same because I was in their situation.” Although Washington is a sanctuary state—meaning that it legally prohibits questioning of immigration status in Eastern and Western Washington to instill greater equity and inclusion (James, 2019)—she witnesses lack of support and prohibition of the strange(r) on a federal level.

Table 4 illustrates sample code words drawn out from the responses, which highlight a pattern of discrimination. These codes apply to all the resiliency themes that emerged from the interview responses, and which are discussed throughout this chapter.

Table 4

Discrimination: sample codes and phrases

Codes
hate crimes corporate eye rolling patriarchy
not safe Islamophobia anti-Semitism
strange(r)

Gender, religion, sexual orientation, and immigration status make up just some aspects of each woman's social location. The religiously diverse research participants represent young, middle, and older aged adults; possess varied educational, employment and social class backgrounds; identify as brown, black, white, African American, African, Middle Eastern, and "human"; and carry a rich heritage and ethnicity they describe as Somali American, Tanzanian American, Congolese American, Jamaican American, Kurdish, European American, Swedish, Hungarian, German, Eastern European, Ashkenazi Jewish, Russian, Lithuanian, and Romanian. Though discrimination has impacted each woman to varying degrees, most expressed deep confidence in their value and purpose in this life. Fueled by inner power and strength, their authority to exist is not dependent on any human's permission or approval, but on each woman's inherited right as God's progeny. As residents of King County, they are energized by creating life, thinking freely, speaking for themselves and those without a voice, facilitating understanding of differences and dismantling myths in the community, advocating for social justice, supporting growth of the church, and leading with love and cooperation instead of competition. One participant stated, "So if the image and likeness is father and mother then I have the right to strong womanhood as well as a strong sense of strength

and courage." Another woman expounded, "As a Muslim woman who is religious I don't second guess God's plan. I realize we were all created for a reason." Perceiving God as both love and creator, another woman asserted that God loves God's creation and views it as good; therefore, *we* are loved and good. Despite offenses and barriers in their personal and public environments, the resilient women access personal security, strength, and meaning from within and through their relationship with God, in whose image they are made.

Table 5

First supporting theme: sample codes and phrases

Codes
made in image of God voice choice
freedom lovability creativity
strong womanhood

Second supporting theme: positive relationship with God defies discrimination and builds resilience

An inner connection with something bigger than oneself is like a "spark…already there and nurtured with faith and religion." This concept was conveyed by one woman as an inner abundance of joy that satisfies every human need: "I already have joy in myself, God has given me so much and that's all I need." A former refugee, she wakes joyously each morning to receive another day of life for her family, coworkers, and herself. Omnipresent during times of joy or tribulation, God is sensed in each sight, smell, taste,

texture, and sound. “It’s the air that touches my face. It’s the beat of my heart, it’s everything. It’s hard for me to not even remember or get away from it.”

God is depicted as never hating or discriminating, only loving. From the Jewish tradition and feminine connotation, God is described as “Shekinah,” “Divine Love,” and seen in the face of loved ones and strangers. Another participant is unsure of God’s identity and elaborated that “‘*Israel’* means God wrestler. So, Jews are God wrestlers, we wrestle with the whole concept of God…and the right way to live our lives.” Referencing Elie Wiesel, writer and survivor of the Holocaust, she continued, “To be a Jew you don’t have to believe in God, you have to behave as if there was a God.”

The love of God, whose image is described as “father” and/or “mother” by several participants, is conceptualized in the Quran as a “million times that of a mother.” Furthermore, God loves those who are harmed and those who harm others. One respondent reflected, “A mother is forgiving...if she gives birth to a monster who hurts people...a mother will always love her child and never wants her child to be punished or condemned.”

In Islam, God has 99 names called “*Al-Asma Al-Husna.*” As noted by one participant, “Each name is an attribute. There is the most beneficial, the most merciful, the most compassionate…” Among the Muslim, Jewish and Christian women in this study, forgiving, merciful, and compassionate were names attributed to God. Deriving from the Latin “compassionem,” to suffer with (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.), theologian Kurt Struckmeyer (n.d.) notes that compassion is a reflection of love that responds to suffering. Referencing Jesus’ embodiment of this idea in the Good Samaritan

parable, Struckmeyer (2019) observes, “He demonstrated that the one who loves the neighbor is the one who shows compassion on the one who suffers” (para. 2).

Regarding God-human relating, Father Richard Rohr (2020), founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation, references Buber in writing that we know God through our “I-thou” (para. 1) relationship with God (portrayed in this study as “eternal-Thou” [Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 24]), and God’s offer of forgiveness, mercy, and compassion. When discussing hate-induced crimes or any form of harm brought to another, one interviewee emphasized that God does not intend or inflict hardship, punishment, or harm on another. She holds human behavior and science responsible for that and asserted, “Did God choose me to be raped a punishment? No, because the person who raped me was that person.” A survivor of violence on many levels, this participant’s relationship with God remains steady and a source of love and strength. She defers to God for justice (as do about one-third of the participants) and believes that if asked for, God’s forgiveness will be given for everything and everyone, including the person who raped her. Another respondent spoke of a family member’s murder, which she said should have been investigated as a hate crime and expressed that it will be up to the perpetrator to ask for forgiveness. Deferring to God to respond to injustice is empowering in that, “there is serious strength that comes from that because you know you are not a victim.”

Though most women interviewed resonate with a strong identity reflective of God’s image, the qualities of strength and power were attributed to God by only two of the participants. Does socialization contribute to a perception that the words “strength” and “power” are associated with patriarchy and *power over,* instead of compassion and

power with? Amidst power plays, aggression, and egregious violence by members of overvalued groups, God is an endless source of love and support empowering women to live their lives with resiliency.

Table 6

Second supporting theme: sample codes and phrases

Codes
God is love Divine connection mother, father
great light and beauty intersection of all qualities creative life force
joy justice forgiveness
God is not a white older man looking down on us and laughing

Third supporting theme: community defies discrimination and builds resilience

Community—particularly faith-based community, in the form of family, friends, neighbors, support groups and mentors—is a source of joy and support during hardship. The word "community" comes from the Latin *communitatem* meaning fellowship (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). The word "communion" comes from the Latin *communionem* meaning fellowship and denotes "participation in the sacrament" (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.).

One research participant gratefully recounted how her family and she, refugees from the Middle East, were picked up at the SeaTac airport by Christian "strangers" and invited to stay in their home until they could rent a place of their own. Those strangers are now her neighbors, whom she also considers family and friends. She emphasized, "As religion it doesn't matter for me as I follow my religion, but I see people as good even though they are not the same religion."

Singing and cleaning the church with her fellow women is life-giving to another participant whose family's journey included fleeing the DRC for the United States. When challenges arise, "we have to be together and pray." Another participant noted that within her multifaith marriage worshipping in both the synagogue and a spiritual center as well as experiencing love and belonging within strong friendships bring joy and support to her wife and her.

Conversely, the absence of a safe place to worship for one of the women, whose identity includes Muslim and lesbian, is an experience of deep pain and one of the hardest aspects of living in King County. She yearns for a place where LGBTQI members of Islam, Christianity, and other religions and ethnicities can go "without feeling persecuted…judged." As a recipient of help from "good people," she finds support through giving back to the community.

Though active in her synagogue and ministry, one woman misses a larger integration of Jewish culture within her community and life. A lack of Jewish girlfriends of similar identity and faith—particularly following trauma such as the Pittsburgh Tree of Life shooting (Mele, Robertson, & Tavernise, 2018)—represents hardship and at times loneliness for another participant. On the other hand, celebrating her Judaism openly and equitably with friends and loved ones, along with feeling safe and protected with them, engenders joy. She commented, "Safety is like a hug." When her family member says to her, "'I love you forever,' it means I will always protect you."

In times of mourning and celebrating, amidst discrimination and victories, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women of King County seek community in the form of

family, friends, neighbors, fellow worshippers, mentors, and other groups. Within these relationships of shared values, they experience love, acceptance, belonging, respect, and/or safety. When two or more are gathered, "*I-Thou*" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 16; see also Buber, 1923/1996) and I-"eternal *Thou*" (Kramer and Gawlick, 2003, p. 24) relating transpire. As Matthew 18:30 expresses, "for where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Table 7

Third supporting theme: sample codes and phrases

Codes
I am not alone I belong here I am safe deep connectedness
feel this amazing joy, love in the community great mentors
It's more about the collective than the individual
I don't like discrimination multifaith, interfaith
pray for each other

Fourth supporting theme: diversity, equity, and inclusion defy discrimination and build resilience

Of the women who named discrimination as the greatest strain in King County, just over one-third named diversity, equity, and inclusion as the best part of living as a woman in King County. From a macro perspective, local government is perceived as fair, with growing awareness of differences and efforts to include more voices. Compared to Eastern Washington, one participant prefers King County where she is not the only one wearing a head scarf. Another woman, whose group memberships include Muslim and refugee, appreciates the equal treatment she receives in King County. At work she

experiences inclusion from her colleague who lends her the office key for daily Islamic prayers. A lesbian identity appears to be well supported in King County, as observed by another interviewee whose neighborhood is accepting of her hanging a Jewish star in her home's window. In contrast to her experience in Idaho, another Pacific Northwestern state, an additional participant views King County's diverse and inclusive environment as conducive to launching her non-profit work.

For one participant, the ease of living in King County is not attributed to the county's values of diversity, equity and inclusion, but membership in cultural normative and dominant groups for race, sexual orientation, ability, and social class culture. These afford her the external freedom to non-discriminately move throughout the city and engage in activities she enjoys. At times she chooses to hide her non-dominant Jewish identity on the inside to protect the privileges she has on the outside: "I can hide my otherness, that fact I am Jewish easily." She shared about family members who survived the Holocaust and her mother's internalized anti-Semitism, and she acknowledged what might be a bit of her own.

For a smaller percentage of the women, King County offers increased fairness, acceptance, safety, and opportunities compared to other areas in which they have spent time. Such an environment can foster greater hope and endurance and, ultimately, resilience.

Table 8

Fourth supporting theme: sample codes and phrases

Codes			
you are welcome	diverse	don't stand out as much	privilege
not afraid to show our beliefs	awareness of minorities	opportunity	
accepting neighborhood	same (rules) for everyone		

Fifth supporting theme: compassion toward self and others defies discrimination and builds resilience

Even though resiliency buoys the women, hardship and acts of hate still bring experiences of worry, anxiety, fear, uncertainty, and/or vulnerability for most of them. Sadness, depression, and/or pain effect about one-third of the women, and anger was reported by one person. Nurtured by a foundation of Divine support, compassion toward oneself and others is the response to adversity for nine out of the eleven women. Instead of resorting to scapegoating or othering, of oneself or others, love and empathy are valued from a personal and faith-based stance. A personal understanding of intergenerational trauma, exists, and fellow brothers and sisters, with histories and circumstances unknown to the women, are viewed as equals doing the best they can. One woman explained, "No one wants to be bad…sometimes there are things working against people—nature, culture, life—so many things. I think most people would rather be humble, kind, decent and good. And for the most part, I think we are." Another participant views compassion from a "bi-religious" lens: "Part of to be Jewish is to feel deeply the pain of others, and feel the suffering of the Jewish people…to be Christian

Scientist is not to deny the pain but to heal it… look into people's heart and ask, 'how am I seeing this person?'" Instead of taking things personally, another participant tries to acknowledge the underlying pain felt by perpetrators of hateful acts and the "bad feelings about themselves and the world around them" that they take to bed with them at night. Rather than feel victimized and give power to the person bullying, she tries to stay "soft" and honor her values of not yelling back or trying to have the final word.

In action, compassion may be walking by a community member living on the street and pausing to "touch them so they can see I see them, and I love them." It may also be viewed as "*tikkun olam*," a Jewish concept defined by a participant as repair of the world. As a co-creator with God, she highlighted the need to draw from one's inner spark of Divinity and be there for another, "make it right." She proposed praying with one's feet as Rabbi Joshua Herschel did while marching with Martin Luther King, Jr. Another participant also referred to King and her belief that only love and light can effectively drive out hate and darkness. Though angry at what they see as the legal system's injustice regarding a family member's death (referenced in the previous section), her family advocated for a lighter sentence; they believed, "the man has potential to do good in his life and he will recognize his mistakes and get to know Muslims and what Islam means." Strong and knowledgeable female leaders in the community inspire her to persist on the path of social justice and advocacy.

Lived compassion might manifest as forging relationships with members of other groups, even those with hurtful motives. One participant illustrated this in a story about a rabbi in Durham, North Carolina who invited his neighbor, a Ku Klux Klan member, to his family's Shabbat dinner. Ignoring the sign on his neighbor's window that read, "Get

the Jews out of Durham," the rabbi eventually invited the neighbor (who did not have a family or money) to live with his family and him. Alternatively, as one participant exemplified, compassion can be focusing on the needs of the collective by openly sharing about one's targeted identities and modeling a life lived with joy and authenticity.

Woven within compassion for the humanity of oneself and others is forgiveness. As explained by one of the women, Judaism has a "culture of forgiveness" and Yom Kippur—the atonement of sins—is the holiest day of the year. In touch with her humanness, she accepts her imperfection and feels safe bringing regrets and apologies to God, as well as to anyone she may have hurt during the past year. One woman refers to two voices: one that judges and the other "small voice" that says, "No, love her. Don't judge, they don't know what they are doing." She views it as her role as a Christian to love and forgive those who hate her or bring harm. When she feels hurt by a loved one and is unaware of harm she may have caused to prompt it, this participant says, "sorry" to offer them peace and soften their heart and anger.

The women in this study offer compassionate prayers for themselves and others trying to endure and carry on with the mix of strengths and vulnerabilities life has given them. "Oh God protect that person" is the prayer one woman says when she sees an accident and hardship. When she feels hate in her heart toward another who brought harm she prays, "Oh God forgive them." "I wish you a better day" or "good luck" are words of support expressed to others struggling with life. Prayers are also offered to protect others from hurt and for those surviving poverty, sickness, and war. Another woman takes an interdependent approach during difficulty and will "…lean on God, prayer and people."

Table 9

Fifth supporting theme: sample codes and phrases

Codes
only God knows… our hearts it's okay not to be perfect be openly loving
change agent patience partner in creation
apologize for mistakes accountable for, never apologize for being Jewish or gay
there can be anger at the system…and…forgiveness and hope
invite into relationship

Sixth supporting theme: mindfulness defies discrimination and builds resilience

Many of the women in this study not only expect hardship but also accept it. One participant compared the story of her Somali culture to that of the Irish:

> After a while, Somalis, we always are saying we are the Irish of the Africans. It's a sad story but it's an Irish story…so hardship and sadness become part of our DNA in a way. It's a journey, some days will be good, some days will be painful.

Another participant whose grandparents are survivors of the Holocaust shared, "I was taught people hate you (Jews), I expect hatred and suffering." She is also mindful of what her family sacrificed and endured and feels a responsibility to positively represent Judaism. Her role within her family and faith is to "carry it on or it will die."

In response to hardship, nine out of the eleven women mindfully apply intelligence and humility to the situation. They ask questions such as, "Why not me?" and "I can't do everything, what is mine to do?" They also trust that only one's own behavior and attitude can be changed. Amid the myriad of "isms," the "invisible beast that

terrorizes America, that makes everything kind of messy for everyone who lives here," one of the interviewees copes by trying to "ride the beast." When she has a choice to set the tone, she doesn't resort to the same oppression but focuses on assuming the best about others and the situation. She reminds herself that "the world is a loving place," and adds, "I might try to affirm certain things, and there is always a lot of negativity and don't want to add more to it or bring it up for someone else if I can try not to." Staying calm and present and trying to enjoy the moment is another approach. Reminders of inner strength are motivating, too: "I am not a victim. I am empowered to stand up, speak up, speak out, shout out, and take control of who it is."

Adversity is seen as growth, which inspires new learning to pass on to others with similar needs. Rather than punishment, it is seen as a path to increased wisdom and strength. For two participants, the mindful act of gratitude—and remembrance that there is always someone whose situation is more dire and that things can get worse—engenders appreciation for their current circumstances. One of them recounted a lesson from her father: "I cried because I had no shoes until I saw the man who had not feet." In Islam *Shukr* means gratitude, and about half of the women say, "thank you" when things are going well. Additionally, "Muslims have daily remembrances of God that we do to be thankful for every little thing. When you are happy you say, "*Umhumdullah,* Praise be to God."

Positivity also promotes wellness and can consist of spending time with others with similar mindsets, listening to uplifting material, and partaking in life-giving activities. During difficulty, viewing life from a perspective of humor is a positive approach for two of the women.

Mindful engagement with holy text, music, and nature also remind the senses that all will be okay. The Quran provides a sense of protection and inspiration; for some, the Mother of the Quran is read 17 times a day and includes:

> in the name of Allah most Gracious, Merciful, praise be to Allah, the Cherisher, and the Sustainer of the worlds. The most Gracious, most Merciful, master of the day of judgment, thee do we worship, and thine aid we seek. Show us the straight way, the way of those of whom thou has bestowed thy grace…those who do not go astray.

The prayer book *Siddur*, the Torah, and the Christian Science Pastor (comprised of the Bible and the book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*) also provide support. As one participant explained, Christian Scientists are taught to "go to the books, go to God, and think about who you are in relation to God. Think about what is most healing in these circumstances. Think about stories in the Bible. Jesus was Jew, Christ-like, the same power he has everyone has."

One of the Christian participants carries the word of God within for support: "What I hold like something that will make me strong, stand still in hardship is the word of God in me." She has a link to daily devotionals from around the world and turns to the Bible during hard times. "When you go and open it you don't have a verse but you just open it and feel God talks to you….God always talks to his kids when you are living in hardship or a bad situation."

During times of loneliness, music is a source of comfort for several participants. Folk music by James Taylor brings memories of security and safety. Gospel music and the Christian radio station are a bridge to the voice and care of God and provide

assurance that all will be well. In sad and traumatic moments, fiddle playing provides a safe outlet for emotions during personal and formal worship times.

Nature also provides solace to some participants. Being around water or in the garden elicits relaxation; air is "the place where Spirit can come in." Another participant finds heart shaped rocks, representing hearts of God, when she is walking outside. They provide assurance that she is ok and affirm, "…the stone was rolled away (from Jesus' tomb) which gives me authority to follow in the footsteps of not only Jesus but those women who carried the word."

A positive relationship with God, community, and oneself enhance personal wellness and resilience during times of struggle and influence a posture of living with love in response to hate and harm. Mindful practices offer grounding in acceptance and endurance, hope and inspiration, positivity and gratitude. Holy text, music, and nature invite the women into an experience of support, comfort, and solace.

Table 10

Sixth supporting theme: sample codes and phrases

Codes		
step forward bravely	addressing Islamophobia	next generation
higher purpose	respect other and self	Puget Sound
when there is joy I just try to be thankful	enjoy some of God's goodness	
shine brightly so others have permission		
pray for the best		

Research Review

This project sought to understand how Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women of intersecting backgrounds, histories, and identities live and love amidst micro and macro aggressions. After the findings were analyzed, two additional questions emerged:

1. How does this study compare to the existing and important research contributions to the topic of resilience?
2. Does the inclusion of diverse social locations and faiths contribute in a positive way to the important research on resilience that currently exists?

The following section compares the themes (presented more generally) that emerged from analysis of the interview responses with existing research studies on resilience. The tables in Appendix E also illustrate these comparisons. Questions and reflections are then posed to support future research.

Positive relationship with self builds resilience

Discrimination related to gender and patriarchy, religion, sexual orientation, and/or legal status is the hardest aspect of living in King County for 100% of the women interviewed for this study. Ali et al. researched religion and feminism in the lives of 14 young to middle-aged Midwestern, Christian, and Muslim women. Half of the participants, all of whom were Muslim, referenced the impact of the 9/11 attacks on their religion, and some of them described not feeling safe worshiping openly and/or going to the Mosque. Muslims in this study referenced being ignored and responses of “stares and glares” when wearing their hijab. One participant stated that loss of loved ones to strife in Somalia was a greater burden on her heart than reactions or remarks to her hijab. Participants in this study who practice Judaism, which was not represented in Ali et al.’s

research, recounted anti-Semitism exemplified in graffiti and the Pittsburgh Tree of Life shooting (Mele, Robertson & Tavernise, 2018). As also found in Ali et al.'s research among Christian participants, the Christian participants in this study did not recount discrimination due to their religion, considered an agent group.

Carter (2010) studied the impact of religious discrimination on six diverse Muslim American couples. While most of the couples did not report that discrimination increased following 9/11, they noted that it rose to the forefront following the attacks and was exacerbated when women wore their hijabs. Assumptions about gender roles within Islam (e.g. women are not knowledgeable of feminist principles and men oppress), as well as race and ethnicity, compounded the impact. Conversely, in this research one participant frustratingly described the superiority of men in her Muslim faith, clearly distinguishing their behavior from the empowering tenants of Islam. Though Christian or Jewish participants were not part of Carter's study, two that participated in this study also referred to an attitude and culture of male superiority, devoid of value for women, within the black church. Another participant lamented the intrusion of patriarchy in the form of female rabbis' more hierarchical and less collaborative styles of leadership in her synagogue.

Additionally, similar to Carter's interview participant who experienced discrimination within his community for practicing a different form of Islam, one participant in this study experiences great pain from microaggressions in her Muslim community related to her non-heteronormative identity as a lesbian.

Regarding their personal perceptions, most of the women in this study expressed a positive view of themselves—grounded in their identity as a creation, image, and/or child

of God—as the most life-giving aspect of living in King County. All these women, with the exception of one, value responding to difficulties with compassion toward self and other, a trademark of resilience. Indicative of positive self-image, 61.8% of the 40-year-old women in Werner and Smith's (2001) research drew from their sense of "competence and determination" (pp. 69-70) to respond with resilience to stressful situations. Likewise, Walsh's (2009) portrayal of resilience includes "tapping personal" (p. 96) resources, and aspects of Van der Kolk's (2019) definition of resilience includes, "the power of commitment to oneself" (para. 3). Furthermore, representative of a component of Wolin's (Wolin et al., 1999) framework on resilience, "Judaism tells us that we are all holy and that all of us are capable of achieving freedom" (pp. 133-134). Similar to the women of this study and Wolin's (Wolin et al., 1999) perspective in which identity with God and religion confirm worth and belonging, the Muslim American couples in Carter's (2010) research drew strength from their identity as Muslim: "The study emphasized how Muslim Americans locate their resilience and power in their core identity—that of being a Muslim" (p. 140).

Positive relationship with God builds resilience

Joyful times are attributed to a Divine connection for 73% of the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women who participated in this study. Previous research inclusive of, and not limited to, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Unitarian Universalist, and spiritual women and men associated contentment and resilience with religion and/or spirituality. Shilo et al.'s (2016) research indicated that coping and improved mental health were supported by a secure connection with God as well as supportive "LGBT" (p. 1559) and

other communities. Divine support also positively affected resilience in Manning's (2014) research of female senior participants.

Existing definitions of resilience include a spiritual component (Walsh, 2009) and a quality of "love and belonging" (Brown, 2010, p. 10) from something bigger than oneself. Additional research reveals that support and thriving emanates from a Buddhist perspective of a light within (Wolin et al., 1999, p. 135), "life source" (Carter, 2010, p. 341) associated with being Muslim, and daily religious practices among Muslim and Protestant women (Ali et al., 2008, p. 44).

Community builds resilience

When joy is present just over half of this study's women think, "I am with my community." Likewise, when times are hard 73% seek community; for example, one participant prays with her community, while another gives back to hers. Shilo et al.'s (2016) research illustrates the positive impacts that community support and acceptance, combined with a secure connection with God (p. 1552), have on well-being. In Carter's (2010) research, support from the community translated to support of the family and support with living life for God (p. 341). Additionally, Brown's (2010) research of leaders underscored the role that an accepting and loving connection with a greater power and one another has on living through challenges (p. 10).

Furthermore, pointing to an ecological influence, wave two of resilience research discovered that attachments within relationships may assist in modulating stress (Masten, 2007; Masten & Shaffer, 2006). Later, wave four highlighted that "gene-environment" (Masten, 2007, p. 924) and "coregulation" (Masten, 2007, p. 924) within relationships affect resilience. The couples in Carter's (2010) study "reassure one another of their

basic goodness and their Islamic character as positive, charitable, and truthful" (2010, p. 123). In Werner and Smith's (2001) study, approximately 50% of the resilient women, characterized as getting along with others, named their partner as the most significant factor in resilience (pp. 69, 70). Van der Kolk's (2014) trauma work also highlights the role that secure bonds play in resilience.

Four of the eight women in this study, whose strong feminine identity is associated with a positive relationship with the Divine, also named community as an important factor during hard times. One of them cited disconnection from Jewish life and community as the most arduous aspect of her life at present. Masten (2001) paired both community and relationship, along with interior resources inherent in each of us, to represent resilience (p. 235). Walsh's (2009) research pointed to the integral role of all four factors, "personal, relational, cultural, and spiritual," (p. 96) in coping and adjusting to life.

Compassion builds resilience

Eighty two percent of the women interviewed for this research strive to be compassionate toward themselves and others in response to various forms of aggression, harm, and adversity. Similar results appeared in Werner and Smith's (2001) Kauai Longitudinal Study of women and men born on Kauai in 1955.

For this study's religiously diverse participants—who experience God as different forms of love, creator, parent, and omnipresence—faith informs 64% of them to respond to harm with love and compassion. These results align with aspects of Van der Kolk (2019), Werner and Smith (2001), and Taylor's (Wolin et al. 1999) understanding of resilience. Serving others is a source of joy for 36% of this research's interviewees,

which parallels Van der Kolk's (2014) theory that resilient individuals consider the needs of the collective.

Pray for one another and oneself was another response to hardship by 82% of the women interviewed. In comparison, nearly half of the multi-faith women in Werner and Smith's (2001) study named prayer and faith as a source of support and resilience. Bhui et al.'s (2008) interviews of young to middle-aged, multi-ethnic women and men revealed that "religious or spiritual coping" (p. 150) was a common response to challenges of the emotions and mind. Activities such as, "prayer, seeking guidance, and receiving comfort" (p. 150) were forms of coping for many of the participants, especially those who were Muslim. Finally, Brown's (2010) research determined that a connection to each other and a "power greater than all of us," rooted in "love and belonging," was "a critical component of resilience and overcoming struggle" (p. 10).

Mindfulness builds resilience

Eighty two percent of the women in this research study respond to adversity by reflecting with intelligence and humility. In Werner and Smith's (2001) longitudinal study, "good planning and problem-solving skills" (p. 78) were strong qualities in the resilient 40-year-old individuals. Part of Van der Kolk's (2014, 2019) resilience theory consists of keeping the collective picture in mind and attributes secure relating and "competency" (Van der Kolk, 2014, p. 115) to positive coping. Research by Brown (2010) discovered that resilient leaders stay curious about how they think, feel, and act and consider how these factors impact relationships. Despite what she describes as terrorizing and messy American "isms," one participant in this study strives to approach interactions and situations with self-awareness and a compassionate tone and lens that

assume the best. Another reflected that the only thing you can change is your "behavior, attitude," not someone else.

Seventy three percent of participants in this study try to stay mindful of a higher purpose embedded in difficulty, while 36% try to contribute to healing during adversity. Purpose was associated with spiritual resilience in Manning's (2014) research and also represents aspects of Van der Kolk's (2019) definition of resilient individuals who possess the, "knowledge that there are things that are larger than our individual survival" (para. 3). Parallel to Wolin's (Wolin et al., 1999) Jewish perspective that difficulties form who we are (pp. 133-134), one Muslim participant in this project emphasized how hardship isn't "punishment," but a path to greater wisdom and strength, which can be used at another time to help someone in need.

Social justice work, in the form of advocacy and activism, was the response to hardship by 73% of the women interviewed. Wolin (Wolin et al. 1999) highlighted religion's "moral obligation" (pp. 133-134) to respond to trouble with acts of resilience. A participant in this research study referred to this as *tikkun olam*, meaning repair of the world, which she described as a commandment. She said, "It's about not sitting by when things are not just in the world." In response to discrimination, particularly from "negative media and government images" (Carter, 2010, p. 122), the Muslim American couples in Carter's study valued "mass re-education in interpersonal exchanges, public forums, or community activism" (p. 123).

When harm happens, 36% of participants strive to remember their own humanness and vulnerabilities. Indicative of such self-reflection and awareness, the resilient leaders in Brown's (2010) studies lean into vulnerability and discomfort while

remaining open and inquisitive about their experiences, which influence their interactions.

Lastly, positivity—which entails intentional engagement with positive thoughts, interactions, and media material—engenders resilience for 33% of this study's research participants. Similarly, 36% of Manning's (2014) participants expressed the role of positivity on their experiences of joy. Furthermore, Werner and Smith (2001) found that optimism was a strong characteristic in the multifaith individuals they researched.

Summary

This Chapter outlined the results of interviews with eleven women participants representing Abrahamic religious traditions and intersecting identities. Based on the interview findings, a definition of resilience was developed reflective of a faith-based and psychological lens. The Chapter concluded with a comparison of the themes that emerged from this research project to other research studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to learn how Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women residing in Washington State's King County live with resilience. Through semi-structured interviews, eleven women described the best and hardest aspects of living in King County, and their associated feelings and thoughts. Qualities of God were shared as well as how faith informs responses to harm. Participants were also invited to share or describe a symbol representing that all will be well when times are hard. In addition to the focus on Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women, the participants' diverse social locations yielded rich insight regarding resilience among women with intersecting group memberships.

This research revealed that secure and loving attachments with God provide the interior resources needed for these women to tolerate micro and macroaggressions—including insults, assaults, and invalidations—that exist on local and global levels. Individuals who impose harm are not made out to be strange(r) by most of the women interviewed but are seen as fellow humans trying to survive and in need of love. Embodying resilience, these women draw from a deep inner, and at times external, well of Divine strength and love from which they relate not with *power over*—as in the patriarchal structures that ungird much of the discrimination they face—but *power with* others.

Women's Responses Indicate Resilience

For the eleven women interviewed for this research study, discrimination or "othering" due to social location represents the hardest aspect of living in King County, WA. However, these resilient women do not other back in response to micro and macroaggressions; rather, they value responding with compassion and love for others and themselves. Contrary to an "I-It" (Buber, 1923/1996, p. 80-81; Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 46) response, they exemplify the concept of "*I-Thou*" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 16; see also Buber, 1923/1996) through seeking to understand underlying pain and suffering of those that cause harm. Buber writes, "Love is the responsibility of an *I* for a *Thou"* (Buber, 1923/2000, p. 6) in which the "*Thou*" is fully embraced for who that person is.

In other words, the majority of this research's participants exhibit a stance of resilience distinguished not only by functioning and interacting amidst adversity but living with love. They encapsulate the part of Van der Kolk's (2019) definition of resilience that realizes "the power of love, the power of caring, the power of commitment, the power of commitment to oneself, the knowledge that there are things that are larger than our individual survival" (para. 3). They model resilience indicative of Brown's (2010) findings, in which spirituality and a connection to each other and a greater power instill the feeling of "love and belonging…a critical component of resilience and overcoming struggle" (p. 10). Combined, these experiences represent a psycho-spiritual form of resilience, in which love of another and self is fostered by a positive and loving relationship with the Divine, characterized as I-"eternal *Thou*" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 24).

Trauma and Attachment

Psychiatrist Sandra L. Bloom and Brian Farragher (2013) compare trauma to a "computer virus" (p. 25) that interferes with interpersonal attachments and can impact functioning. Conversely, having loving and supportive relationships associated with healthy attachments, particularly early in life, is akin to "good antivirus software" (2013, p. 25).

The former John Bowlby (1988), child development researcher and attachment theory founder, referenced our internal human system as an "internal working model" (1988, p. 171) that represents the attachment relationship. A secure, internalized attachment is reflected in closeness to another perceived as "better able to cope with the world" (1988, p. 1270; see also Van der Kolk, 2014, pp. 112-113), and a source of comfort and care during challenging times. Such a relationship encourages stabilization and, as noted by psychiatrist Dan Siegel (2012), lays the groundwork for adjusting to life. Siegel writes, "Security conveys resilience, whereas insecurity conveys risk" (pp. 114-115).

Analyzing the role of both psychology and spirituality as they relate to resilience, Erikson viewed the child's relationship with his or her mother as the foundation for human and spiritual relating: "The mother-child relationship for Erikson established the model for all relationships, including the human-divine connection" (Myers, 2016). Scripture exemplifies a mother or caregiver's love, in its most idyllic form, in reference to God's love for her/his children. Isaiah 66:13 expresses, "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you," and Isaiah 49:15 states, "Can a woman forget her

nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you." Another example can be found in Psalm 139: 1-10:

> O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in hell, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

While Bowlby's (1988) work focused on the child-mother attachment, as analyzed by the former developmental psychologist Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978), he believed that attachment could develop with other individuals over the course of a life time. Building on the work of Cynthia Hazan, Seigel (2012) refers to "emotionally engaging relationships" (p. 116) and states that "these later forms of attachment can be established in the same manner that allows a secure attachment to develop in childhood" (p. 116). Within "symmetrical" friendships and partnerships, "each member of the dyad demonstrates consistent, predictable, sensitive, perceptive and effective communication" (p. 116). Within "asymmetric" relating that may occur in therapeutic, educational, and, perhaps, worship settings, "the sensitivity to signals is the primary responsibility of the former individual, who serves as

the sole 'attachment figure' providing a safe haven and secure base for the other" (p. 116).

As humans, we carry wounds and trauma of varying degrees that can be individual or collective, internalized or externalized, and passed down to us through systems, culture, ancestors, and genes; therefore, our connections and engagement with others are not always as loving as we would hope. Try as we might, we fail at times to be there for others, and we fail to be there for ourselves. I would like to propose that one's personal and unique relationship with God, whether it be depicted as "symmetrical" (Seigel, 2012, p. 116) or "asymmetric" (Seigel, 2012, p. 116)—both of which are represented in the interviewees' relationships with God—is an attachment that is consistently supportive and consistently secure; it is a bond of trust that, without fail, is always available to us.

Instead of an "I-It" relationship (Buber, 1923/1996, p. 80-81; Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 46) with God, it is a relationship that embodies I-"eternal *Thou*" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 24) and fosters not only surviving amidst micro and macro aggressions and other forms of adversity, but resiliently thriving and loving.

The participants in this study exhibit I-"eternal *Thou*" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 24) relationships by orienting inwardly and/or extending outside of themselves into experiences of community, nature, and other creative expressions of God. Additional I-"eternal *Thou*" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 24) examples from this research abound and are highlighted in Chapter 4; they support an understanding of resilience as living and loving through the support of a secure I-"eternal *Thou*" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 24) attachment with God.

Applying the psycho-spiritual concepts of resilience outlined above to a scenario in which one is harmed—by a community member, official, neighbor, co-worker, friend, or family member, for example—one can recognize the capacity of humans to fail one another and connect with God's unconditional love. Such love may be felt through interior as well as exterior means in the form of Scripture, music, nature, and/or supportive community. Andrew Steane (2014), professor of physics at the University of Oxford, reflects, "We have I-Thou relationships with God through I-Thou relationships with people, nature, art and the world" (p. 49; see also "Martin Buber [1878-1965]," n.d.). Research shows that resilience is also engendered by the following cognitions and perspectives:

1. Hardship will pass; hardship develops endurance.
2. A higher purpose and a call to act for change exists within hardship.
3. A God of love, acceptance, and forgiveness is in all things and is available for us to run to or cry to.

Patriarchy and Matriarchy

Patriarchy, rated the most frequent form of discrimination in this study, constitutes the hardest aspect of living in King County for almost half of the participants. Feminist theologian Carol P. Christ (2016) analyzes patriarchy's role and impact in society:

> When we see patriarchy as an integral system, we can see that seemingly unrelated struggles—for example, those concerning war, rape, environment, family violence, birth control, abortion, gay marriage, gun control, redistributing wealth, racism, and the sex of God—are in fact related. (p. 224)

Matriarchy, an alternative model, is not patriarchy's opposite (Christ, 2016, p. 217). Scholar Heidi Goettner-Abenddroth (2009) teaches us that matriarchal societies are not based on domination by the mother but societies that value egalitarianism (p. 20). Christ (2016) explains that matriarchal societies do not "separate the sexes according to rigid gender binaries—as occurs in patriarchy" (p. 216). Expounding on this concept, she writes,

> Both sexes are expected to embody the principles of care, love, and generosity in all aspects of their lives. Men and boys are taught to be as loving and caring and generous as their mothers and sisters. Acts of power over and domination are not celebrated or valorized for either sex. (pp. 216-217)

This project's interviews and research of non-violent examples of "*I-Thou,*" or human-God relating (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 16; see also Buber, 1923/1996) enabled a model of matriarchy to emerge in which love of "I" and love of "Thou" is the primary response to intentional and unintentional expressions of harm and hate. Furthermore, the research illuminates a need for greater integration of matriarchal principles against a backdrop of patriarchy. The participants' lives provide a starting point for such a model of resilient living anchored in a secure and loving attachment with God.

Hagar and Sarah, visited in the theological reflection, looked to their attachment with God (filled with trust and belonging) to withstand oppressive and vulnerable forms of othering within their patriarchal system. They went on to be known respectively as the matriarchs of the Arab and Jewish nations. Would their culture's definition of matriarchy resemble any aspect of a modern-day egalitarian and loving society, referred to above?

It is unknown and perhaps unlikely, given what we know about society's laws and structures during that time. As for Hagar and Sarah's relationship amidst the dynamics of under and overvalued memberships, it is also unknown and unlikely that resilience took the form of loving interactions between them. Jesus, an activist and egalitarian, was a scapegoat for his society's fear, hate, and violence. He loved, forgave, and prayed through the end of his human life and hate's ultimate expression: his torture on the tree by the Roman government (Crossan, 1995). Rohr (2019a) reflects on Jesus' relationship with God in his "Daily Meditations":

> Jesus came to give us the courage to trust and allow our inherent union with God, and he modeled it for us in this world. Union is not a place we go to later—if we are good; union is the place from which we come, the place from which we're called to live now. (para. 5)

He later reflects, "God is not self-contained, egotistical and self-absorbed but overflowing love, outreaching desire for union with all that God has made. God moves toward us so that we may move toward each other and thereby toward God" (Rohr, 2019b, para. 6).

In the 20th century, amidst persecution and genocide by the Nazi regime, Etty Hillesum clung to her God of love and God's "protective wall" (Hillesum, 2002, p. 364). Despite the possibility of escape, she stayed in hope of easing the suffering of her family who died, as she later did, in Auschwitz. More than ten years later, during the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King Jr. tirelessly advocated for love in the face of hate, fear, and suffering until his assassination.

More recently, devout Muslim Malala Yusafzai (theirworld.org, n.d.) who survived the Taliban's attempted assassination on her life in 2012, continues to stand firmly in forgiveness and the compassion of the Prophet Muhammad, Jesus Christ, and Lord Buddha. "This is what my soul is telling me, be peaceful and love everyone" (theirworld.org, n.d., para. 15). Congruent with the principles of the Sisters of Saint Joseph and the Gospel of Jesus, Sister Helen Prejean (1994) relates to her "dear neighbor" (p. 123) on death row with love as she acts to change current laws. She accesses God's love and strength through introverted moments of reflection and extroverted moments with friends and community. She states, "Prayer doesn't change God; it changes us. And it's not always blissful. Just the opposite: It jolts us awake to pain and suffering caused by injustice and won't leave us in peace until we do something about it" (2019, p. 253).

Their lives, along with those of the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women I had the immense honor of interviewing, are not a reflection of giving into despair and depression but living in hope as proclaimed by Sister Joan Chittister (2003, p. 19). They are examples of lives that lean on God's love, and, according to most of the narratives, respond with love to the pain and suffering of their brothers and sisters.

Moreover, their lives characterize a trauma-informed and matriarchal form of leadership grounded in God's strength, equality, self-love, and love of other. Their experiences of being seen and heard by God translate to efforts to fully see and hear others in all their humanity, identities, and history.

Their example serves as a model to lift up others' gifts, accept and support growth edges, invite diversity, engage in dialogue, and seek to equally serve the collective needs

of the community. This approach could be continued or added in places of worship, homes, local and other government offices, clinics, schools, and community organizations. Furthermore, these values would provide a fertile foundation for diverse multi-faith women to gather toward a vision of mutual support, mutual learning, mutual advocating, mutual worship, mutual mourning and mutual celebrating.

Akin to such aspirations of community, fellowship, and communion, Elisabeth Gerle (2013) proposes the following vision:

> an open kitchen with a broad round table that may facilitate real listening between radically different women and help create global alliances where women are able to affirm their own subjectivity and to resist oppressive policies. This is a vision where women are affirming and claiming respect for their own desires while also being sensitive to the needs of others. The kitchen is also an image for a biblical [or other holy Scripture] generosity to the stranger, an expression of the 'Hearthold of God' and of mercy. A round table can be solid in a way that prevents hugging as well as fighting, yet a place where gestures of love can be expressed (pp. 55-56).

The "broad, round table" (Gerle, 2013, p. 55) of a kitchen would welcome and celebrate women of Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and other beliefs, and the fullness of their multidimensional identities. It would be a place where neighbors come together in "*I-Thou*" (Kramer and/& Gawlick, 2003, p. 16; see also Buber, 1923/1996) relating, not only toward each other but also toward themselves. Individual and collective narratives of pain and joy from the past, present, and future would be carried, mourned, and celebrated together.

Images of God, Self and Other

Additional questions that surfaced from this research pertain to the relationship between one's image of God, self, and other: What influence does each woman's image of God and her relationship with God have on her own self-image, and also her relationship with self and others? When we accept the complicated and unique nature of ourselves and others, is that the fruit of a God who wants and embraces all of us?

From an ecological perspective, applied by Harvey to trauma and resilience (1996 pp. 5-6; 2007, pp. 9, 17), how does environment impact one's experience and view of self? When environmental supports are not in place, to what extent can one persevere by means of an interdependent, safe, and accepting relationship with oneself, God, and possibly other? Furthermore, which forms of support will safeguard one from self-othering and nurture self-love and safety, instead?

While three out of eleven of the women named community as the best part of living in King County, I wondered why more women did not respond similarly. Do the women who resonate with a strong sense of female identity and leadership experience support from the Divine in an interior way instead of a more extroverted, collective way?

For some of the Christian interview participants living in King County, patriarchy within the church was described as a hardship. However, none of them named discrimination due to their religion as a challenge. Does that reflect the privilege of belonging to an overvalued religious group?

Reflecting on the feelings associated with hardship, anger was named by just one participant. Do narratives from religion, culture, and family inform which feelings may

be acceptable and/or safe to carry? Anger can arise when there is an injustice or unmet need (Sitzman, 2001), so why was anger not a response from more than one woman?

Overall, more responses were given to the question regarding hardship than about joy. Does that represent the brain's mechanism to store negative information more readily than positive information for the sake of future survival (Ainsworth, 2013)? Is a practice of mindfulness, prayer, and/or giving thanks needed to notice joy and allow one's self to feel it? Additionally, when we talk about joy or hardship is relationship with self, God, and/or other always a component that needs to be considered?

Finally, germane to the topic of image, just 18% of the women used the terms "all powerful" and "strength" to reflect their perception of God. If we don't ascribe strength to God, whose image participants believe we are made in, how can it manifest in our lives? Is the prevalent thread of love, creation, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness another way to talk about strength and power in terms that are less oppressive and more mutual, equitable, and inclusive? Furthermore, are such qualities reflective of a paradigm consisting of matriarchal values versus patriarchal ones?

Implications for Future Research

This study recommends increased research of matriarchy in diverse contexts where its principle of *power with* instead of *power over* is already in place. Nurturing matriarchy, instead of patriarchy, in places of worship and other arenas men and women share is another important area for future research. Chittister (2006) conceptualizes friendship as something that engages the heart, soul, and mind: a "process of opening ourselves to the care, to the wisdom, of the other….Friendship extends us into places we have not gone before and cannot go alone" (p. XIV). Such relating can act as a model for

a matriarchal structure and society of peace, in which friendship applies to all relationships.

Additional areas of study for consideration include:

- the relationship between one's image of God with one's image of self and other
- the role that community plays in resilience
- the comparison of experiences between under and overvalued religious identities
- views toward anger among multifaith women

Summary

Interviews with religiously diverse participants and research of past and current followers of faith contributed to a working definition of resilience, which is congruent with components of Walsh's (2009) definition, resonates with aspects of Van der Kolk (2019) and Brown's (2010) concepts, and integrates an explicit psycho-spiritual dynamic. For the purpose of this study, resilience is defined as living and loving amidst adversity. Intrapersonal and interpersonal "*I-Thou*" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 16; see also Buber, 1923/1996) relating is engendered by a secure attachment with the "eternal-*Thou*" (Kramer & Gawlick, 2003, p. 24), which in turn nurtures and strengthens resilience. Amidst a backdrop of patriarchy, a relationship between matriarchy and resilience has surfaced and is presented here as a possible subject for future study.

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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Exemption

Institutional Review Board Approval

March 4, 2019
Kristen Moss
School of Theology & Ministry
Seattle University

Dear Kristen,

Thank you for submitting your application for exemption. After careful consideration, I have determined your study **Muslim, Jewish and Christian Women Living with Resilience Amidst Micro-Aggressions and Macroaggressions in King County** exempt from IRB review in compliance with **45CFR46.104(d)**:

> 2) Research involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording), provided that i) data is recorded in such a manner that a participant's identity cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through indirect identifiers; ii) disclosure of participant responses outside the research would not reasonably place that individual at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or iii) data is recorded in such a manner that a participant's identity of the human subjects *can* readily be ascertained, directly or indirect identifiers, and the IRB conducts a limited determination review.

Note that a letter of exemption does **not** mean IRB "approval." *Do not include statements for publication or otherwise that the SU IRB has "reviewed and approved" this study*; rather, say the SU IRB has "determined the study to be exempt from IRB review in accordance with federal regulation criteria." **Be sure to retain this letter in your files for any future verification of exemption.**

If your project alters in nature or scope, contact the IRB right away. If you have any questions, I'm happy to assist.

Best wishes,

Andrea McDowell, PhD
IRB Administrator
Email: irb@seattleu.edu
Phone: (206) 296-2585

cc: Dr. Sharon Callahan, Faculty Adviser

APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE:	Muslim, Jewish and Christian Women Living with Resilience Amidst Micro-Aggressions and Macroaggressions in King County
INVESTIGATOR:	Kristen Moss, The School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University, 206.296.5330
ADVISOR: (if applicable)	Dr. Sharon Callahan, The School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University, 206.296.5336
PURPOSE:	You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate how Muslim, Jewish and Christian women carry on with life amidst micro and macroaggressions, and explicit and implicit forms of discrimination in King County. You will be asked to participate in an interview about your experience and the role that faith plays. You will also be asked to bring and share about something that you touch, see, hear, taste and or smell as a reminder that life and you will be okay when times are hard. The interview will be 1 to 1 ½ hours in length and will take place in a private and safe location of your choice that includes: your home, the investigator Kristen's home in Federal Way, your place of worship, a reserved library room or a reserved room at Seattle University.
SOURCE OF SUPPORT:	This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree in the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University.
RISKS:	There are no known risks associated with this study. However, questions will explore not only what is best about living in King County but also what is hardest which could bring some discomfort.
BENEFITS:	Learning about how you continue to live amidst difficulty will support efforts for other women in King County and beyond to live with more resiliency as well.

INCENTIVES: You will receive no gifts/incentives for this study. Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name, residence, workplace, and or place of worship will never be used in any public dissemination of these data (publications, presentations, etc.). The research will include the race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age range, education level, social-economic status, and religion of the participants. Each participant and file will be assigned a non-identifiable code word that corresponds with a code key list. All research materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in a secure room. Electronic data will be in secure cloud storage. Human subjects research regulations require that data be kept for a minimum of three (3) years. When the research study ends, any identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential. However, if we learn you intend to harm yourself or others, we must notify the authorities.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request to the investigator Kristen Moss, 206.296.5330, mossk@seattleu.edu. The summary will be available by November 2019.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any concerns about my participation in this study, I may call Kristen Moss, who is asking me to participate, at 206.296.5330. If I have any concerns that my rights are being violated, I may contact Dr. Michelle DuBois, Chair of the Seattle University Institutional Review Board at (206) 296-2585.

APPENDIX C

Participant Demographic Questionnaire

Date

_____

Religion

_____

Religious Denomination

_____

Field of Work (please circle)

healthcare legal system social justice ministry arts environment education
human services community development advocacy administration
government and politics management financing and accounting
other_____

Age (please circle)

20s 30s 40s 50s 60s 70s 80s 90s

Schooling Last Completed (please circle)

elementary school middle school high school training certificate trade AA BA
BS MA MS Post-MA Post-MS Doctorate Ph.D.
other_____

Gender (please circle)

female male transgender intersexed non-binary
other_____

Sexual Orientation (please circle)

lesbian gay queer bisexual heterosexual
other_____

Pronouns (please circle)

She/her/hers they/them/theirs he/him/his
other_____

National Origin

_____

Race

_____

Ethnicity

_____

Social Culture (please circle)

middle high low

What describes your past and also current experience best? (Please circle the responses that fit best.)
migrant asylum seeker asylee refugee immigrant citizen

Thank you!

APPENDIX D

Partial Interview Responses

Table D1

Question 1, part 1: What has been the best part of being a woman with your particular religious culture, ethnicity, national origin, race, sexual orientation and social culture here in King County?

Response	Faith(s)	Participants	% of total
Living and leading from a strong feminine identity	M, J, C, CJ	8	72
Diversity, equity and inclusion	M, J, C	4	36
Supportive community	M, J, C	3	27
Privilege	J	1	9

Note. M = Muslim; J = Jewish; C = Christian

Table D2

Question 1, part 2: What has been the hardest part of being a woman with your particular religious culture, ethnicity, national origin, race, sexual orientation and social culture here in King County?

Response	Faith(s)	Participants	% of total
Discrimination	M, J, C, CJ	11	100
Gender, patriarchy	M, J, C, CJ	5	45
Religion	M, J	4	36
Sexual orientation	M, J	2	18
Immigration status	C	1	9
Trauma and loss	M, J, C	3	25
Secularism and separation from religious community	M, J	3	25

Note. M = Muslim; J = Jewish; C = Christian

Table D3

Question 2, part 1: What do you tell yourself when there is hardship? How do you feel?

Response	Faith(s)	Participants	% of total
Be compassionate with self and other	M, J, C, CJ	9	82
Pray for each other and trust	M, J, C, CJ	9	82

Response	Faith(s)	Participants	% of total
Reflect with intelligence and humility	M, J, C, CJ	9	82
Feelings of worry, anxiety, fear, vulnerability, uncertainty	M, J, C, CJ	8	73
Higher purpose rooted in hardship	M, J, C, CJ	8	73
Community matters	M, J, C	8	73
Advocate for social justice, and participate in activism	M, J, C, CJ	8	73
Expect and accept hardship	M, J, C, CJ	7	64
Use encouraging self-talk	M, J, C, CJ	7	64
Be responsible	M, J, C	7	64
Communicate respectfully and Effectively	M, J, C, CJ	5	45
Feelings of depression, unhappiness, sorrow, pain	M, C, CJ	4	36
Forgive	M, J, C, CJ	4	27
Be brave	J, C, CJ	3	18
Be grateful	M, J	2	18
Use humor	J, C	2	9
Feelings of anger	CJ	1	9
Use creative expression	C	1	9

Note. M = Muslim; J = Jewish; C = Christian

Table D4

Question 2, part 2: What do you tell yourself when there is joy? How do you feel?

Response	Faith(s)	Participants	% of total
Divine connection	M, J, C, CJ	8	73
I am with my community	M, J, C, CJ	7	64
Feelings of joy	M, J, C	6	55
Feelings of happiness	M, J, C	4	36

Serve and support others, servant leadership	M, J, C	4	36
Positivity is supportive	M, J, C	4	36
Thank you	M, J, C	4	36
Feelings of love	M, J, C	3	27
I am living courageously and congruently	J	2	18
Feelings of belonging	J	1	9
There is beauty	M	1	9
I am safe	J	1	9

Note. M = Muslim; J = Jewish; C = Christian

Table D5

Question 3: What is your image of God? What sort of qualities does God have or not have?

Response	Faith(s)	Participants	% of total
God is love	M, J, C, CJ	5	45
God is creative life force, creator	M, J, C	4	36
God is everywhere, omnipresent	M, C	4	36
God is father and mother	C, CJ	3	27
God is compassion, the most compassionate	M, J, C	3	27
God is forgiveness	M, C	3	27
God is mercy, the most merciful	M	3	27
Same God for all religions, one God	J, M	2	18
God is kindness	J, C	2	18
God doesn't judge	J	2	18
God will be seen on the day of judgment	M	2	18
God is peace	J, C	2	18
God is all-knowing:	J, M	2	18

Response	Faith(s)	Participants	% of total
God has 99 names called *Al-Asma Al-Husna*	M	2	18
God is not a figure we imagine	M	2	18
God is all-powerful	J, CJ	2	18
God is good	J, M	2	18
God is in nature	M	2	18
God is mother, God is in each of us, God is grand light and beauty	M	1	9
God is approachable and listens, God is a higher power, God is comfort, God is trustworthy, God does not punish or bring harm or hardship	M	1	9
God is protector, God plans everything in life	M	1	9
God is the most beneficial, God is the most merciful	M	1	9
God takes care of everyone after they pass, God is responsible for Heaven	J	1	9
God is healing, God is laughter	J	1	9
God is the universe	J	1	9
God is a still, small voice, God is the intersection of all qualities, God is strength, God is truth	CJ	1	9
God is an energy	C	1	9
God is joy, God is organized, God is the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control	C	1	9

Note: M = Muslim; J = Jewish; C = Christian

Table D6

Question 4: What does your relationship with God and faith tradition say about how to respond when someone else seems to hurt you either on purpose or accident?

Response	Faith(s)	Participants	% of total
Be loving and compassionate	M, J, C, CJ	7	64
Forgive	M, J, C	6	55
Remember our humanness	M, J, C, CJ	4	36
Leave judgment to God	M, C	4	36
Contribute to healing	M, J, C	4	36
Dialogue and educate	M, J, CJ	3	27
Be patient	M	2	18
Invite into relationship	M, J	2	18

Note. M = Muslim; J = Jewish; C = Christian

Table D7

Question 5: You were invited to bring something that you can hear, see, touch, taste, smell, or feel that means you and life will be okay when times are painful or hard. Or in other words, an item that helps you keep living and loving during difficulty. Please tell me about it.

Response	Faith(s)	Participants	% of total
Holy text	M, C, CJ	6	55
Music	J, C	3	27
Nature	M, J, C	3	27
Jewelry and emblem	J, C	2	18
Children, movement, chocolate	M	1	9
Pillow	J	1	9

Note. M = Muslim; J = Jewish; C = Christian

APPENDIX E

Interview Responses with Research Comparisons

Table E1

Hardest part of living in King County: Summary of responses with research comparisons

Responses	%	Faith(s)	Research comparisons
Discrimination	100		
Religion	36	M, J	Ali, Mahmood, Moel, Hudson, & Leathers, 2008: In the study of religion and feminism with 14 Midwestern Muslim and Protestant women ages 25-43, the Muslim participants referenced the September 11, 2001 attacks. One Muslim participant stated, "…it was not safe to openly practice her religion." The Christian participants did not refer to religious discrimination. Carter, 2010: Research of ethnically diverse six Muslim-American couples living with strength following atrocities on September 11, 2001 noted, "…there was a surfacing of, rather than increase in, 'paranoia,' 'fear,' 'hatred,' and 'suspicion' toward Muslims."
Secularism and separation from community	25	M, J	Shilo, Savaya, & Yossef, 2016: Through research with 113 Israeli gay and bisexual Jewish males with "high religiosity," "…negative religious coping" was associated with "an insecure connection with God."
Sexual orientation	18	M, J	Shilo, Savaya, & Yossef, 2016: Through research with 113 Israeli gay and bisexual Jewish males with "high religiosity" and "…dealing with stress arising from the conflict between religious and sexual identities," only when there was connection with LGBT community and friends' acceptance of sexual orientation did "positive religious coping," a "safe connection with God," support mental health.

Note. M = Muslim; J = Jewish; C = Christian

Table E2

Feelings and thoughts during hard times: Summary of responses with research comparisons

Responses	%	Faith(s)	Research comparisons
Be compassionate with self and others	82	M, J, C, CJ	Van der Kolk, 2019: Resilience includes love, care, and commitment to others and self. Werner & Smith, 2001: Compassion, caring, was a strong quality among 41.2% of the 40-year-old multifaith resilient individuals. Wolin, Muller, Taylor, & Wolin, 1999: From a Christian perspective, Jesus is a model of resilience, and that resilience is expressed in offering love to others.
Pray for each other and trust	82	M, J, C, CJ	Bhui, Dein, King, & O'Connor, 2008: Among 116 ethnically and religiously diverse women and men ages 25-50, religious supports including prayer supported coping during mental health difficulties especially for Muslims. Brown, 2010: Connecting to others and a greater power in belonging and love was a source of resilience during difficulty. Manning, 2014: For women 80 and older, five Christian and one Unitarian Universalist, one African American and five white, spiritual resilience was nurtured through "divine support." Shilo, Savaya, & Yossef, 2016: Through research with 113 Israeli gay and bisexual Jewish males with "high religiosity," "…positive religious coping" was defined as a "…safe connection with God." Werner & Smith, 2001: Prayer and faith were a source of support and resilience during difficulties among nearly half of the 40-year-old multifaith women.
Reflect with intelligence and humility	82	M, J, C, CJ	Brown, 2010: Resilient leaders stayed curious about how they thought/felt/acted and the impact of these dynamics within relationships. Van der Kolk, 2019: Perspective of bigger and collective picture is part of resilience.

Responses	%	Faith(s)	Research comparisons
			Werner & Smith, 2001: Planning and problem solving skills were strong qualities in 40-year-old resilient multifaith individuals.
Higher purpose rooted in hardship	73	M, J, C, CJ	Manning, 2014: For women 80 and older, five Christian and one Unitarian Universalist, one African American and five white, spiritual resilience was nurtured through "purpose." Van der Kolk, 2019: Resilient individuals have the "knowledge that there are things that are larger than our individual survival. And in some ways, I don't think you can appreciate the glory of life unless you also know the dark side of life." Wolin, Muller, Taylor, & Wolin, 1999: From a Jewish perspective, difficulties form a person.
Community matters	73	M, J, C	Brown, 2010: Among leaders, connection with others and something greater than oneself, characterized by love and belonging, contributed to resilience. Carter, 2010: For six ethnically diverse Muslim American couples, support from community supported family and living life for God. Masten, 2007, Wave 2: Within diverse populations, attachments in relationships potentially assisted with stress regulation. Masten 2007, Wave 4: Resilience was influenced by "gene-environment" interactions and "co-regulation" within relationships. Shilo, Savaya, & Yossef, 2016: Through research with 113 Israeli gay and bisexual Jewish males with "high religiosity," the pairing of a secure connection with God and community/friends supported coping and mental health. Van der Kolk, 2014: Trauma work highlighted the role that secure bonds play in resilience.

Responses	%	Faith(s)	Research comparisons
			Werner & Smith, 2001: Getting along with others was a strong aspect of 40-year- old resilient individuals; half of women viewed their partner as the most important support and contributor to resilience.
Advocate for social justice and participate in activism	73	M, J, C, CJ	Wolin, Muller, Taylor, & Wolin, 1999: From a Jewish perspective, there is a moral obligation to be resilient which is expressed in action.

Note. M = Muslim; J = Jewish; C = Christian

Table E3

Best part of living in King County: Summary of responses with research comparisons

Responses	%	Faith(s)	Research comparisons
Living/leading from strong feminine identity	72	M, J, C, CJ	Carter, 2010: Being Muslim and practicing Islam among six ethnically diverse Muslim-American couples was connected with "primary identity, core self and life source." Masten, 2001: Resilience comes from "everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities." Van der Kolk, 2014: Competence can aid in protection from trauma. Van der Kolk, 2019: Definition of resilience includes, "…the power of commitment to oneself." Werner & Smith, 2001: 61.80% women, diverse in faith, viewed their own determination and competence as the most effective form of dealing with stressful events and being resilient. Werner & Smith, 2001: There are "self-righting tendencies in human nature" contributing to an ability to adapt following adversity.

Responses	%	Faith(s)	Research comparisons
			Wolin, Muller, Taylor, & Wolin, 1999: Jewish perspective that "We are all holy and that all of us are capable of achieving freedom."

Note. M = Muslim; J = Jewish; C = Christian

Table E4

Feelings and thoughts during joyful times: Summary of responses with research comparisons

Responses	%	Faith(s)	Research comparisons
Divine connection	73	M, J, C, CJ	Ali, Mahmood, Moel, Hudson, & Leathers, 2008: Religion was supportive during daily life for the 14 Muslim and Protestant women, ages 25-43, living in the Midwest. Brown, 2010: Spirituality in the form of connection with others and something greater than oneself, characterized by love and belonging, was a key aspect of resilience. Carter, 2010: "Life source" was associated with being Muslim and practicing Islam amongst six ethnically diverse Muslim-American couples, and was supported by community. Manning, 2014: Among women 80 and older, five Christian and one Unitarian Universalist, one African American and five white, support from the Divine contributed to resilience. Shilo, Savaya, & Yossef, 2016: Among 113 Israeli Jewish gay and bisexual men with "high religiosity," the pairing of a secure connection with God and community/friends supported coping and mental health. Wolin, Muller, Taylor, & Wolin, 1999: Buddhist perspective of resilience supported by light within.
I am with my community	55	M, J, C, CJ	Carter, 2010: Within diverse Muslim couples, support from community supported family and living life for God.

Responses	%	Faith(s)	Research comparisons
			Masten, 2007, Wave 1: For diverse populations, attachments within relationships impacted ability to regulate stress and be resilient. Masten, 2007, Wave 4: Interactions with environment and genes and co-regulation among relationships supported resilience. Shilo, Savaya, & Yossef, 2016: Among 113 Israeli Jewish gay and bisexual men with "high religiosity," the pairing of a secure connection with God and community/friends supported coping and mental health. Van der Kolk, 2014: Trauma work highlighted the role that secure bonds play in resilience. Werner & Smith, 2001: Getting along with others was a strong aspect of 40-year-old resilient multifaith individuals; half of the multifaith women viewed their partner as the most important support and contributor to resilience.
Serve & support others, servant leadership	36	M, J, C	Manning, 2014: Among women 80 and older, five Christian and one Unitarian Universalist, one African American and five white, having purpose contributed to resilience. Van der Kolk, 2019: Resilient individuals consider needs of collective and bigger picture.
Positivity is supportive	36	M, J, C	Werner & Smith, 2001: Optimism was a strong characteristic in 40-year-old resilient multifaith individuals.

Note. M = Muslim; J = Jewish; C = Christian

Table E5

God's qualities and response to harm based on faith: Summary of responses with research comparisons

Responses	%	Faith(s)	Research comparisons
Be loving and compassionate	64	M, J, C	Van der Kolk, 2019: Resilience includes love, care, and commitment to others and self. Werner & Smith, 2001: Compassion, caring, represented a strong quality among 40-year-old multifaith resilient individuals. Wolin, Muller, Taylor, & Wolin, 1999: Christian perspective sees Jesus as model of resilience, and resilience expressed in offering love to others.
Contribute to healing	64	M, J, CJ	Van der Kolk, 2019: Resilient individuals consider needs of collective and a bigger picture.
Remember our humanness	36	M, J, C, CJ	Brown, 2010: Resilient leaders stayed curious about how they thought/felt/acted and impact of these dynamics within relationships; and they leaned into vulnerability and discomfort.

Note. M = Muslim; J = Jewish; C = Christian