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Monotheist but not Monolithic: Middle Eastern Muslim Identity and Intersectionality in Middle Eastern Picture Books

Mehmet Gultekin

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, MONOTEHIST BUT NOT MONOLITHIC: MIDDLE EASTERN MUSLIM IDENTITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY IN MIDDLE EASTERN PICTURE BOOKS, by MEHMET GULTEKIN, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education &Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

_____
Laura May, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

_____
Teri Holbrook, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Rhina F. Williams. Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Gholnecsar Muhammad, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Date

_____
Lynn Hart, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Department of Early Childhood
and Elementary Education

_____
Paul A. Alberto, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education &
Human Development

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

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MEHMET GULTEKIN

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Mehmet Gultekin
Early Childhood and Elementary Education
College of Education and Human Development
Georgia State University

The director of this dissertation is:

Laura May
Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education
College of Education and Human Development
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30303

CURRICULUM VITAE

Mehmet Gultekin

EDUCATION:

Ph.D.	2019	Georgia State University Early Childhood and Elementary Education
Masters Degree	2013	University of Georgia Early Childhood Education
Bachelors Degree	2010	Ataturk University Early Childhood Education

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2014-2019		Research Assistant Georgia State University
2010-2012	Teacher Elementary School	
2008-2010		Teacher Kindergarten

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS:

May, L., Crisp, T., & **Gultekin, M.** (revised & resubmitted), The intersections of science and religion in award-winning children's biographies, *Children's' Literature in Education.*

Gultekin, M. (2016). Book Review: Faith ed.: Teaching about religion in an age of intolerance, by Linda K. Wertheimer. Boston: Beacon Press, 2015. *Religious Education* (January 13, 2017). Available at http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00344087.2016.1224006

Gultekin, M. (December 2017). From crazy women to nasty women: Gender construction and unequal women in interactive read-aloud discussions. In ARF paper session. (Reactor: Nora A. Vines). *American Reading Forum,* Sanibel Island, FL.

Crawley, A., **Gultekin M.** (December 2017). Expanding the analysis of Naidoo's *Rainbow Family* and *World* Collections: An exploration of international LGBTQ-inclusive

children's literature – where, when, and trends? In LRA symposium Challenging Representation of Gender and Sexual Orientation in Literature for Children and Young Adults (Discussant: Caroline T. Clark). *Literacy Research Association,* Tampa, FL.

Gultekin, M., & May. L. (December 2015). The role of religion in NSTA's outstanding children's biography books. Paper presentation at *American Reading Forum,* Sanibel, FL.

May, L., Bingham, G., Crisp, T., Barria, R., **Gultekin, M.,** Pickens, M., & Turnbull, S. (December 2016). The hybrid nature of science trade books: A sensible approach to a false dichotomy of informational texts. In LRA symposium Rethinking Reader Response: Hybridity, Transmediation, and Multimodality (Discussant: Jon Michael Wargo). *Literacy Research Association*, Nashville, TN.

May, L., Crisp, T., Lankford, M., Lundy, T., & **Gultekin, M**. (November 2016), Reading aloud NSTA outstanding trade books. Symposium Presentation at *National Council of Teacher of English*, Atlanta, GA.

May, L., Bingham, G., & **Gultekin, M.** (July 2015). Making science relevant: Culturally and linguistically relevant read-alouds of informational texts. In NCTE-ECEA Symposium Distrusting the Commonplace: Critical Literacy in Early Childhood (Chair: Sally Brown). *Literacies for All Summer Institute*, Decatur, GA.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

2015	Literacy Research Association (LRA)
2016	National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME)
2014	National Council of Teacher of English (NCTE)

MONOTHEIST BUT NOT MONOLITHIC: MIDDLE EASTERN MUSLIM IDENTITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY IN MIDDLE EASTERN PICTURE BOOKS

by

MEHMET GULTEKIN

Under the Direction of Laura May

ABSTRACT

A long history of misrepresentation of Middle Eastern Muslims exists in the West. Middle Eastern Muslim students face discrimination in school settings. Compounding this issue is the fact that little children's literature is available with Middle Eastern Muslims as characters. As a result, Middle Eastern Muslim children are seldom able to see themselves and their communities reflected in classroom materials. Also, children from other religious communities are not provided with authentic representations of Middle Eastern Muslims. In this study, I use critical content analysis and intersectional theory to examine the 36 picturebooks honored with the Middle East Outreach Council-Middle Eastern Book Award (MEOC-MEBAW). Findings suggest that the books tend to represent Middle Eastern Muslims using a small number of single stories, thus falling short of reflecting the great diversity in the Middle East. Three intersectional

identities were prevalent across the data set: traveling men from long time, courageous and sacrificing women accomplishing change, and the refugee or immigrant. This study fills a small portion of the dearth of research of Muslim children's book characters in children's literature published in the West and indicates the need for more attention to the publishing and classroom use of more diverse children's literature about Middle Eastern Muslims.

INDEX WORDS: Islam, Middle Eastern Muslim Identity, Intersectionality, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Picturebook, Book Awards.

MONOTHEIST BUT NOT MONOLITHIC: MIDDLE EASTERN MUSLIM IDENTITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY IN MIDDLE EASTERN PICTURE BOOKS

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family: grandfather (Bekir Sitki, Rest in Peace), grandmother (Emine), father (Servet), mother (Zahide), three brothers (Mustafa, Bekir, Ahmet), and all Middle Eastern communities who need to be heard.

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aided my development as a scholar, critical thinker, and teacher educator. Their time, support and feedback meant a lot to me. Further, I would like to thank all the faculty members from the Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education at Georgia State University for believing in my abilities and welcoming me with open arms. I have learned so much from my time in the department. Lastly, I would like to thank the staff members in the department (Kendall Jones, Maria Armour, La'Twan Roddy, Tsian Wright, and Dedra Davison) for working hard to make me feel at home.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Islam has a long history of marginalization in the United States. Discrimination and biases against Muslims and Islam are heightened by current discourses including U.S. political rhetoric, discriminatory policies, and a recently implemented travel ban to six mostly Muslim countries (Thrush, 2017). This travel ban restricts Muslims from entering the U.S. including those with a valid visa. In addition, hate speech, negative depictions, and derogatory acts aimed at Muslims appear regularly across media outlets (Yan, Sgueglia, & Walker, 2016). Negative images of Muslims and Islam are often based on incomplete and/or inaccurate information and contribute to the ongoing misrepresentations about Islam and Muslims. The pervasiveness of these biases and stereotypes are particularly concerning when considered alongside the acknowledgement that Muslim children living in the U.S. are growing up in their midst as they develop understandings of what it means to be Muslim. In this study, I will examine representations of Islam and Muslims provided through one outlet, children's literature. Drawing on critical paradigms of intersectionality, I will investigate how Islam and Muslims are represented in 36, award-winning picture books published in the U.S. about the Middle East.

Introduction to Islam

"All mankind is from Adam and Eve; an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also, a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action."

—Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing upon him), Last Sermon, Delivered 632 A.C.

"And act justly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly."

—Al-Hujurat 49:9

"O you who believe! Be upholders and standard-bearers of justice, bearing witness to the truth for God's sake, even though it be against your own selves, or parents or kindred. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, (bear in mind that) God is nearer to them (than you are and more concerned with their well-being). So do not (in expectation of some gain from the rich or out of misplaced compassion for the poor) follow your own desires lest you swerve from justice. If you distort (the truth) or decline (to bear truthful witness), then know that God is fully aware of all that you do."

—An-Nisa 35: 4

Islam is a religion of justice and equity as indicated by the verses and hadith translated above. As highlighted, regardless of race, ethnicity, or social class, all are to be treated fairly. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings upon him) modeled this by honoring Bilal al-Habashi, the first enslaved Black sahabi, or person who met Muhammad (pbuh) in person. After his master, Ümeyye bin Halef, learned that Bilal al-Habashi had converted to Islam, he tortured him. Abū Bakr, the father-in-law of Muhammad (pbuh), witnessed it and freed Bilal al-Habashi. Then, Abū Bakr informed Muhammad (pbuh), and the Angel Gabriel heralded that Abū Bakr was to be rewarded with Heaven for his equity-oriented act.

After Muhammad's (pbuh) pilgrimage from Mecca to Medina, Muslims built the Al-Masjid an-Nabawī, a mosque still considered important today. Muslims were searching for a unique way to invite people to pray in mosques but were unsuccessful because other religions already used methods such as having a fire or ringing a bell. Finally, a sahabi suggested using a human voice to reflect Islam's human nature; it was approved. Due to his beautiful voice, Bilal al-Habashi was chosen to announce the first *adhan* (call for prayer) in world history. To do so,

he climbed to a higher place, most likely on rocks (now there are special minarets for this) and said the following words with a lyric:

God is most Great! God is most Great!

God is most Great! God is most Great!

I bear witness that there is no God but Allah.

I bear witness that there is no God but Allah.

I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

Come to prayer. Come to prayer.

Come to success. Come to success.

God is most Great! God is most Great!

There is no God but Allah

Despite resistance to his prominence and as can be seen in the quote from Muhammad's (pbuh) final sermon that begins this section, Bilal al-Habashi has had one of the most recognizable roles in Islam through his commitment and submission to God regardless of his race, socioeconomic status, or enslavement. This call is conducted in Arabic across the world in Muslim communities. I heard it from my house in Turkey five times each day from birth until I left.

Below, I provide Islamic words and definitions used in this dissertation. Also note that when Muslims reference Prophet Muhammed (Peace Be Upon Him), they use Sallallaahu Alaihi Wasallam (SAW) meaning Peace Be Upon Him. I used Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH) to show the respect given to him, a practice followed by many Muslims around the world.

Table 1. Islamic Words and Definitions

Arabic Word	English Definition
Adhan	Call for prayer through human voice.
Al-Hujurat	The Chambers (49th chapter in *Quran*)
Allah	God
An-Nisa	The Women (35th chapter in *Quran*)
Caliphate	Chief Muslims ruler after Muhammad's dead (pbuh).
Dar al ahd	Abode of accord
Dar al harb	Abode of war
Da'wah	Invitation
Eid al-Fitr	Celebration after one month fasting in Ramadan
Eid el-Adha	Feast of the Sacrifice
Farz	Obligation, duty
Hadith	A collection of traditions containing sayings and narrative of the prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings upon him).
Hajj	Pilgrimage to Mecca
Imam	A Muslim leader managing prayers
Islam	Peace; submission to God
Jihad	A self-striving
Kuffar	Infidel
Masjid	Mosque; building designated for worship for Muslims
Muezzin	A man call Muslims for prayers.

Muslim	One who submits their will to God
Qur'an	Holy book of Islam
Salat	Daily prayers (Five times a day)
Sawm	Fasting
Sahabi	People who met Muhammad (pbuh), believed in Islam, and died as Muslims.
Shada	Declaration of Islam
Wudu	A special way of washing some parts of body before praying
Zakāt	an obligatory form of charity

From a Muslim perspective, Islam is the last religion and will remain the last religion. To be Muslim means to believe in one God (*Allah*), to be guided by Muhammad (pbuh), and to submit to God in daily rituals (Hussain & Ashraf, 1979; Prothero, 2010). In addition, Islam is a *da'wah* (invitation) to create a just world as stated in the *Quran* and *hadith*; it is a *jihad* (striving) to struggle with self and communal problems; it is a warning to self and society; and it is a reminder that we are not immortal in this world and that we should get rid of our sin.

As part of this submissive way of living, millions of Muslims follow the recommended rituals. The five pillars are *farz* (obligation) and include *shahada* (declaration of faith), *salat* (five daily prayers), *zakāt* (charity), *sawm* (fasting), and *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). To become a Muslim (for *shahada*), one should declare the existence of God and Muhammad (pbuh) by claiming the sentence: "There is no god but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God." In Muslim countries, *imams* and *muezzins* call for daily prayer five times a day for *salat*. In Turkey, whether living in a metropolitan or suburban area, everyone can hear this call from their home.

These calls remind the community of the daily prayer and are inherited from Bilal al-Habashi. People have the opportunity to go to the mosque for daily prayers, but they may also pray at home on a special prayer rug. Further, before praying, everyone should ensure they are clean and do *wudu* (washing some parts of the body before daily prayer). The third pillar, *zakat*, dictates that people should donate a certain amount of their wealth based on their income to people who struggle due to financial problems. The fourth, *sawm*, requires all adolescents and adults to fast from sunrise to sunset during *Ramadan* (the holy month). Lastly, *hajj*, is pilgrimage to the holy land. Due to the cost, it is stated that people who are going to Mecca for *hajj* should not have any debt and have at least a middle-class income (Soloway, 2013).

The first historical division within Islam came after the death of Muhammad (pbuh) and resulted in two groups, Sunni and Shia. Shias supported Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law and uncle's son, and his descendants as leaders of the Muslim world since they were the first generational relatives of Muhammad (pbuh), while Sunnis believed Abū Bakr, father-in-law of Muhammad (pbuh), to be the leader of the Muslim world. In the conflict between the two groups, Ali and his sons were killed, and the *caliphate* (the chief Muslim) passed to Abū Bakr. Amongst the Middle Eastern countries, Persia (now Iran) accepted and followed Shia school of thought, while most other Arab countries followed the Sunni. Though some small ritualistic differences exist, the core ideas of Islam are kept in both doctrines.

Muslims celebrate two major festivals. One is *Eid al-Fitr* (Ramadan) in which, after fasting for a month, people celebrate by visiting older people, neighbors, and relatives; sweets, candies, and cakes are generally served. The second major festival is *Eid el-Adha* (Feast of the Sacrifice) and celebrates Abraham who promised to sacrifice his son, Ishmael, to God (in the Christian *Bible*, the son is Isaac). Instead, the Angel Gabriel brought a ram, and Abraham

sacrificed it. To honor this act, all Muslims with a certain income should sacrifice a mammal such as a sheep, a cow, or a camel to God. Following the sacrifice, 1/3 of the meat is donated to the poor, 1/3 of the meat is offered to the people who visit the house (e.g., relatives, neighbors), and 1/3 is for the themselves. Coming from a Muslim community, I remember these festivals as celebrations in which everyone in the neighborhood participated. However, when I moved to the U.S., I could not celebrate these festivals in the same way as Islam is a minority religion in the U.S., and I did not live near a Muslim community.

Changes in how I celebrate festivals might be expected as a result of moving to a different part of the world. Many of the difficulties I have faced due to being Muslim, however, are much more concerning. For example, in 2013 I was pulled from the airport security line and required to wait for 6 hours in the security room with no reason given. I decided that because I am from a city close to Syria, I was suspicious to the security guard. Though I was a Ph.D. student and had a valid visa and passport, I could not avoid 6 hours in that isolated security room. For the first 2 hours, I sat with a new U.S. citizen from Iran, married to an American. After he left, in the room by myself, I thought about how many Americans conceptualize Islam as something to be scared of and Muslims as in need of isolating. This viewpoint is at odds with my understanding of Islam and leads me to acknowledge the privilege, defined by McIntosh (1998) to pinpoint White privilege and supremacy as "unearned advantage" (p. 192). Paralleling McIntosh's conceptualization of White Privilege, Killermann (2012) created a list of 30+ examples of Christian privilege, the majority religion in the U.S. After he invited more people to comment, his list expanded to 33 examples. This list includes religious holidays, Christian churches in all neighborhoods, being surrounded with Christians in all social environments, and hearing Christian politicians' comments and viewpoints. Yet many Muslims have difficulty

finding a place to pray. Each time I read or hear of a mass-shooting in the U.S., like other Muslims living here, I think, "I hope the murderer is not Muslim." Fear of discrimination for being Muslim is always present but increases after well-publicized attacks.

Muslims in the U.S.: A Historical Overview

The first Muslims came to the U.S. through African enslavement (Curtis, 2009). The dehumanizing oppression experienced prevented the enslaved Africans from practicing their religion (Nyang, 1999). Already suffering from their enslavement, being Muslim caused them to be further tortured by their Christian oppressors (Smith, 2010). Efforts to compel Muslims to abandon their religious faith included torture and execution. As supported by Kly (1989) "Enslaved African American Muslims] were tortured, burnt alive, hung or shot unless they renounced their religion and their names and accepted to be called by the name of the one who claimed to own them" (p.153). Maintaining their religious rituals was seldom an option. In some cases, they chose people amongst them to guide prayers in secret but only did so three (rather than five) times daily due to well-justified fear (Kly, 1989). Keeping in mind that almost no Muslims scholars or imams were available to fight back against the Christian supremacy, it was a huge challenge for enslaved Africans to keep their Muslim identities. Over time, the newly developed Afro-American Christianity became more appealing (Leonard, 2003). For survival some enslaved Muslim African Americans converted to Christianity. Existing evidence does not indicate that African American Muslims were able to continue to practice their religion freely and openly due to slavery (Nyang, 1999).

During the 1960s, a large number of Muslims came from the Middle East particularly from oil-producing countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia) when U.S. immigration policies changed in ways that allowed Middle Eastern students to enroll in U.S. colleges and universities (Bilici,

2011). Most of the early Middle Eastern Muslim immigrants saw the United States as a *kuffar* (infidel) country; many who immigrated as students left the country after receiving their university degree to prevent assimilation and to keep their religion (Bilici, 2011). After the 1960s some Muslim immigrants came to believe that they could keep their religion in the U.S. and came to see the U.S. not as a *dar al harb*, a non-Muslim country that fights and does not accept Muslims, but as a *dar al ahd*, a place which does not have anger and hatred against Muslims (Bilici, 2011). In addition, the political environment in the Middle East changed resulting in shifts in the regimes of many countries. The volatility that resulted from these shifts caused many Muslims to come to see the U.S. as safer than their home country.

As indicated in this brief overview, Muslims are not a single, unitary group of people. The religion is practiced all over the world and includes people who were born into U.S. Muslim communities, people who have converted from another religion to Islam, immigrants from other countries who have lived in the U.S. for a long period of time, and recent immigrants. Because of this diversity, no clear consensus on the exact number of Muslims now living in the U.S. exists. Various ways of counting populations are available based on the diverse ethnic, racial, national, and immigrant groups. For example, the Pew Research Center reports 3.3. million Muslim Americans in their 2015 survey but this number excludes many Muslim immigrants living in the U.S. who are not citizens, particularly students living in the U.S. through the student visa program. As a result, estimates range from two to 12 million (Bilici, 2010; Johnston, 2016). Despite this wide range of reported populations, these numbers highlight the presence of Muslims in the U.S. and show Muslim Americans as "the fastest growing segment of the population in Western countries due to immigration, higher birth rates, and conversion" (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009, p. 638). Contrary to common assumptions, most Muslims worldwide

are not from the Middle East, with only 19.8% of the Muslim population from Middle Eastern heritage. The highest percentage of Muslims in the world are from the Asia-Pacific region (61.7%) followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (15.5%). Further, 2.7% Muslims live in Europe (Retrieved from http://guides.library.cornell.edu/IslamAsiaExhibit/MuslimPopulations). The Muslim population in the U.S. parallels these numbers with 24.% of Muslims American (with at least three generations having lived in the U.S.), 58% of from South Asia and Pacific Asia, 25% from the Middle East, and 9% from Sub-Saharan Africa (Retrieved from http://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/demographic-portrait-of-muslim-americans/)

Further, their contribution to the science, medicine, architecture and education is beyond measure. To give a few examples, Al Razi was a chemist, physician and teacher whose works were translated into Greek and Latin in the 9th Centruy, Al-Zahrawi wrote the first illustrated surgical book in the 10th Century, Ibn Sina wrote *Canon of Medicine* in the 11th Century. Many more examples also exist.

My own personal experiences also speak to this issue. After being awarded a scholarship by Ministry of Turkish Education, my family was concerned about sending me abroad as I would be the first one in the family to go so far from home. Thus, it was stressful for them. Yet, my grandfather and grandmother, actively practicing Muslims, supported me more than any other family members. Each time we talk about my education abroad, they referenced a hadith, reminding other family members of the directive to "Go in search of knowledge even into China" (Retrieved from http://www.ismaili.net/histoire/history03/history335.html). Here, China is used to shows distance as it was the farthest known geographical at that time. My family fully supported me throughout my masters and Ph.D. work and kept reminding me that what I am doing is an Islamic ritual.

The Positioning of Muslims in the U.S. and Islamophobia

Communities of Muslim Americans include a diverse range of nationalities, languages, and ethnicities, countering the idea of a unified Muslim identity (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009). Like other religions, Islam has evolved and diversified throughout its history while maintaining a shared belief of core ideas (Nyang, 1999). Yet, as with other religions, different schools of thought have spread from region to region, and new populations have accommodated and adapted Islam from the very beginning of the religion (Rauf, 2016).

Yet, in spite of this diversity, Muslims living in the U.S. are often treated monolithically with all Muslims categorized as "other," as different than Eurocentric mainstream culture (Taras, 2013; Abdo, 2005; Bleich, 2012; Semanti, 2010). Through this othering, Muslims are alienated, rejected, and discriminated by the West in ways that cause them to be viewed from a deficit perspective (Bassiouni, 2015). Muslims are perceived more antagonistically than any other religion and/or belief (Bleich, 2012; Chitwood, 2015). For example, throughout his candidacy and election, former U.S. president Barack Obama was attacked for his perceived Muslim identity with some conservative media groups describing it as the biggest threat for Americans (Belt, 2016).

This othering is often described in terms of Islamophobia. A *phobia* is defined as an illogical fear (Garner & Selod, 2015), and *Islamophobia* means the fear of Islam and also includes a fear of Muslims (Andre & Pratt, 2015). The source of this fear comes from the essentialist approach that Westerners have taken to define Islam as "incompatible with modernity, with civilization, and, more important, with Euro-Americanness" (Semati, 2010, p. 266). The lack of knowledge about Islam has led to stereotypes and exaggerated, overgeneralized prejudices and can be considered the primary reason for fear of Muslims and Islam (Kunsta,

Tajamala, Samb, & Ulleberga, 2012). Because of insufficient and inaccurate information, the easy spread of negative gender portrayals of Muslim males and females, barbaric representations, and discourse that positions Muslims as anti-Western is possible (Marranci, 2004). Garner and Selod (2015) describe particular characteristics used to other Muslims:

> Physical markers, such as religious clothing (women), and a Muslim name (men), result in Muslims being viewed as permanent foreigners and un-American. Headscarves are read unproblematically as outward signs of oppression, a fact which serves to underscore the civilizational border between American-ness and Muslim-ness (p. 16).

This sort of othering makes it very difficult for those Muslims that self-identify as both Muslim and American. One way the West justifies Islamophobia is through the Middle Eastern geographic origin of Islam and the political instability of the region. Indeed, when the Iranian people elected a more religious leader, Islamophobia increased as the United States was threatened by the existence of a new economically powerful Muslim country that changed the political power balance in the Middle East (Gerges, 2003). In addition, the 9/11 attack, planned and executed by hateful people led to an increase in Islamophobia and an accompanying increase in harassment and discrimination against Muslims in the United States (Baiata, 2016). The fear of Islam was performed in various ways, including attacks on mosques, hate speeches, immigration bans, and the bombing of some Muslim countries (Johnston, 2016).

Yet seldom acknowledged are the Western sources of the region's instability. After World War I, geographic areas were divided and borders were defined by British and French colonists in ways that ignored the boundaries of the various groups of people living there (Johnson, 2017; Theros, 2015). When problems resulted from the illogical border drawing, people in the West attributed them to oppression or terrorism (Shakry, 2015). These issues were

further exacerbated when Western countries including the U.S., France, and the United Kingdom supported the establishment of Israel as a Jewish country on the Muslim land of Palestine. In an example of the complex, constantly changing socio-political atmosphere of this region, the Arab Emirates rejected this establishment in the early years, but then later increased its support of more peaceful cooperation. In response to these acts and others, a rise has occurred in Wahhabism, an Islamic doctrine that supports the unified Muslim state and regards the West as an enemy. This rise has inspired many terrorist groups (Panaviotides, 2015; Theros, 2015).

Even though Muslims identify as many different races, Islamophobia is not race-neutral. One way the relationship between race and Islam can be seen is through Americans' identification of Muslims with specific geographic areas:

> The race-ing of Islam does not take place in a vacuum but within the context of a specific historical relationship. In the current racial formation, Islam and Muslims have taken a familiar yet strange meaning often evoked in the language of war, conquest, terror, fear, and the new crusades. The racial figure of the Muslim ranges far and wide primarily to include populations hailing from the Middle East to Africa to South Asia (Rana, 2007, p. 159).

The practice of combining all Muslims into once category has historical roots. Despite the various racial groups amongst Muslims, the term *Arab* took the place of the term *Muslim* in many cases (Spellberg, 2009). According to Love (2009), the ideology of racism targets Muslims through Islamophobia. In fact, Garner and Selod (2015) have argued for the inseparability of racism and Islamophobia. The racialization of Islam points to a false binary of good Muslim/bad Muslim that underestimates the complexity of Muslim identity (Garner & Selod 2015; Meer, 2013). Islamophobia is used/defined by Westerners to support an illogical fear (Maranci, 2004).

The good Muslim/bad Muslim binary restricts people's awareness of the variety of geographic, cultural, economic, and educational backgrounds that characterize Muslims. Because of the diversity of the Muslim community in the U.S., investigations of this community must highlight the vital intersections of race, class, gender, and ethnicity to avoid the good Muslim/bad Muslim binary. In this study, I focus on the representation of Muslims in Middle Eastern Book Award, particularly picturebooks, in ways that consider these multiple, overlapping identities.

These identities are important given children's religious identity development, the ways Muslims experience U.S. schools, and how teachers can respond to marginalized populations through culturally relevant pedagogy. These topics are addressed in the following sections of this chapter.

Religion and Children: A Developmental Overview

Child development theorists have applied their ideas to religious development. Jean Piaget, a child development theorist, broached developmental issues by emphasizing the importance of stages and readiness of children to grasp abstract ideas related to religion (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2010; Mata-Mcmahon, 2016). Piaget proposed four stages which are sensorimotor (birth-2), preoperational (age 2-7), concrete operational (7-11), formal operations (11 and up), and he strictly emphasized that these stages are universal (Inhelder, Chipman, Zwingmann & Piaget, 1976). All children need to pass through each of these stages in order to arrive at the stage of formal operation in which they can fully understand religion (Sutherland, 1992).

Piagetian theorists situated in cognitive development believe that children are not able to grasp the abstract concepts associated with religion, including God, rituals, beliefs, and

spirituality until the formal operational stage which takes place around 11 years old (Takriti & Buchanana-Barrow, 2006; Hansen & Zambo, 2005). Elkind (1961), a follower of Piaget, interviewed 700 children ranging in age from 5-12 to understand their religious development. He found that the sequences of stages Piaget offered are valid and reliable in many areas. However, he also found that children as young as 5 can grasp some ideas associated with religion though their understanding may differ from that of older children. Rather than considering child development in terms of stages, present-day cognitive developmental researchers find the flexible and continuous aspects of neo-Piagetian ideas more acceptable (Day, 2017; Gottlieb, 2006). In other words, the ages attached to Piaget's stages can vary according to children's readiness in that some children can grasp religious ideas in earlier stages (Nyhof, & Johnson, 2010), while some may take longer. Since post[neo]-Piagetian theorists believe that children's thinking and learning process are the same as adults, they maintain that children can create their own hypotheses about religion and examine how they hold true (Gottlieb, 2006).

Additional research points to the cognitive processes associated with religious development. Rather than observing religious development directly, some phenomena related to religion have been examined, such as the development of God as a concept (Ruchert & Barret, 2005; Nyhof & Johnson, 2010). Nevertheless, child development researchers acknowledge that little is known about the religious development of children, and much more research is needed (Boynton, 2011; Ratcliff, 2010). It is noteworthy that scholars mostly collect data from Christian children yet generalize findings to all children's religious development. Despite this limitation, these studies provide valuable knowledge about children and their cognitive development of religion.

Although abstract religious concepts fall under the cognitive domain of development, socio-emotional development also affirms children's understanding of religion as connected to relationships and moral development. Parents and/or caregivers are the primarily influencers of religious understanding (Bartkowski, Xu, & Levin, 2008). Children are born into a community with particular religious practices and understand the religion in terms of family and community relationships. As Ratcliff (2010) stated:

> Yet the religious community is seen as secondary to the crucial importance of the home in developing trust and faith in young children; the religious context reiterates and underscores the basic trust engendered at home (p. 118).

Due to the importance of their family and community on children's religious development, the cognitive development theories should also take the context into account while conceptualizing this development (Callanan, 2006). According to socio-cultural theory no learning occurs outside of the society in which the children live. The conceptual development is influenced by the social environment such that children are always in the process of learning through interacting with their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Society impacts children and their religious development, and through children's relationship with the community, they make sense of themselves in ways that contribute to their religious identity development (Hemming & Madge, 2011). These ideas are connected to the moral development of children that shapes their role and behavior in the community (Gottlieb, 2006).

Mata-Mcmahon's (2016) review of the literature on children's spiritual development provides additional information about existing studies. She examined the scholarly articles published from 2005 to 2015 and concluded that three major themes were studied to understand spirituality of children: "spiritual meaning making and relations to/with God" (p.142) indicating

that “God and the child’s relationship to God, tends to have a strong presence in early childhood” (p. 144); “children’s spirituality in education” (p. 144) summarizing what children’s religious experiences are at school as well as emphasizing religious education; and “identity formation and sense of self”(p. 146) that focuses on the spiritual meaning of being and its impact on shaping children’s worldviews. As far as identity development referenced in the articles Mata-Mcmahon reviewed, she found that spirituality correlates with positive sense of self, children’s spirituality is connected to their happiness, and it helps them learn how to control their emotions.

Muslims in U.S. Public Schools

Most Muslim families send their children to U.S. public schools, though they also have concerns related to the Eurocentric and Christian nature of the curriculum used (Timani, 2006). Broadly, families are concerned about public schools’ inclusion of celebrations of Christian holidays such as Christmas, the Eurocentric perspectives from which they operate, and the failure to meet needs unique to Muslim students. As Soliman (2015) reported, Muslim parents have identified difficulty in navigating U.S. school climates as Muslims. For example, Muslims need to pray five times a day, and two of them generally take place during the school day, one around noon, the other in the afternoon. For these prayers, students need access to a clean carpet and a special room to pray; before praying they need to cleanse themselves (Jilani, 2016). Public school are usually not set up to meet these needs (Niyozov & Pluim, 2015), and teachers are unaware of the needs that exist. In another example, in his study of Muslim students Niyozov (2010) highlighted the loss of instructional time and marginalization that occurred due to required prayers, festivals, and celebrations. Further, the teachers’ lack of understanding about Islam cause individual students to have to constantly educate their teachers and advocate for themselves (Ahmad & Szpara, 2003). Another problem in public schools can be noticed through

physical education (P.E) that requires all students to wear gym clothes that do not align with Muslim dress codes (Jilani, 2016; Soliman, 2016). Conflicts between parent beliefs and school practice related to sex education and *halal* (food prepared by Islamic law) also create problems (Soliman, 2016). Public schools in the West are not organized in ways designed to accommodate Muslim students.

Providing a safe space for Muslims is not an easy task (Moore, 2006). Muslims are often misrepresented and portrayed negatively (Jackson, 2010), leading to mockery, bullying, shaming, and blaming. Muslims are not safe in many public schools (Saleem & Thomas, 2011). They are victimized, ostracized, and teased due to their religion (Hoot, Szecsi, & Moosa, 2003). They face various forms of bullying from the verbal to the physical, including being called suicide bombers and having hijabs pulled (Jilani, 2016). In this manner, another angle of Islamic education involves making non-Muslims aware of Islam in ways that challenge biases and stereotypes; most Muslim students believe that their teachers and peers know little about Islam (Callaway, 2010). When teachers are not aware of their Muslim students' culture, it negatively impacts parent-school-teacher relationships (Sharby & Bruna, 2007). It is crucial to create safe spaces for Muslim students and allow them in culturally relevant ways.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

This study is informed by culturally relevant pedagogy as defined by Ladson-Billings (1995). It is

> a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate. (p. 469)

Besides addressing student achievement, this theoretical framework enhances students' cultural identity and critical thinking, in part through troubling norms and inequalities. Marginalized students' schooling experiences often fail to align with those of students from mainstream cultures as they are less likely to see their cultures and identities reflected in the classroom. Yet, culturally relevant pedagogy provides a way to incorporate these students' cultures and identities in ways that improve academic achievement. Further, culturally relevant pedagogy aims to improve socio-political consciousness. Without socio-political consciousness, children most likely would not be aware of how their identity plays a role in their positioning. Culturally relevant pedagogy suggests a way to help students become more aware of the systematic inequalities they experience such as racism, Islamophobia, and more. It is important to note that, children who are not marginalized should also be aware of these inequalities in order to be socio-politically informed and survive in a multicultural society.

From the critical paradigm of culturally relevant pedagogy, children should also learn to recognize that the truth claims often stated by people representing mainstream points of view, in fact, do not always echo the reality of every student. Different groups, particularly marginalized groups have different truth claims often not represented in schools. Stories related to the Middle East are mostly about wars. This fact is problematic by itself. In addition, the wars in each country have different power dynamics and are more complicated than any given single narrative. More specifically, the war in Syria involves much more than the Syrian government and rebellions. Many other powerful groups are involved (e.g., Kurds, international forces such as Russia, U.S., China, European Union, Yezidi, etc). Given common representations, however, one can easily miss these factors. Culturally relevant pedagogy offers a way for multiple voices

to become visible. This approach is also more likely to cultivate socio-politically informed citizens.

Culturally relevant pedagogy guides teachers to authetically embed students' culture into classroom practices and instruction to more effectively promote learning. It addresses longstanding deficit ideologies that blame students for their lack of success (Banks, 2007; Gay 2013). Its epistemological perspective is that what students already know and have learned are key factors in promoting the acquisition of new knowledge. Banks (2007) argued that the objective knowledge we presume to be true is a product of mainstream culture and often ignores marginalized groups. Mainstream knowledge claims are used to victimize people of color; acknowledging marginalized groups' values and cultures is a way to challenge mainstream knowledge claims. Culturally relevant pedagogy offers an avenue to accepting and maintaining minoritized groups' identity and knowledge.

Culturally relevant pedagogy works from critical race theory and critical sociohistorical consciousness (Brown, Brown, & Ward, 2017). In critical sociohistorical consciousness, students benefit from understanding the complexities and contradictions of race throughout history. Developing their sociopolitical consciousness alongside the more positive self-images that come from more inclusive classrooms can also bolster children's informal schooling experiences (Aviles, Anderson, & Davila 2006). In addition, education that acknowledges everyone's religion can help students socialize as not all children come from same religious background or find religion beneficial (Takriti, Barrett, & Buchanan-Barrow, 2006). In such situations, identity, socio-emotional, and cognitive development are interrelated (King, Abo-Zena, & Weber, 2017).

Like race, class, and ethnicity; religion is a part of one's culture and identity (Moore, 2009). Yet, less attention has been given to it in the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy

and multicultural education (Abdo, 2005; Dallavis, 2011; Erricker, 2006; Kurien, 2006; Tomalin 2007). Culturally relevant pedagogy that acknowledges religion can decrease gaps between home and school cultures (Muhammad, 2015).

The concept of culturally relevant pedagogy that incorporates religion can easily be confused with religious education, but a distinct line exists between the two. Religious education aims to indoctrinate a particular religion (Moore, 2009). On the other hand, culturally relevant pedagogy bolsters positive identity development and academic achievement in ways that value students' home cultures and connects those cultures to learning.

Culturally relevant pedagogy in practice is not easy to achieve as the teacher is simultaneously (a) reflecting on their own cultural competence while cultivating it in their students, (b) taking and teaching students to take an active role against inequality, and (c) expecting academic achievement from all students (Ladson-Billings, 1991, 1995).

Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy theory has been used a great deal to investigate teaching and learning (e.g., Dutro, Kazemi, Balf, & Lin, 2008; Love, 2012). Yet, only a fraction of the research on culturally relevant pedagogy acknowledges religion as a part of students' cultural identities. In one example Norton (2006, 2008, 2016), who considers religion a subcategory of spirituality, positioned students as co-researchers. Her students conducted interviews around spirituality with family members, thus increasing their literacy skills (e.g., writing, reframing questions, verbal communication, and reading) (Norton, 2006). In another example, May's studies (2011a, 2011b) indicate how a teacher used culturally relevant pedagogical practices while facilitating interactive read-alouds of informational texts. This teacher taught reading comprehension strategies in ways that invited, acknowledged, and built on students' outside of school experiences. At times, the experiences shared by students were

religious in nature such as when a student provided detailed information of the Old Testament's Passover and when students shared practices related to *dia de los muertos*, a Mexican American tradition closely interrelated with All Saints' Day. As indicated with these two examples, most of the research literature that does acknowledge religion as a part of culturally relevant pedagogy presents Christianity. But this scarcity of research is even more of an issue when the religion is Islam. Despite the growing number of Muslim students in the U.S., most teachers are unaware of the needs of Muslim students (Callaway, 2010) and the benefits and practical uses of culturally relevant pedagogy (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Harmon, 2012).

In their study of religious identity and culturally relevant pedagogy, Aronson, Amatullah and Laughter (2016) identified three articles that incorporated race, ethnicity, and religious identities in culturally relevant pedagogy. In Nasir's (2004) ethnographic investigation of one student's (named Karim) resistance and unwanted behaviors in schooling experiences, those teachers who valued and embraced Karim's home culture were most able to help Karim adjust to the school environment. Mason (2005) focused on Dalmar, a third-grade Black Muslim immigrant student, and concluded that as a Black Muslim student, Dalmar was already aware of the norms that surrounded him and that if teachers did not value his intersecting identities and home culture, it would only lead to poor academic success for him. Muhammad (2015) has illustrated the practical use of culturally relevant pedagogy that addresses Islam while investigating an African American Muslim girl's writing for social justice in which she referenced verses from Quran and hadith in every day meetings. As Muhammad claims, **"**being Muslim is not just merely a part of one's self or life, but intricately makes up one's cultural way of life" (p. 290).

Yet situating Islam as a way of a student's cultural way of life can be difficult in large part because of the limited number of authentic representations and pervasive misrepresentations of Muslims in materials such as picture books that can be used as curriculum.

Research Questions

This qualitative study focuses on Middle East Outreach Council—Middle Eastern Book Award (MEOC-MEBAW) award-winning picture books from 2000 to 2017 with the primary purpose of understanding how Islam and Muslims are represented in these books. The committee and award are more fully described in chapter 3. The study will address the following questions:

1. What are the overall characteristics of the MEOC-MEBAW picturebooks?
2. How are Islam and Middle Eastern Muslims represented using the words and images in the MEOC-MEBAW picturebooks?

Considering the importance of both words and images, and the variations in Middle Eastern Muslim identities (e.g., nationality, gender, ethnicity, language, etc.), the intersectional analysis of these books matter. Thus, the second question includes the following sub-question.

a. Which intersections of Middle Eastern Muslims and other identities (e.g., class, gender) can be identified?

The next two chapters offer more detail about how I will address these questions. Chapter 2 provides an inclusive review of literature on marginalization in children's literature, religion in children's literature, and Islam in children's literature to persuade the need for an intersectional analysis of Islam to back up the importance of this study. Chapter 3 describes the theoretical framework and methods I will use to investigate the study's research questions. I will represent my findings in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the findings and provide limitations and directions for further research.

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter synthesizes the existing research on children's literature related to this study. I first introduce the study of children's literature and Sims Bishops' (1982) well-known metaphor for children's literature as mirrors and windows. I then discuss awards in children's literature and connect this review to my study by focusing in on marginalization in children's literature. Following, I describe publication trends in children's literature and review research related to religion and children's literature. Lastly, I provided information about studies of Islam and Muslims in children's literature. I conclude the chapter by indicating the need for intersectional analyses of picturebooks with Middle Eastern Muslim characters.

There is a long tradition of studying literature produced for children, following the rise in popularity of children's literature's in the 1920s (Giblins, 1986). Zipes' (2002) definition of children's literature includes books that are (a) written for children, (b) written by children, and (c) include child characters; however, most often the term refers to books published for children. Research on children's literature tends to focus in on one or more of the following: the text, the reader, the context. In this study, I will examine Middle Eastern Book Award picturebooks given by Middle East Outreach Council from text angle.

Galda, Ash, and Cullinan (2000) identify two ways of studying children's literature as text:

> Literary analyses examine individual texts or genres to describe what the authors do, looking, for example, at narrative patterns, character development, symbolism, intertextuality, or the function of setting…Content analysis examine what texts are about, considering the content from a particular perspective such as sociohistorical, gender, culture, or thematic studies (p. 362).

Children's literature has been recognized for its ability to reflect sociopolitical issues (Bottigheimer, 1998; Rudd, 2010; Stevenson, 2011). Content analysis in particular sheds light on these issues. Highlighting how children's literature is not culture free but rather influences and is influenced by socio-political, cultural, and economic issues (Zipes, 2009). Eagleton (1996), a literary theorist, argued that studying literature is beneficial because literature offers more than one point of view, presents an ideology (even if the author is unaware of doing so), and provides experiential opportunities. Thus, books can serve as cultural artifacts useful for learning about the socio-political nature of communities. As I describe in the next two sections, all students do not have the same access to these experiential opportunities.

Children's Literature as Mirrors

According to Bishop (2007, 1990), young readers need to see themselves portrayed in picture books in authentic and accurate ways; in this way, picture books can act as mirrors. Tschida, Ryan, and Ticknor (2014) describe the metaphor thusly:

> The concept of a book acting as a mirror implies that readers see something of themselves in the text. Such a book reflects back to readers portions of their identities, cultures, or experiences. When readers are able to find themselves in a text, they are therefore validated; their experiences are not so unique or strange as to never be spoken or experienced by others (p. 29).

It is important, therefore, for children to see themselves in the literature they read. Unfortunately, children's literature in the United States does not serve as an effective mirror for Muslims (Möller, 2014). Understanding that religion is a social identity (Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010), seeing one's own religion in books can support a positive religious identity development (Campbell & Crowe, 2015).

Not every young reader, however, is able to benefit from this opportunity. Khan (2006), a Muslim children's literature author writing about Islam, has described feeling delighted when, as an adult, she saw a woman wearing hijab in a picturebook, even though the woman was not the main character. Amongst the pervasive negative representations of Muslims and Islam, Khan's experience seeing someone like herself represented in a positive way provided her with an opportunity to consider herself a part of the country where she lived. In fact, what pleased Khan was not only the inclusion of a girl like herself in a picture book, but the authentic and positive representation that was so unlike common portrayals of Muslims as terrorists and suicide bombers, in stark contrast to the peaceful nature of the Islam she knew. Seeing such a character was crucial because, as a religious person living in Canada, she continues to face various forms of marginalization and stereotypes. Personally, I have never seen myself, a Muslim Kurd, represented authentically in a picture book.

While indeed "books can be a mirror, reflecting and validating the familiar culture and experiences" (Cox & Galda, 1990, p. 582), for Muslims and other minority groups, children's literature sometimes errs by focusing on "a single story" (Adichi, 2009), generally those about immigration and refugee life (Möller, 2014). The lack of accurate and full representation can leave Muslim readers feeling that they are not a part of the community in which they live (Bishop, 1990). The quality of the existing books is also questionable (Raina, 2009). While advocating for higher quality Western Islamic children's literature and explaining the historical evolution of this literature, Gilani-Williams (2016) claimed, "[children's literature referencing Islam] allows [Muslims] to see themselves as purposeful, accepted, and needed individuals who can contribute to society" (p. 119). Thus, it is essential for Muslims children to see themselves in

children's literature because in serving as a mirror, such literature helps children develop a positive sense of self as well as a sense of belonging to their society. rather than an othering.

Children's Literature as Windows

Children's literature not only provides the mirror's opportunity for self-reflection; it can also serve as windows (Bishop, 1990) by presenting new perspectives about groups of people unfamiliar to readers. As populations of diverse social groups continue to grow, it becomes even more important that members of the dominant culture learn about these groups (Banks, 2003). Further, to live successfully within this diversity, people need to develop the skills to maintain dialogue necessary for living in a peaceful environment (Dallavis, 2011). Children's literature can aid this dialogue. According to Bishop (1990),

> Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. (p. ix)

When children enter this imaginary world, they can experience the unfamiliar in ways that expand their worldview and offer avenues for learning about groups of people (Bishop, 1990; Cox & Galda, 1990). Though not a replacement for relationship building, children's literature support connections because "the door invites interaction" (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. xiii). In this new world, readers have the opportunity to experience a life unlike their own. As Myers (2013) said, "This is the point of literature, to widen our view beyond ourselves, to take part in that implied and idyllic community of readers" (p. 14). These windows encourage readers to connect with other people (Lapp, Flood, Kibildis, Jones, & Moore, 1995).

As described in chapter one, Islam is often misunderstood by members of other religions. Learning about Muslims is vital for all religious groups, so they might reconsider misconceptions and stereotypes (McQueeney, 2014). If children's literature serves as effective windows, then authentic and accurate depictions of Muslims offer the opportunity for non-Muslim readers to learn about Islam and minimize their biases (Möller, 2014).

Studying Picturebooks

Historically, picturebooks have comprised a considerable part of children's literature in the U.S. (Clark, Lennon, & Morris, 1993). Definitional dilemmas make it difficult to create a definite timeline; in fact, some scholars argue that picturebooks go as far back as cave drawings in which people drew pictures to tell stories (Sipe, 2010) while other scholars maintain the picturebooks are defined by certain elements not included in cave drawings such as binding, artistry, a continuum of characters (Moebious, 1990). The language used in the term itself is also of consequence for differences have been identified between *picture book* (two words) and *picturebook* (a compound word). Sipe (2010) supports the use of picturebook as a compound word because for him, a synergy exists in which the text and image tell the story together, interacting to create meaning. Other scholars note that the text and image do not always interact in the same way (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2000).

While many studies examine the interaction between words and image (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2000; Short & Fox 2013; Sipe 2010), picturebook research is not limited to this topic. Much of the research on picturebooks is multicultural and focuses on authenticity, the author's background, the content of the book, and children's responses to books through various activities including interactive read-alouds (Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Cai, 2002; Hayik, 2011; Peyton & Jalongo, 2008). These studies are used to support social action such as the recent

#WhoNeedsDiverseBooks movement, which has increased attention to representational inequality (Dávila, 2015). Using Twitter, Elen Oh and Malinda Lo initiated this movement on April 17th, 2014 when they created the hashtag #WhoNeedsDiverseBooks to bring widespread awareness to the lack of available diverse children's literature (https://diversebooks.org/faq/). This movement has influenced teachers, teacher educators, and scholars by educating them on the benefits of diverse books and making them more aware of existing multicultural children's literature.

Studying Awarded Children's Literature

Existing studies are indeed necessary for supporting important movements such as this one. Yet, deciding which books to examine is no simple task. One resource researchers use to limit their data set has been lists of award winning books. Shortly after the inception of the Nobel Prize for literature (first given in 1901), the recognition of literary works through awards entered other genres including children's literature (Kidd, 2007). The Newbery Award, one of the first awards given for children's literature in the U.S., was first awarded in 1922 (Valadez, Sutterby, & Donaldson, 2013). Since then, many more awards have been developed. The criteria for these awards vary considerably with some honoring the writing (e.g., Newbery), others the illustrations (e.g., Caldecott), others the representations of a particular content area (e.g., National Science Teacher's Association of Outstanding Science Trade Books), in addition to varied other foci (e.g., religious books, (dis)ability, translated books, international books). Awarded books tend to be more popular and thus more accessible to an increased number of readers. As a result, they are more likely to make their way into classroom and school libraries. That is, these books are more likely to be purchased by teachers and parents making them more likely to be read by children.

For those book awards aimed at highlighting authentic multicultural books, children's book audiences can benefit from the high-quality books depicting minority communities selected by award committees, typically made up of experts in the field who have devoted considerable time to reading the books in depth (Yokota, 2011). Because few teachers or librarians have time in their schedules to read and evaluate all of the books published each year, and because they frequently lack large book buying budgets, award lists provide assistance with book selection (Crisp, 2015). Awards given to specific groups also increase teachers' and students' consciousness about the identified groups due to the increased recognizability and availability of the books (Mendoza & Reese, 2001).

It is also important to recognize the limitations of the award lists. The subjectivity of the committee members that determine the awarded books is an important issue too often left unexamined (Mendoza & Reese, 2001). Careful consideration of who the committee members are, their expertise, and their relationship to children's literature can help readers better understand how much credibility to give the awards. Moreover, the popularity of the awarded books is problematic when considering how few are given to books authored or illustrated by people from marginalized communities (Kidd, 2007; Rawson, 2011). Yet it is also important to note that an increasing number of awards have been created to counteract this problem (Miller, 2003).

The Coretta Scott King Award recognizes outstanding African American authors and illustrators. This annual award was first given in 1970 (Clark, Lennon, & Morris, 1993). Other awards addressing ethnic and racial representation followed. These awards play an important role in making the books, their authors, and their illustrators more visible in the world of children's literature. Other awards are sponsored by religious groups including the following: The National

Jewish Book Awards for Children's Literature, The Hindu Young World-Goodbooks Award, Bala Kids & The Khyentse Foundation Children's Book Prize for Buddhism, the Catholic Book Award, and the Christian Book Award. Yet, in spite of a thorough search, I was not able to locate an award specifically focused on Islam or Muslims. The Arab American Book Award specifies an "aim to honor the books written by or about American Arabs" yet also draws a distinct line between Muslim and Arab identities (http://www.arabamericanmuseum.org/bookaward). Neither does the Middle Eastern Book Award designate Muslim identity, instead maintaining a strict focus on Middle Eastern identity. More attention should be paid to this issue of why no awards are devoted to Islam and Muslim children's literature.

Award-winning books have been analyzed in a variety of ways. As mentioned earlier, researchers often conduct their studies by centering in on one or a combination of reader, text, and context. These studies include examinations of how readers respond to award-winning books (e.g., Beach, 1993; Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2014), the authenticity of the books in terms of insider and outsider perspectives (e.g., Reese 1999; Fox & Short, 2003), the politics and conflicts of the awarding process (e. g., Kidd, 2009; Yokoto, 2011), and the economics of the award-winning books (e.g., Taxel, 2010). Across focus areas within research on children's literature, the study of award-winning books is well established. Much of this research examines issues of representation (e.g., Altieri, 2008; Crisp & Hiller, 2011; Nodelmam, 1992; Naidoo, 1992). Scholars have examined award-winning books through critical lenses to investigate marginalization, equality, and diversity issues. These studies have examined gender (Clark, Lennon, & Morris, 1993; Crisp & Hiller, 2011; Liang, Watkins, & Williams, 2013), sexual orientation (Crisp & Hiller 2011; Kidd, 2007; Rawson, 2011). Overwhelmingly, studies analyzing award-winning books signify the need for more inclusive children's literature (Koss, 2015). In the

next section, I include this work, situating it in the broader research literature on marginalization in children's literature.

Marginalization in Children's Literature

Discrimination and disparity have been an ongoing problem in children's literature, initially signaled in Larrick's (1965) article on the predominance of Whiteness in children's literature. In her examination of over 5,000 books, Larrick found that few referenced African American characters; these few representations portrayed African Americans in negative, stereotypical, and biased ways. Multicultural literature began to increase around the late 1960s, but in the 1970s its growth stopped due to increased publishing costs related to inflation and the significant wealth gap between White book purchasers and that of consumers from other demographics (Giblin, 1986). Increases in multicultural literature began again in 1982 as more institutional markets were launched to produce diverse books and the rise of social justice issues-oriented attention brought new lenses to publication trends (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015; Colby & Lyon, 2004; Vandergrift, 1993).

Much of the research in this area includes quantitative counts to illustrate who is and is not included in children's picture books. The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) has reported representation of race and ethnicity within published children's books each year since 1994 (Horning, 2017). Their broad examination includes all 3,000-4,000 trade books published in English each year. Their findings shed light on the conversation related to multicultural literature. Recent findings concerning the representation of race and ethnic groups illustrate the considerable gap that still exists. A comparison of the numbers the CCBC provides on the roughly 3,200 books published in 2016 with those of an equal number published in 2015 indicates that books written by African/African American and American Indians/First Nations

authors decreased while those written by Asian Pacific/Asian Pacific American and Latinos authors almost doubled. Noticeable growth over time can be seen across all categories. Considering the total number of books published, however, it is clear that multicultural literature still has a long way to go. Published books about African/African American, American Indians/ First Nations, Asian Pacific/ Asian Pacific American, and Latinos made up less than one fourth of the total in both 2015 or 2016. See Table 2 for exact numbers.

Table 2. Children's Books by and about People of Color and First/Native Nations Received by the CCBC*—U.S. Publishers Only 2015

Year	Books received from US Pubs (est)	African / African Americans		American Indians / First Nations		Asian Pacific/ Asian Pacific Americans		Latinos	
		By	About	By	About	By	About	By	About
2016	3,200	90	265	8	35	194	224	94	157
2015	3,200	105	243	9	28	156	107	56	78

Data about multicultural children's literature from The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), retrieved from http://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp

The most popular children's book award in the U.S. is the Caldecott, given to credit the illustrator and first bestowed in 1938 (Clark, 2007). Because of its popularity, multiple examinations have been conducted on Caldecott winners. Albers' (2008) visual analysis illustrated the binary appositions in the books (e.g., male-female). This particular award is also one of the most criticized awards due to the lack of diversity across the awarded books (Albers, 2008). The first awarded book with an African American main character, *The Snowy Day* by

Ezra Jack Keats in 1963, was not given until 25 years after the initiation of the award (Clark, 2007; Pescosolido, Grauerholz, Milkie, 1997). This discrepancy has not changed with time. Of 332 books (including awards and honorable mentions). Amongst 332 books, 22 (7%) have only African American characters, 10 (3%) have Native American main characters, 13 (4%) have Asian/Asian American main characters, six (6%) have Latino main characters, four (1%) have indeterminate characters, 47 (14%) have inanimate or animal characters, and 173 (52%) have White characters (Moffett, 2016). Amongst 332 awarded and honored books only 51 (slightly over 30%) depict main characters from marginalized racial or ethnic groups.

In a recent study on inclusive children's literature, Koss (2015) provided evidence that the dominance of Whiteness in contemporary picturebooks has not changed over the past forty years. She found that "not surprisingly, 199 (75%) of the human main characters in picturebooks are White. African American main characters comprise 15% (39 titles), and those who are Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Native American main characters make up just under 6% (19 titles) (p. 35). While 199 books represent White characters, only 58 books represent minoritized groups.

Yet, although consistent demographic representation information for many groups is made available, it remains difficult to obtain even the most basic counts of Middle Eastern characters and/or authors. These difficulties arise in part due to terminology. For instance, even though the Middle East does not only include the Arab world, there is a tendency to equate Middle East with Arab, and Arab with Muslims (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2012). However, these terms are not synonymous and should not be used interchangeably. The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) does not have a separate category for Middle Easterners. If a country is clearly stated, Middle Easterners are categorized as African or Asian. If not, they categorize

Middle Easterners as White (K. T., Horning, personal communication, January 2, 2017). Four years ago, they began a separate log for characters coming from Middle East and some other countries (e.g., Azerbaijan) but have not yet clearly defined Middle East or Middle Easterners due to its complexity including the multiple religions and languages in the geography (K. T., Horning, personal communication, January 2, 2017). Koss (2005), whose study focused on Whiteness in children's literature, categorized Middle Easterners as a separate group and found 19 contemporary picturebooks with Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Native American characters. He did not, however, provide any details for the depiction of people from the Middle Easterner. CBCC racial and ethnic categories parallel those of the U.S Census Bureau which categorizes Middle Easterners as White. Yet some organizations from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have advocated for an additional ethnic category for categorizing people from these regions such as MENA (Wang, 2018). However, for the upcoming 2020 census, the U.S Census Bureau has decided not to separate Middle East and North Africa out as an additional category (Lo Wang, 2018).

Crisp (2015) illustrated the visibility problem faced by Middle Easterners in the U.S. in his report of his examination of Orbis Pictus Award winners from 1990-2014. Orbis Pictus is one of the most prestigious books awards given for informational books in the U.S. Over a time period of 24 years, not a single book included a focal Middle Eastern character. In a separate survey of 90 books with multiracial protagonists published for audiences of 9-14 years old, Chaudhri and Teale (2013) found only one character from an Arab background, a character identifying as Latino and Arab. In their study, they clearly specified Arab as a race and ethnic group.

The limited representation of Middle Eastern characters in children's literature has important implications for classroom libraries. As indicated in a study by Crisp, Knezek, Quinn, Bingham, Girardeau, and Starks (2016), only 1.5% of books in preschool classroom libraries featured Middle Eastern Americans. Their categorization of the Middle East is much broader than Arab, and they coded the data for African Americans, American Indians, Asian/Pacific Americans, Latino/a Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, and mixed-race Americans. Thus, they distinguish White from Middle Eastern Americans. Their study also supports the severity of the underrepresentation of Middle Eastern characters on classrooms' bookshelves.

Authenticity in Children's Literature

Although more inclusive children's literature has been created that includes characters of diverse genders, sexual orientations, religions, races, ethnicities, and (dis)abilities, family types, social classes, etc., such books have remained limited when considered in the context of overall publication rates. In addition, the authenticity of many of these books included in the multicultural counts has been questioned (Yokota, 2011). Some adopt a colorblind approach and do not represent marginalized groups authentically (Guilfoylo, 2015). Others orient readers to a handful of stories about a marginalized group, leading to stereotypes and biases about that group (Adichie, 2009; Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015). For instance, hearing only terrorist, immigrant, and refugee stories about Muslims blocks access to wider perspective and prevents authentic representations of the diversity amongst Muslims that exists in actuality.

Thus, while the number of books with characters from marginalized groups is important, increasing the number of diverse books alone will not solve the problem; the authenticity of the books matters as well. In her analysis of the authenticity of African American characters, Sims Bishop (1982) identified three categories of analysis. The first category was *social conscience*

books that aim “to develop empathy, sympathy, and tolerance for African American children” (p. 651). These books oversimplify the community’s cultural values and fail to illustrate detailed cultural features. The second category was the *melting pot*, in which the books represent all characters as “typical” middle class Americans. The last category included *culturally conscious* books that were told from an African American character’s viewpoint and explained family and neighborhood stories. This category was seen as desirable in its authenticity and its value for the represented group’s culture. Muslim characters in children’ literature can also be classified based on these three categories for the authenticity. Raina (2009), while examining Muslim characters in children’s literature adapted these categories as explained in detail later in this chapter.

Many groups in the U.S. face marginalization and inequality Middle Easterners from different geographical areas, religions, ethnic and racial backgrounds experience inequalities. The lack of authentic children’s books representing Muslim is also another way of marginalization and inequality. This study will contribute to the scholarly body of knowledge by examining the multiple stories included in picturebooks that have received the Middle Eastern Outreach Council Book Award. In the next section, I will focus on religion in children’s literature.

Religion and Children’s Literature

Religion is an essential part of culture and shapes daily lives, morals, and worldviews to the extent that it cannot be ignored (Erricker, 2006; Kurien, 2006; Wang, 2013). Yet, little research exists on the role of religion in children’s literature. The lack of research likely relates to the perceived absence of religious content in the children’s literature itself (Miskec, 2011; Sullivan & Yandell, 1990; Werner & Riga, 1989). Not surprisingly, the research that does exist has long focused on Christianity, reflecting the dominance of Christian themes or references in

children's books that include religion. Yet, even acknowledging an overrepresentation of Christianity in children's books, the research on religion is outrageous in its lack of acknowledgement of other religions. In many cases the terms religion and Christian are used synonymously (see, for example, Miskec, 2011, Trousdale, 2005). In a *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* (1989) special issue about religion, variation could be seen in the theoretical lenses used, but every single article reported on an examination of Christianity.

Though limited, studies have been conducted on how depictions of religion have changed in children's literature over time (Werner & Riga, 1989). Trousdale (2005) overviewed the treatment of Christianity in children's literature over time, demonstrating shifts from dogmatic approaches prior to the 20th century to a more secular treatment during most of the 20th century that failed to disclose religion or presented it in less conspicuous ways, and a reemergence of portrayals of religion treated more critically during the last quarter of the century. Examinations of how Christianity is portrayed in children's books have also become more critical over time in terms of both which representations are available to readers and the nature of the representations that are available (Trousdale, 2011) In recent years, scholarly examinations have begun surveying text sets and asking which religions are represented in children's literature and considering why Christianity is overly depicted (Piehl, 1989).

Though studies of Christianity dominate the literature, a small number of studies of other religions are available. In my reviews of literature, I have only found studies of the major Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism). I have not found empirical studies of the role of other religions such as Hinduism or Sikhism in U.S. children's literature. Further, limited research has examined Islam and Judaism in children's literature. Of those studies that have been published, evidence suggests that the "single story" (Adichie, 2009) problem exists in which the

varied complexities present within particular religious groups is ignored, and instead a single or select ways of being are extracted, often corresponding to distinct time periods. For example, children's books about Judaism and Jewish people are mostly about the Holocaust (Eicler-Levine, 2010). In addition, American Jewish children and adolescent characters created by writers of contemporary realistic fiction, (e.g., Judy Blume) are from well-educated, economically advantaged interfaith families in the northeast (Krasner & Zollman, 2010). Research on Jewish characters has also emphasized the passivity of women characters in ways that reinforce stereotypes. Jewish girls have been found to be presented as shoppers and complainers and Jewish boys as sportsmen and human rights supporters (Cummins, 2011).

Stewart (1989) affirmed that religious women have more submissive roles in children's literature than non-religious women. Sanders, Foyil, and Graff (2010) found that men are represented in positions of power in religious children's literature while women are not, and that religion is one reason for this submissive representation of women.

Islam and children's literature. Little research has examined representations of Islam in children's literature. This lack is correlated with the very small number of existing children's literature related to Islam. Khan (2006) calls for more inclusive literature about Islam and Muslims that avoids stereotypes. Siddiqui (2016) has also expressed concern about the limited number of books that represent Islam. In addition, he notes the problematic nature of the absence of multiple Muslim narratives available to children (e.g., a lack of Muslim heroines). Multiple Muslim narratives would allow for the authentic representation of Muslims and challenge the good Muslim/bad Muslim binary that prevents the recognition of diverse Muslims groups and identities (Phelps, 2010). Such multidimensional narratives would help not only teachers, but also Muslim and non-Muslim students by offering "authentic windows and respectful mirrors"

(Möller, 2014, p. 70). Yet, children's literature journals do not reference Islam. As Gilani-Williams (2016) has stated

> when looking through the archives of children's literature journals, such as: *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*; *School Library Journal*; *The Lion and the Unicorn*; *The Looking Glass*; *The Horn Book*; *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*; *Children's Literature in Education*; and *The Journal of Children's Literature Studies* there are virtually no references to Islamic children's literature" (italics in original, p. 114).

A few empirical research studies examining Muslims and Islam in children's literature do exist. One of the first was conducted by Seemin A. Raina (2009) who drew on Said's post-colonialism work and Sims' (1982) categories to examine representations of Muslims in children's books. This study focused on the books' genres, author-text relationships to Islam (i.e., insider/outsider issues related to authenticity) and resulted in the following categories:

> *social conscience books*: Books that represent how the Muslims as 'others' live for the mainstream audience in the U.S.; *melting pot*: Books that portray Muslims similar to the mainstream society within the U.S. so much so that they depict no nuances that are religiously and culturally distinct; *culturally conscious*: Books that show sensitivity and an awareness of authenticating details about the lived experiences, beliefs, and cultures of Muslims nationally and globally (Raina, 2009, italics added, p. 68).

Amongst these categories, culturally conscious books are needed to reflect Muslim communities authentically. The other two categories, social conscious books and melting pot books do not help to represent Muslims since they focus on otherness and assimilation of Muslims.

Raina (2009) found that female protagonists and authors were more common than male protagonists and authors, 15 Muslim countries were represented, and "the major themes that are reflected in the books in this study are those of war/refugees, family relationships, striving to survive, and greater gain" (p. 89). Using Sim's (1982) categorical system, Raina (2009) identified 27 socially conscious books, eight melting pot books, and 38 culturally conscious books. Considering the publication rate of children's literature in the United States approximately 3,000-4,000 titles per year, a total of 73 books about Islam is a very small number. Finally, although she did not specify an exact correlation between the authors writing from emic and etic perspectives in relation to her three book categories, she concluded that books written by authors who had done in-depth research and had rich experience with Muslim cultures were most likely fit into the culturally conscious category. She did not state the number of insider and outsider authors as related to culturally conscious books. In another study investigating Muslim women in children's literature, Seemin Aziz (2013) found that Muslim women were portrayed as exotic, which surely contributed to the othering of this group. In addition, she found that these books used an inauthentic Western feminist approach. This approach prioritizes White, middle-class, U.S. audiences over Muslim readers, addressing the perceived expectations that majority readers want stories about empowered Muslim girls. As a result, Aziz (2013) attributes the prioritization of the U.S. audience to the presence of the larger number of female Muslim protagonists as compared with male protagonists and the ignoring of Muslim methods of empowerment such as dressing, being educated, making choices, etc. Gilani-Williams (2010) also attributed children's book depictions of Muslim characters situated in Muslim communities to the tendency of Western publishing houses to address the expectations of the majority audience.

Reyes-Torres (2014) analyzed post-9/11 picture books and focused on "strategic essentialism," which emphasizes that although Americans are not the same privately and individually, a standardization still exists among them which makes them classify themselves as "us" vs "them". The books in her data set echoes this idea, and she claimed that these books "reassert American cultural values, national identity and beliefs in direct opposition to the notion of an ambiguous evil Other who is non-white and is directly related with terrorism, and implicitly with the Arab world" (Reyes-Torres, 2014, p. 135). As in Aziz's (2013) and Gilani-Williams's (2010) work, the othering of Muslims was the focus of this study. Referencing the work of Raina (2009), whose data set is mostly young adult novels, Heidi J. Torres (2016) decided to focus on picturebooks in order to understand what the books are about, what they represent, whether they include stereotypes, and what those stereotypes are. She found that

> altogether, twenty-three books, about half fiction and half non-fiction, can be described as having narratives that portray the diverse lives of Muslim people beyond religious practices. Rather than the central purpose of the narrative being to explain and teach about Islam, the focus of these books is to tell a story about a character or characters (p. 199).

The picturebooks in Torres' (2016) study more effectively represent Muslims in diverse settings and beyond religious identity. That is to say, 23 books did not solely focus on religious content. Her findings also suggest that Islam is presented as lacking divergent groups with 54 of the 56 picturebooks investigated; most either included a generic treatment or referred to Sunni Muslims.

Studies in the West are not only limited to the United States. Probably one of the most essential studies related to Islam and children's literature explored Islamic identity in British picture books to illustrate the otherness of Muslims (Janson, 2012). Using a historical lens to

understand these representations, he analyzed the images and found that the earlier books did not use real human faces, while the more recent ones included human faces. He states that

> all in all, the books produced from the late 1970s through the 1980s observe aniconic traditions more strictly than books produced from the early 2000s onward. Fourteen of the forty-seven story books published before 2001 were completely devoid of human imagery, while a few contain only pictures of people seen from a distance or avoid images of faces. Almost all of these books were produced during the 1980s. (p. 330-331)

In the last five decades, human images have become more visible in children's literature about Islam and Muslims. However, aniconism (the absence for drawing of any divine beings, generally human) is still a current discussion in the Muslim world. Some Muslims still do not approve of drawing a human image due to the concern that God is the only creator. That is, drawing a human is equated to acting like God. These debates are still not resolved, yet because technology and interaction with different faiths and cultures are increasing, these questions are no longer the focus they were in the past. Therefore, more human images are available in recently published children's literature depicting Muslims.

The studies reviewed in this chapter have contributed to academic understandings of religion in children's literature, but the existing body of knowledge has not clearly stressed the complexity of Islam and its intersectionality with other social identities. That is, existing studies related to children's literature and Islam emphasized the marginalization of Islam, the otherness of Muslims, negative and inaccurate representations, the need for authentic depiction, and historical shifts, yet underestimated the nuances within Islam and the intersectionality of being Muslim with other identities. As a result, more work is needed to shed light on the complexity of Islam in children's literature.

Conclusion

As illustrated above, little research exists about Islam and children's literature. The existing studies explain how more inclusive multicultural literature related to Islam is necessary for children of all races to be aware of this topic. Moving beyond "single stories" (Adichie, 2009) is crucial to understand the diversity of Muslim communities. This study seeks to contribute to the needed examinations of the variations of portrayals of Muslim communities in children's picturebooks. In next chapter, in addition to my theoretical framework, I will explain the methods to analyze the picturebook.

3 METHODOLOGY

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the overall characteristics of the MEOC-MEBAW picturebooks?
2. How are Islam and Middle Eastern Muslims represented using words and images in the MEOC-MEBAW picturebooks?
    a. Which intersections of Middle Eastern Muslims and other identities (e.g., class, gender) can be identified?

In response to the first question, I will examine the words and images in my data set in order to identify a comprehensive description of the text set as a whole. Then, using an intersectional lens, I will identify the representation of Middle Eastern Muslims as related to other identities Content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) will guide the examination of print text and images of Middle East Outreach Council—Middle Eastern Book Award picturebooks. Further, intersectionality will be used for criticality in the content analysis (Collins & Bilge, 2006; Hancock, 2016; Nash, 2008). In this section, I first explain how I will use intersectionality as a theoretical framework, then I explain my process for applying critical content analysis.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Theory and Intersectionality

Critical theory is applicable to this study since Islamophobia causes the othering and marginalization of this group by mainstream culture and norms. Grant and Ladson-Billings (1997) provided information about the historical roots of the critical paradigm by linking it to the Frankfurt School, saying that it "reveals how the given facts of our ordinary, everyday reality, which appear as the positive index of truth, are really the negation of truth, such that truth can be revealed through the destruction of facts (i.e., determinate negativity," p. 51). That is, the truth we agree in our everyday life is negotiated and does not represent everyone's truth. As a result, it

is important to reconsider it in ways that bring questions of hegemony, power, and inequality. The use of critical theory will allow me to highlight the underrepresentation and unequal distributions that Muslims experience. In the next section I will discuss intersectionality in this paradigm.

When studying an individual's lived experiences, it is important to take into consideration how social identities such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, and nationality interconnect in unique ways (Bailey 2009; Cusick, 2009; Giles 2006; Guy-Sheftall; 2009; Moody-Turner, 2009). For instance, as Bailey (2004) has explained, the experience of Anna Julia Cooper (a Black enslaved woman who earned her doctoral degree in France) as an enslaved Black woman differed from that of an enslaved Black man from the same time period because of the way gender is interconnected with race and social class. Considered the mother of intersectional thinking, Cooper (1892), wrote about her experiences as a Black enslaved woman in ways that acknowledged her social class, race, gender, and how they intersected with each other. As a result, she was able to conceptualize knowledge as related to Black women's experiences. Knowledge is produced by examining hybrid identities, rather than treating each identity as sectional or additive. Further, the interconnected nature of identities is also helpful in explaining oppression. For example, by clearly indicating that she was a Black enslaved woman, she left the house for education after receiving a scholarship at age 9. The interconnection of identities plays a significant role in oppression. Cooper (1892) claimed that:

> In this arena then is to be the last death struggle of political tyranny, of religious bigotry, and intellectual intolerance, of caste liberality and class exclusiveness. And the last monster that shall be throttled forever methinks is race prejudice. Men will here learn that a race, as a family, may be true to itself without seeking to exterminate all others (p. 168).

Oppression and inequality can originate from the following areas both individually and in the ways they interconnect: religious discrimination, social class, dictatorship, and intellectual prejudice. Intersectionality emphasizes the entangled system of oppression rather than approaching identities independently. In order to dismantle the norms of dominant culture as well as to better understand the experiences of minoritized people, it is essential to take an intersectional approach. Though Cooper was considered the first scholar to describe the idea of intersectionality, she did not use the term itself (Bailey, 2009; Bailey, 2004). Crenshaw (1989), a legal scholar and Black woman, coined the term.

Recently, scholars including Collins and Chepp (2013) and Collins and Bilge (2016) have expanded the use of intersectionality to include class, sexuality, age, disability, religion, and many more social identities. These scholars also use intersectionality as a tool to understand how oppression works. Collins and Chepp (2013) defined intersectionality as

> an assemblage of ideas and practices that maintain that gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, ability, and similar phenomena cannot be analytically understood in isolation from one another; instead, these constructs signal an intersecting constellation of power relationships that produce unequal material realities and distinctive social experiences for individuals and groups positioned within them (p. 59-60).

Their definition emphasizes how power relationships work within interconnected identities and how they lead to distinctive experiences and inequalities. Further, it illustrates how individuals position themselves within power relationship exposed by intersecting identities. To understand the complexity of individuals' experiences, intersectional analysis is helpful as it aims to emphasize the intersecting nature of identities such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, nation,

religion, (dis)ability, and more (Collins, 2015; Hancock, 2013; Nash 2008). Central to intersectional analysis is the role of power and power relationships.

Inequality and oppression are extremely complicated and cannot be understood by only focusing on one social identity. Intersectionality gives a broader perspective by approaching race, gender and many more identities as together (Hancock, 2016). Power, as used in intersectional theory, is relational and always considered in terms of its context. As Hancock (2016) explains, each individual has agency within a particular *situational contingence*. Situational contingency is time specific in that everything related to the situation matters to understanding oppression (May, 2015). Thus, all identities and contextual information should be considered in order to understand oppression (May, 2015). In this study, I will examine representations of Middle Eastern Muslims' various interconnected social identities.

Critical inquiry. Critical inquiry aims to understand the inequalities of marginalized people and to connect theory with practice in order to empower disenfranchised people (Collins & Bilge, 2016). A primary purpose of intersectionality is to make visible people who are otherwise unseen (Hancock, 2016; May, 2015). The visibility project can be carried out in terms of highlighting the visibility of marginalized groups in their own communities and in the larger community (Hancock, 2016). This study seeks to identify how Muslims are represented within a particular set of picturebooks. By according other social identities (e.g., gender) a central place alongside characters' Muslim identities rather than allowing them to remain at the margins, it seeks to increase visibility.

Religion in intersectionality. Race, class, and gender identities are included much more often than religious identities in intersectional studies (Collins & Bilge, 2016; McCall, 2015). Much research is needed to investigate how religious identities interconnect with other identities,

particularly for those associated with minoritized groups. Middle Eastern Muslims are othered in multidimensional ways based on their religion, race, class, gender, ethnicity, and nationality**.** Intersectionality offers a unique way to examine inequality and marginalization through the examination of mutually influencing identities (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

For instance, Islamophobia, a form of othering that Muslims face, should be investigated in depth including multidimensional aspects of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and nationality as various types of inequalities and marginalization exist. To give an example, after analyzing judicial decisions related to Muslim employments in Norway, Skjeie and Langvasbraten (2009) found that Muslim women have increased experiences of being fired from their work for reasons related to dress code as compared with Muslim men. Here, even though they have the same religious identity, the inequality women face is not same as men. Halrunnjo and Jonker (2016) have also described a similar situation in other Scandinavian countries where Muslim women's oppression differs from that of Muslim men.

Illustrating intersectionality has the potential to both exemplify the inequalities and struggles Middle Eastern Muslims face and characterize how they are portrayed. Additionally, investigating these identities from an intersectional lens will challenge binary thinking related to Middle Eastern Muslims by emphasizing nuance (Meer, 2013). For example, instead of a Middle Eastern Muslim woman, intersectionality allows us to investigate Muslim Yemeni women, as compared to Muslim Turkish women. Thus, it is significant to stress these nuances and differences to not only challenge Islamophobia, but also to address stereotypes and biases.

Method: Critical Content Analysis

Content analysis as a qualitative method emerged in the 1970s. Its entrance into the field of children's literature came much later. Thanks to scholars who investigated the representation

of marginalized groups in children's literature, it started to become more commonly used with children's literature (Beach et. al, 2009; Martin, 2004). Krippendorff (1989) defines content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" (p. 403). In addition to replicability and valid inferences, he added context as an essential part of content analysis. The context is a construction; it is crucial for researchers to examine the texts' content (Krippendorff, 2004).

The critical theory of intersectionality described in previous sections of this chapter will inform my analysis. When the researcher conducting content analysis is working from a critical theory or applying a critical lens to the content, it is considered critical content analysis. Critical content analyses can take multiple forms by bringing various forms of criticality from various theories (Beach et al, 2009; Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017). Critical content analyses of children's literature use various critical theories and investigate different types of social inequalities. Children's literature scholars using critical content analysis work to understand the social problems and ideas in the text. As a result, content analysis is a flexible method. Here, I explain the process and procedures and describe how I will operationalize them in this study.

Phase one: Data identification and initial analysis.

Due to my interest in Islam and the role of children's literature in the U.S., I first turned to children's book award lists. In a search of the major book award lists including Caldecott, Newbery, Orbis Pictus Award, and Coretta Scott King Award, I only found one book referring to Islam, *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi* by Chris Van Allsburg (1979). I then searched for book awards related to Islam and Muslims. I was not able to identify any particular children's literature award focused on Islam or Muslim characters. Because my ultimate focus was Muslims from the Middle East, I then identified and examined two children's book awards related to this

area. The Arab American Book Awards is sponsored by the Arab American National Museum and considers books by and about Arab Americans from "22 Arab countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen" (http://www.arabamericanmuseum.org/umages/pdfs/2018_AABookAwardSubmissionForm.pdf). The Middle Eastern Book Award focuses on Middle Eastern identities and is sponsored by the Middle East Outreach Council. "For the purposes of this award, the Middle East is defined as: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen" (http://www.meoc.us/book-awards/winners-of-the-2017-middle-east-book-award). Considering my research interests, Islam and children's literature, I had two options in terms of related award-winning books: the Arab American Award, or the Middle Eastern Book Award. As stated earlier, not all Arabs are Muslims, and Muslims come from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. Thus, the Middle Eastern Book Award gave me the opportunity to investigate diverse Muslim groups based on race, ethnicity and nationality; that helped me to expand the intersectional analysis beyond Arab Muslim identity into Middle Eastern Muslim identities. I also acknowledge that additional Muslim groups exist. Further, the majority religion in Middle East is Islam. Thus, as I expected these books referenced Islam more than other awards. "Established in 1981, the Middle East Outreach Council (MEOC) is a national non-profit organization working to increase public knowledge about the peoples, places, and cultures of the Middle East, including Arab world, Israel, Iran Turkey, and Afghanistan" (http://www.meoc.us/about). The members of the council produce a member listserve, the annual

book awards, and a semi-annual newsletter. The MEOC-MEBAW is given annually in the U.S to books that are either published in English or bilingual that relate to Middle-Eastern countries. The first MEOC-MEBAW picturebook award was given to *The House of Wisdom* by Florence Parry Heidi and Judith Heidi Gilliland (2000), and in same year the honorable mention was *The Storyteller* by Ted Lewin (2000). Since then, the award has evolved to include three categories including picture books (from 2000), youth literature (from 2000), and youth-nonfiction (from 2001). My focus on early childhood education makes picturebooks appropriate compared to other two categories: youth literature and youth non-fiction.

The award committee defines picture books as "simply worded, plot- or subject-driven text accompanied by large images on most pages, intended for elementary school readers" (MEOC, n. d.). The total number of awarded books is 58, and the number of honorable mentions is 41. I limited the study to picturebooks which have 17 winners and 19 honorable mentions (n=36) from 2000 to 2017. In *Table 3*, the list of awarded picturebooks is provided. The committee did not award any picturebooks in 2003 and 2006. In 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 they did not announce honorable mentions.

My focus is Islam, yet some of the on the lists are not explicit about their reference to the religion. Thus, in my initial examinations, I included references to Islam such as hajj or an image of the crescent star. In identifying the sample, I first read and wrote a brief summary of each book for indexing purposes. Following, I investigated the presence of religion in picturebooks and documented which books referenced Islam and Muslim characters. In addition, I maintained a record of the summaries.

Table 3. MEOC-MEBAW Picturebook List

Book's Name	***Author/ Illustrator***	***Year***	***Type of Award***
Lost and Found Cat: The True Story of Kunkush's Incredible Journey	Doug Kuntz & Amy Shrodes, illustrated by Sue Conelison	2017	Award Winner
My Beautiful Birds	Suzanne Del Rizzo, illustrated by Suzanne Del Rizzo	2017	Honorable Mention
Stepping Stones	Margriet Ruurs, translated by Falah Raheem, illustrated by Nizar Ali Badr	2017	Honorable Mention
When the Animals Saved Earth: An Eco-fable	Alexis York Lumbard, illustrated by Demi	2015	Award Winner
New Month/ New Moon	Allison Ofanansky, photographs by Eliyahu Alpern	2015	Honorable Mention
The Olive Tree	Elsa Marston, illustrated by Claire Ewart	2015	Honorable Mention
The Story of Hurry	Emma Williams, illustrated by Ibrahim Quraishi	2015	Honorable Mention
Razia's Ray of Hope	Elizabeth Suneby, illustrated by Suana Verelst	2014	Award Winner
Hands Around the Library: Protecting Egypt's Treasured Books	Karen Leggett Abouraya, illustrated by Susan L. Roth	2013	Award Winner
Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors	by Hena Khan, illustrated by Mehrdokht Amini	2013	Honorable Mention
Folktales from Turkey: From Agri to Zelve	Serpil Ural, translated by Ginger Saçlıoğlu, illustrated by Dilara Arin	2012	Award Winner
The Wooden Sword: A Jewish Folktale from Afghanistan	Ann Redisch Stampler, illustrated by Carol Liddiment	2012	Award Winner
What's the Buzz: Honey for a Sweet New Year.	Allison Ofanansky, photographs by Eliyahu Alpern	2012	Honorable Mention
Mirror	Jeannie Baker, unknown translator, illustrated by Jeannie Baker	2011	Award Winner
The Secret Message	Mina Javaherbin, illustrated by Bruce Whatley	2011	Honorable Mention
Time to Pray	Maha Addasi, illustrated by Ned Gannon	2011	Honorable Mention
How Many Donkeys: An Arabic Counting Tale	Margaret Read MacDonald, and Nadia Jameel Taibah, illustrated by Carol Liddiment	2010	Award Winner

Kings and Carpenters: One Hundred Bible Land Jobs You Might Have Praised or Panned.	Laurie Coulter, illustrated by Martha Newbigging	2010	Honorable Mention
The Butter Man	Elizabeth Alalou and Ali Alalou, illustrated by Julie Klear Essakalli	2009	Award Winner
The Grand Mosque of Paris: A Story of How Muslims Rescued Jews During the Holocaust	Karen Gray Ruelle and Deborah Durland DeSaix, illustrated by by Karen Gray Ruelle and Deborah Durland DeSaix	2009	Honorable Mention
Silent Music: A Story of Baghdad	James Rumford, illustrated by James Rumford	2008	Award Winner
Four Feet, Two Sandals	Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed, illustrated by Doug Chayka	2008	Honorable Mention
The Best Eid Ever	Asma Mobin-Uddin, illustrated by Laura Jacobsen	2008	Honorable Mention
One City, Two Brothers	Chris Smith, illustrated by Aurélia Fronty	2007	Award Winner
Count Your Way Through Iran	Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson, illustrated by Farida Zaman	2007	Honorable Mention
The Rich Man and The Parrot	Suzan Nadimi, illustrated by Ande Cook	2007	Honorable Mention
Lugalbanda: The Boy who Got Caught Up in a War	Kathy Henderson, illustrated by Jane Ray	2006	Award Winner
Mystery Bottle	Kristen Balouch, illustrated by Kristen Balouch	2006	Honorable Mention
Alia's Mission: Saving the Books of Iraq	by Mark Alan Stamaty, illustrated by Mark Alan Stamaty	2005	Award Winner
The Librarian of Basra	Jeanette Winter, illustrated by Jeanette Winter	2005	Honorable Mention
The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela	by Uri Shulevitz, illustrated by Uri Shulevitz	2005	Honorable Mention
Muhammad	Demi, illustrated by Demi	2004	Award Winner
Celebrating Ramadan	Diane Hoyt Goldsmith, photo-graphs by Lawrence Migdale	2002	Award Winner
Travelling Man: The Journey of Ibn Battuta, 1325-1354	James Rumford, illustrated by James Rumford	2001	Award Winner
The House of Wisdom	Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland, illustrated by Mary GrandPré	2000	Award Winner

The Storytellers	Ted Lewin, illustrated by Ted Lewin	2000	Honorable Mention

Phase two: Analyzing and interpreting main characters.

Overall characteristics: To analyze the overall characteristics of the books, I first identified the genres of the books. Galda and Cullinan's (2006) definition guided me with their description: "A genre is a category of composition that has such defining characteristics as type of characters, setting, action, and overall form or structure" (p. 8). In this study, picturebook is categorized as a format rather than a genre. Then, I focused on characters (e.g. gender, nationality, human or not). I also did an extensive research to understand authors' and illustrators' relationship to the Middle East. I sought information about authors and illustrators from books and book jackets, authors and illustrators' webpages, and publishing houses. The information about each was recorded in a word document followed by a research note (e.g., the author was born in Turkey, but currently lives in London. He/she has a Middle Eastern heritage). Gathering information about authors and illustrators helped me to delve into the authenticity of the books. Then, I investigated the presence of religion and documented the references in a separate word document. In the same word document, I also provided information about the historical overview the time period in which the books were set. Following, I focused on the characters as I described below.

Character descriptions. Using intersectionality to inform this critical content analysis allowed me to provide nuanced descriptions of Muslims. To understand how Middle Eastern Muslims are represented in the MEOC-MEBAW picture books, I used both image and print text to write a character description of each book's main character. Adapted from Crisp's (2015) definition of focal subjects, I considered characters "the person or people a book is about or

through whom a text is presented for readers" (p. 244). In this study, I used focal subjects leading and main characters interchangeably. In cases where there are two main characters, I described both of them. Due to my intersectional focus, these descriptions included characters' social identities. Following recommendations for intersectional research, I avoided an additive approach and consider the multiple social identities alongside each other (e.g., Black + Lesbian+ Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Women) (Bowleg, 2008). I used my understandings of intersecting identities to create these descriptions. Because I understand that identities are socially constructed, I engaged in warranted reading and supported my claims with evidence from the text (Rosenblatt, 1996). As a result, my character descriptions were accompanied by the information used in the book to support the descriptions. I used a three-column chart to structure this information with book title and character name in the first column, character description in the second, and supporting evidence in the third. Below, I describe this process in terms of gender though I used the same process with other social identities (e.g., nationality, race, social class).

In this study, I coded the gender representation in the books based on the images and print text. I acknowledge, however, that all authors and illustrators do not necessarily work from the same understandings of gender. Gender has traditionally worked along male-female binaries with stereotypically feminine behaviors used for women, and masculine behaviors for men, yet it is increasingly framed as a social construct that is learned (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In today's world, conventional feminine and masculine behaviors break down; for example, men engage in tasks traditionally assigned to women, such as taking care of children, and women engage in tasks traditionally assigned to men, such as working in construction (Lorber, 1994). These boundaries are challenged, and the distinct line between femininity and masculinity is

collapsing. Further complicating this situation, my own subjectivities related to gender also impacted the analysis. Thus, when engaging in analysis, I substantiated any social identity claims related to gender with the data I used to make that interpretations. For example, if I note that a character is female, I documented this identity with a statement such as the following: "In the image, the character is wearing a hijab (see illustrations in *Alia's Mission: Saving the Books of Iraq* by Mark Alan Stamaty, 2004). In the print narrative, the character is named Alia (first seen in the very first page and title) traditionally recognized as female. The author uses the female pronouns she and her (throughout the book)."

Analytic memo 1. Upon completion of the initial character description and researcher claim substantiation, I used the research questions and initial analysis to draft an analytic memo to articulate and document ongoing interpretations. At this point, I was able to provide an overview of the themes and topics addressed in the books based on summarizes and character descriptions, identify potential common patterns in the characters portrayed in the books, and consider which intersecting social identities are represented. These analyses were noted in a word document, and the notes were discussed with peer debriefers. Each book was read closely at least three times with the first reading mostly focused on the print text, the second one mostly focused on images, and the last one focused on both images and print text to ensure I did not miss any details. Following Bowleg (2008), I simultaneously considered these social identities independently and together. The main character's intersectional social identities were described in detail based on images and text. Then, other entangled identities were noted down and explained. For example, in 2014 awarded book, *Razia's Ray of Hope* by Elizabeth Suneby, the main character Razia, wants to go to school. However, she lives in a patriarchal society where males in the family make decisions for her. Further, the book illustrates how she has to do daily

works in the home to helps family make money since their daily works such as gardening to survive. As an intersection of her identity a young Afghani girl living in a working-class family can show how these identities work independently and together to explain the conflict related to and her desire to go to school.

Phase three: Examination of characterization techniques.

The analysis documented in the initial analytic memos were used to identify how the picturebook creators used words and images to create their characterizations. Close attention was given to the Middle Eastern Muslim characters in the books, and anything related to their identities were noted in analytical memos as well as thinking and questions related to their representation. I then conducted close analysis across two stages (i.e., open and pattern coding), with each accompanied by at least one analytic memo. In the open coding process, I used my analytical memos and the books to create tentative labels for blocks of data to summarize what I noticed across the books. Basically, I focused on the meaning that I identified from the data and I let data guide me. In the second step, I looked for patterns. The labels in open coding led me to create larger categories to represent the data set. These codes, however, were not always the same. I searched for likeness rather than sameness. That is, the codes could sometimes seem contrary, yet what that described was the same sort of data. I also used Hatch's (2002) categories for pattern coding. I simultaneously looked for "similarity, difference, frequency, sequence, correspondence, and causation" (p. 150). In my pattern coding, I first identified the following categories: references to religion and Islam, multifaith books, same stories but different books, books without main characters, refugee and immigrant characters in West refugee and immigrant characters in the Middle East, empowered women characters, lack of books representing some countries, social class in the Middle East and in Western countries, women's images and

headcoverings, men's images and beards, drawing of human's images, transportation (e.g., donkeys, horses, camels), images of minarets, mosques, star and crescent, historical overview and chronology of settings in the books, women attempt to change in the community level, women attempt to change in family level, men leaving house for business, men leaving house to travel. Following, I collapsed and clarified the categories for parsimonic purposes. I generated three major findings related to Middle Eastern Muslim identities and intersectionality, fully described in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

For qualitative studies, trustworthiness is essential for the rigor of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1986) offered some terminology and strategies to support the trustworthiness which are "credibility" (p. 301), "transferability" (p. 316), "dependability" (p. 316) and "confirmability" (p. 318). In addition to these terms, the emic and etic perspectives of the researcher play an important role in the trustworthiness of the study. In the next section, I will explain my emic and etic perspective through a reflexive statement, then delve into Lincoln and Guba's (1986) suggestions as applied to this study.

Reflexivity statement. Since trustworthiness provides both affordances and limitations in analyzing the books, I found it beneficial to write my personal connection to religion and Islam. In addition, it serves to provide evidence of rigor to my analysis for I will be as transparent and detailed as possible.

While growing up, I never saw anyone wearing a burka even though the mainstream religion in my community was Muslim. The first time I saw a woman wearing a burka, I was 15 visiting the Turkish city of Gaziantep. In addition, in my mostly Muslim community—a small town in southeast Turkey close to the Syrian border--males and females not related to each other

directly shake hands and/or hug. At age 18, I moved to downtown Antakya/Hatay (Biblical name is Antioch), which has a more diverse religious population than that of my birth town. At first, I thought it would be challenging for me to enter a religiously pluralistic environment. During that time, I was surrounded by various religious groups, including Jews, Christians (mostly Eastern Orthodox), Muslims, atheists, and non-religious people. I found them all to be welcoming and lived peacefully in this culturally plural city.

During my one-year-experience in Antakya, I lived in an Arab-Alawite neighborhood that was close to the city center, a drastic change from the Sunni-Hanafi-Kurdish religious environment in which I grew up. In my room in Antakya, I was able to hear azan (the call to prayer by the imam) five times a day from the mosques around me as well church bells on Sundays. I interacted with people who had distinct religious backgrounds from mine. This diversity gave me the chance to broaden my horizon by understanding and learning about their religions.

After my year in Antakya, I moved to a Northeast city in Turkey for my undergraduate degree named Erzurum. There, my experience was different. In this city, Sunni Turks surrounded me. I felt limited in my potential to think and act critically as compared to Antakya. For instance, I felt an obligation to fast during Ramadan (the holy month in Islam), a pressure I had never felt before. However, I had opportunities to engage in delightful conversations with friends and read to satisfy my curiosity about the ideas related to the dominant culture, its norms, and democracy, and freedom. By relating these topics to concurrent conversations, policies, and politics in Turkey, I was able to expand passion for diversity and cultural pluralism.

Four years later, I completed my undergrad schooling and left Northeast Turkey to begin my master's program in another demographically similar city. Here, I continued thinking about

the norms and dominant culture's pressure on others. While working on my master's degree, I was awarded a scholarship from the Ministry of Turkish Education that supported graduate work in the U.S. I began by enrolling in an English Language Program at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. I had no reason to choose the University of Alabama other that knowing the song "Sweet Home Alabama".

The time in Alabama (August 2011-February 2012) was yet another shocking experience for me as there were both similarities and differences with Erzurum and Antakya. I noticed that in Tuscaloosa, the dominant religion was Christianity. In addition, the students were profoundly religious too. Some people did not welcome me since I did not fit the dominant cultural norms of religion and language; some tried to persuade me to go to church and join their Bible studies. Both the atmosphere on campus and outside of campus seemed discriminatory to me. I felt ostracized for not meeting the criteria for the dominant culture. My international friends and I had a hard time making friends and socializing with people native to Alabama. Cliques built upon shared values such as religion, ethnicity, and race were hard to break into. These feelings of being ostracized were lessened but continued during my time in Athens, Georgia where I spent the following year and a half for my master's degree.

During my time in these U.S cities, I did not fit the norms of the predominant culture, much like when I lived in some cities in my home country. However, as an outsider in Tuscaloosa and Athens, I kept wondering about these people's ideas about other religions. What did they think about other religions? Did they see me as a terrorist because of my physical appearance? These questions and many more were left unanswered because I was never able to talk about these topics with the members of the communities. Yet the topic of religion existed in various media. Religion was considered a sensitive topic, which may have prevented people

talking about religion with me. I could not answer the questions I had. Correspondingly, I was not sure whether people who practice a religion in these towns talk about their own religion when they meet somebody in the same community with the same shared values. Although I understand that this topic is sensitive for many people, I believe that creating a safe environment to talk about religion can promote insightful understanding of religion and how it frames our actions, friend choices, families, interaction with others, and worldviews; basically, how the individual is embedded within religion and religion is embedded within culture has made me realize how difficult it is to tease apart individual, religion, and culture. Even for people who do not practice a religion, it nonetheless enters daily life and culture in many ways.

My strong interest in picturebooks emerged during my master's program. In one of my classes focused on children's literature, I saw a book for which I had previously watched the animated movie version, not knowing at the time that it originated from a book. The book was *Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg. Even though I was not Christian, and I had never celebrated Christmas, the movie version made me cry because I had not realized that Christianity focused on moral issues. I recognized that, contrary to my biases, the movie was reflecting Christian traditions which are almost the same as Islamic morals such as sharing, faith, friendship, and caring. These positive images parallel my understanding of Islam, and the emotional aspect of the movie impacted me deeply and made me question my misinformation and biases about Christianity. Seeing that book in class was one of the most surprising moments in my life. When I learned that the movie version originated from a picturebook, I immediately got a copy of it. I read and reread it. I began to think about how great it would be to have books reflecting Islamic holidays in the same way *Polar Express* reflected Christianity. I began to seek out books that portray Islam and Muslims. For a long time, I have thought that this type of book

could contribute to a more peaceful society. I think of picturebooks as capable of building bridges and developing empathy amongst different groups. For me, they offer a way to advocate for addressing the oppression and inequality Muslims face in the U.S.

Because I was born and raised in Turkey with Islam as the dominant religion, unlike many American Muslims, I did not grow up thinking of Islam as a marginalized religion. I believe that my emic perspective of having lived as a Muslim in a Muslim community for most of my life will allow me to better understand nuances as compared to non-Muslims while analyzing data. Further, because I come from a Middle Eastern country, Turkey, I am particularly interested in Middle Eastern Muslims. My understanding of Islam and being Islam parallels with Muhammad's (2015) definition, "being Muslim is not just merely a part of one's self or life, but intricately makes up one's cultural way of life" (p. 290). Acknowledging that not all Muslims are the same and that not all Middle-Easterners are same, I also held an etic perspective with the picturebooks about Middle Eastern Muslim communities.

I will also incorporate other aspects of trustworthiness drawn from Lincoln and Guba's (1985) work.

Credibility. In order to increase the credibility of the study, I will use three of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) strategies based on their applicability to this study.

Peer debriefing. A fellow graduate student who is also Muslim and from Turkey acted as peer debriefer by questioning and validate my coding. I met with my peer debriefer once a week for about one hour once I started coding and drafting analytic memos. In our meetings, we talked about my interpretations as related to the data and other ways the data could be interpreted. When I moved forward with my coding, I needed more help from experts on Islam. Two Muslim Islamic scholars (one Sunni Muslim from Turkey, the other a Shia Middle Eastern American),

and a Sunni imam from Turkey helped me throughout my analysis. I consulted them on sensitive and controversial topic and when I was uncertain about my knowledge about a particular Islamic ritual or understanding. These experts informed me from their more knowledgeable perspectives. For example, when I questioned information in *Celebrating Ramadan* (2002) by Diane Hoyt, I had consulted these three experts. I had 4 Skype meeting with each spending roughly an hour per call. All sensitive and controversial topics I noted were discussed during these meetings. In addition, I met with an expert debriefer regularly to talk about my coding process and my ways of interpreting the data. The expert debriefer brought an outsider perspective and made me consider other options that I missed.

Negative case analysis. While coding, I regularly checked negative cases and hypotheses to confirm whether an exception exists or not. When I stared to notice a common theme across the data, I sought out examples that do not fit the theme to identify data that challenge my emerging themes. The negative cases are discussed with both peer and expert debriefers.

***Referential Adequacy*.** The term references archiving some parts of data and analyzing it later to ensure that the first analyzed data and archived analyzed data are parallel. I, firstly, analyzed the award-winning books, then I returned to honorable mentions to see if honorable mentions' analysis is parallel to the ones I have in award winning picturebooks.

Transferability. Another strategy to increase trustworthiness is transferability. The findings of this study were considered time and context specific. That is, the findings were not overly generalized, and predictions for other data sets were not made. In order to define the data, thick descriptions were provided about the context. I fully described the books, yet these descriptions were not transferable to other data sets.

Confirmability. I kept a coding notebook that includes initial analysis as well as analytic memos. In the analytic memos, I noted patterns and my thinking related to the data along with my decisions related to process.

4 RESULTS

The findings of this study are represented in two categories. First, I will describe the overall characteristics of the books in an aim to respond to the first question: *What are the overall characteristics of the MEOC-MEBAW picturebooks?* Second, and in response to the subsequent question: *How are Islam and Middle Eastern Muslims represented in the MEOC-MEBAW picturebooks?*

Overall Characteristics of the Books

When analyzing the books, I focused on book genre and characters; authors' and illustrators' relationship to the Middle East; the presence of religion and Islam; and the historical time period in which the books are set.

Book genre and characters. As Galda and Cullinan (2006) define, "A genre is a category of composition that has such defining characteristics as type of characters, setting, action, and overall form or structure" (p. 8). Inspired by this definition and recognizing picturebooks as a format rather than a genre, I identified the following five categories in award winning MEOC-MEBAW picturebooks: realistic fiction 39% (14), fantasy 3% (1), fables 5% (2), folktales 17% (6), biographies 17% (6), informational texts 14% (5), and concept books 5% (2). In addition to and despite the fact that MEOC-MEBAW has a separate category for nonfiction (e.g., biographies, informational texts, concepts books), a large percentage of the picturebooks are classified as nonfiction with 36% (13), including the biographies, informational texts and concept books ad defined "intend to convey information about the natural and social world, typically from someone presumed to know that information to someone presumed not to" (Duke & Tower, 2004, p.130), and concept books (i.e., books centered around a concept for

young children such as the alphabet or numbers). These percentages are shown in Figure 1 below. Table 4 provides more detailed information about the awarded picturebooks and genres.

Figure 1. MEOC-MEBAW picturebook genres

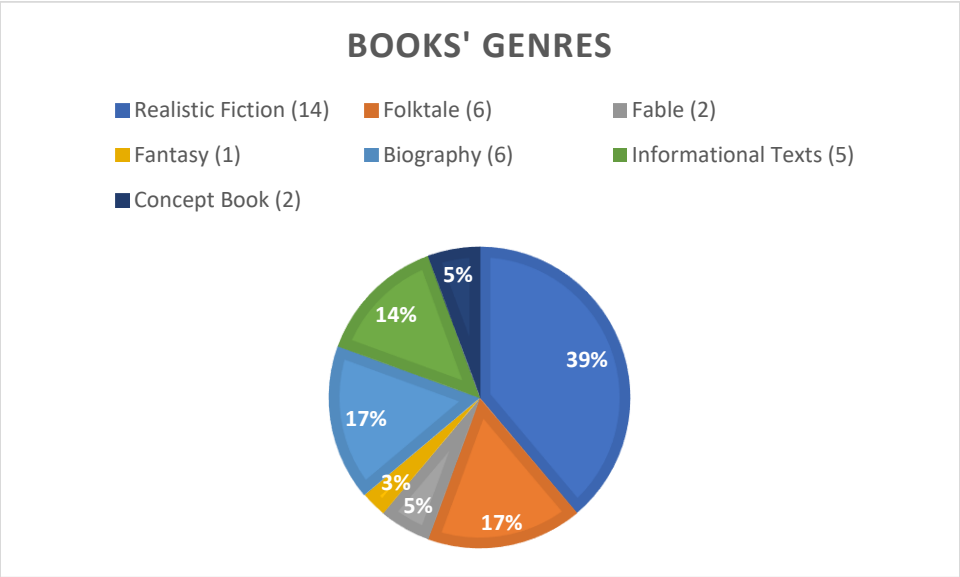


Table 4. Award Year, Book Title and Genre

Award Year	Book	Books' Genre
2017	*LOST AND FOUND CAT: THE TRUE STORY OF KUNKUSH'S IN- CREDIBLE JOURNEY* by Doug Kuntz & Amy Shrodes, illustrated by Sue Conelison (Crown Books for Young Readers, 2017).	Realistic Fiction
2017	*MY BEAUTIFUL BIRDS* by Suzanne Del Rizzo, illustrated by Suzanne Del Rizzo (Pajama Press, 2017).	Realistic Fiction
2017	*STEPPING STONES: A REFUGEE FAMILY'S JOURNEY* by Margriet Ruurs, translated by Falah Raheem, illustrated by Nizar Ali Badr (Orca Book Publishers, 2016).	Realistic Fiction
2015	*WHEN THE ANIMALS SAVED EARTH: AN ECO-FABLE* retold by Alexis York Lumbard, illustrated by Demi (Wisdom Tales, 2015).	Folktale
2015	*NEW MONTH/NEW MOON* by Allison Ofanansky, photographs by Eliyahu Alpern (Kar-Ben Publishing , 2014).	Informational Text
2015	*THE OLIVE TREE* by Elsa Marston, illustrated by Claire Ewart (Wisdom Tales, 2014).	Realistic Fiction
2015	*THE STORY OF HURRY* by Emma Williams, illustrated by Ibrahim Quraishi (Seven Stories Press, 2014).	Realistic Fiction
2014	*RAZIA'S RAY OF HOPE* by Elizabeth Suneby, illustrated by Suana Verelst (Citizen Kid, 2013).	Realistic Fiction

2013	*HANDS AROUND THE LIBRARY: PROTECTING EGYPT'S TREASURED BOOKS* by Karen Leggett Abouraya, illustrated by Susan L. Roth (Dial Books, 2012).	Realistic Fiction
2013	*GOLDEN DOMES AND SILVER LANTERNS: A MUSLIM BOOK OF COLORS* by Hena Khan, illustrated by Mehrdokht Amini (Chronicle Books, 2012).	Concept Book
2012	*FOLKTALES FROM TURKEY: FROM AGRI TO ZELVE* by Serpil Ural, translated by Ginger Saçlıoğlu, illustrated by Dilara Arin (Citlembik Publications, 2012).	Folktale
2012	*THE WOODEN SWORD: A JEWISH FOLKTALE FROM AFGHANISTAN* by Ann Redisch Stampler, illustrated by Carol Liddiment (Albert Whitman & Company, 2012).	Folktale
2012	*WHAT'S THE BUZZ: HONEY FOR A SWEET NEW YEAR* by Allison Ofanansky, photographs by Eliyahu Alpern. (Kar-Ben Publishing, 2011).	Informational text
2011	*MIRROR* by Jeannie Baker, unknown translator, illustrated by Jeannie Baker (Candlewick Press, 2010).	Realistic Fiction
2011	*THE SECRET MESSAGE* by Mina Javaherbin, illustrated by Bruce Whatley, (Disney/Hyperion Books, 2010).	Fable
2011	*TIME TO PRAY* by Maha Addasi, illustrated by Ned Gannon (Boyds Mills Press, 2010).	Realistic Fiction
2010	*HOW MANY DONKEYS: AN ARABIC COUNTING TALE* by Margaret Read MacDonald, and Nadia Jameel Taibah, illustrated by Carol Liddiment (Albert Whitman & Company, 2009).	Folktale
2010	*KINGS AND CARPENTERS: ONE HUNDRED BIBLE LAND JOBS YOU MIGHT HAVE PRAISED OR PANNED* by Laurie Coulter, illustrated by Martha Newbigging (Annick Press, 2010).	Informational Text
2009	*THE BUTTER MAN* by Elizabeth Alalou and Ali Alalou, illustrated by Julie Klear Essakalli (Charlesbridge Publishing, 2008).	Realistic Fiction
2009	*THE GRAND MOSQUE OF PARIS: A STORY OF HOW MUSLIMS RESCUED JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST* by Karen Gray Ruelle and Deborah Durland DeSaix, illustrated by by Karen Gray Ruelle and Deborah Durland DeSaix (Holiday House, 2009).	Informational Text
2008	*SILENT MUSIC: A STORY OF BAGHDAD* by James Rumford, illustrated by James Rumford (Roaring Brook Press, 2008).	Realistic Fiction
2008	*FOUR FEET, TWO SANDALS* by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed, illustrated by Doug Chayka (Eerdman's Books for Young Readers, 2007).	Realistic Fiction
2008	*THE BEST EID EVER* by Asma Mobin-Uddin, illustrated by Laura Jacobsen (Boyds Mills Press, 2007).	Realistic Fiction
2007	*ONE CITY, TWO BROTHERS* by Chris Smith, illustrated by Aurélia Fronty (Barefoot Books, 2007).	Folktale
2007	*COUNT YOUR WAY THROUGH IRAN* by Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson, illustrated by Farida Zaman (Millrook Press, 2007).	Concept Book
2007	*THE RICH MAN AND THE PARROT* retold by Suzan Nadimi, illustrated by Ande Cook (Albert Whitman & Company, 2007).	Fable

2006	*LUGALBANDA, THE BOY WHO GOT CAUGHT UP IN A WAR* by Kathy Henderson, illustrated by Jane Ray (Candlewick Press, 2006).	Folktale
2006	*MYSTERY BOTTLE* by Kristen Balouch, illustrated by Kristen Balouch (Hyperion Books for Children, 2006).	Fantasy
2005	*ALIA'S MISSION: SAVING THE BOOKS OF IRAQ* by Mark Alan Stamaty, illustrated by Mark Alan Stamaty(Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).	Biography
2005	*THE LIBRARIAN OF BASRA* by Jeanette Winter, illustrated by Jeanette Winter (Harcourt, 2005).	Biography
2005	*THE TRAVELS OF BENJAMIN OF TUDELA* by Uri Shulevitz, illustrated by Uri Shulevitz (Farrar Traus Giroux, 2005).	Biography
2004	*MUHAMMAD* ص by Demi, illustrated by Demi (Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2003).	Biography
2002	*CELEBRATING RAMADAN* by Diane Hoyt Goldsmith, photographs by Lawrence Migdale (Holiday House, 2002).	Informational Text
2001	*TRAVELING MAN: THE JOURNEY OF IBN BATTUTA, 1325-1354* by James Rumford, illustrated by James Rumford (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001).	Biography
2000	*THE HOUSE OF WISDOM* by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland, illustrated by Mary GrandPré (DK Publishing, Inc., 1999).	Biography
2000	*THE STORYTELLERS* by Ted Lewin, illustrated by Ted Lewin (New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 1998).	Realistic Fiction

While there is generic diversity across the books, the characters in the books do not fully represent Middle Eastern Muslims, particularly in terms of gender and nationality. Following Crisp's (2015) definition of focal subjects, I considered characters "the person or people a book is about or through whom a text is presented for readers" (p. 244). Of the 36 picture books, two have no characters. In *Count your Way Through Iran* by Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson (2006), a concept book about Iran/Persia (both names used in book) designed to teach counting, each number is elucidated through a feature or historical event with accompanying print that includes, "Iran's flag has three colors. White is for peace. Red stands for courage. Green is the color of Islam" and "Five women weave a carpet. The wool they use is dyed many colors" (unpaginated). In the other book I identified as having no characters, *Kings and Carpenters: One Hundred Bible Land Jobs You might have Praised or Panned* by Laurie Coulter (2010), various

jobs are described from "the Bible Land, from 1200 to 586 BCE (Before the Common Era, or year 1)" (p. 6). In each of the 11 categories , different jobs are represented from the Christian Bible's Old Testament time period including farmers include village elder, senior homemaker, plowman and others. No main characters were referenced in the job descriptions. Though people are represented in these books, they are not consistent across either book and would not be considered characters according to literary definitions. Thus, I did not include these two books in my analysis of characters. In the second of the two books, the civilizations referenced (i.e., Israelites, Philistines, and Canaanites) no longer exist.

In addition to the two books without characters, there are two books about each of the following, a Sufi story from a poem by Rumi (i.e., Nadimi's (2007) *The Rich Man and the Parrot* and Javaherbin's (2011) *The Secret Message*) and a biographical account of an Iraqi librarian who saved books during a conflict (i.e., Stamaty's (2004) *Alia's Mission: Saving the Books of Iraq* and Winter's (2005) *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq*). These two books tell the same story using the same characters, and all four are included in the analysis.

Both human and animal characters are prevalent in the books with four featuring animal characters alongside human characters (e.g., a cat interacting with human characters). None of the MEOC-MEBAW picture books had only animal characters. *Folktales from Turkey: From Agri to Zelve* by Serpil Ural (2012) has multiple, mainly human characters as the book is an anthology with 26 short chapters, each containing its own folktale. See *Table 5* for an overview of the books' characters.

The characters' nationalities are not fully representative of Middle Eastern Muslims. As indicated in Chapter 3, MEOC considers that "the Middle East consists of Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, the

Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen" (http://www.meoc.us/book-awards/winners-of-the-2017-middle-east-book-award). However, most of these countries cannot be found in a single award winning picturebook. In some cases, the inability to identify them is due to the multiple books (total of 6) with no national background clearly indicated. For example, both *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns* (2012) by Hena Khan and *The Best Eid Ever* (2007) by Asma Mobin-Uddin are set in unnamed Western countries with no information provided about the ethnic or national background of the Muslim families. Paralleling these two books, *Time to Pray* (2010) by Maha Addasi does not specify where the character is traveling. The main character's grandmother lives in a Muslim country, but the country's name is not stated.

On the other hand, some books (the remaining 30 books) clearly state both the Western country and Middle Eastern country either in same books such as *Mirror* (2010) by Jeannie Baker in which both Australia and Morocco are named or in a separate book such as *When the Animals Saved the Earth: An Eco Fable* (2015) by Alexis York Lumbard, set on Emerald Isle (i.e., Ireland).

Though the MEOC-MEBAW lists present day countries, another complicating issue is that, for reasons described in the second half of this chapter, one book is about a civilization no longer in existence, *Lugalbanda: The Boy who Got Caught up in a War* (2006) by Kathy Henderson. This book exemplifies a Sumerian character who lived around "four and a half thousand year ago" (unpaginated). Sumer, now considered Iraq, is no longer recognized as a nation. Neither is the religion practiced by the characters still in use. An additional book, *One City, Two Brothers: A Story from Jerusalem* (2007) by Chris Smith, is set in a city that has been important to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam at a time well before the city was considered a part

of Israel. Though the story in the book is represented as being told by King Soloman, a figure important to all three religions, the following is explicitly communicated about the story, "It is not part of the holy books of Jews, Muslims or Christians; rather, it is a simple folk tale, passed from storyteller to storyteller for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years, and kept alive by the power of its message" (unpaginated).

As far as books set in the Middle East, there is a tendency to focus in on particular countries. One third of the picture books, 13 of the 36 picture books, are set in the same 3 of the 21 countries named by MEOC-MEBAW, Iraq (5 books), Iran/Persia (5), and Morocco (3). The remaining books feature five additional countries including Afghanistan (3), Israel (2), Syria (2), Egypt (2), Turkey (1), Lebanon (1), Saudi Arabia (1). In addition, one book is about Palestinian characters living in the Gaza Strip. The remaining 12 countries listed by MEOC-MEBAW are never referenced.

Further, four books are set in unnamed Western countries with the characters' origins also left unstated. Similarly, two books are set in the Middle East, but the countries are never stated: *How Many Donkeys: An Arabic Counting Tale* by Margaret Read MacDonald, and Nadia Jameel Taibah is about counting in the Arabic language. In *Time to Pray* by Maha Addasi, the setting of the book alternates between an unnamed Western country and an unnamed Middle Eastern country.

As far as the gender and age of the characters, adult male main characters are included most often in the date set (n= 19) following by 11 female children, 8 male children, and 7 adult females. Interestingly, despite the fact that adult males are represented more often than male children, the opposite is true for women. That is to say, female children are more often

represented than adult females. Additionally, some animals and trees were assigned to a gender.

Table 5 below provides information about the leading characters.

Table 5. Overview of the Characters in the Books

Book	Name	Country of Origin	Characteristics
LOST AND FOUND CAT: THE TRUE STORY OF KUNKUSH'S IN- CREDIBLE JOURNEY by Doug Kuntz & Amy Shrodes, illustrated by Sue Conelison (Crown Books for Young Readers, 2017).	Sura	Iraq	Adult female
	Kuskush	Iraq	Male cat
	Amy Shrodes	Unnamed Western country	Adult female
MY BEAUTIFUL BIRDS by Suzanne Del Rizzo, illustrated by Suzanne Del Rizzo (Pajama Press, 2017).	Sami	Syria	Male child
STEPPING STONES: A REFUGEE FAMILY'S JOURNEY by Margriet Ruurs, translated by Falah Raheem, illustrated by Nizar Ali Badr (Orca Book Publishers, 2016).	Rama	Syria	Male child
WHEN THE ANIMALS SAVED EARTH: AN ECO-FABLE retold by Alexis York Lumbard, illustrated by Demi (Wisdom Tales, 2015).	Adam	Emerald Isles	Male child
NEW MONTH/NEW MOON by Allison Ofanansky, photographs by Eliyahu Alpern (Kar-Ben Publishing , 2014).	Israeli	Israel	Adult male
THE OLIVE TREE by Elsa Marston, illustrated by Claire Ewart (Wisdom Tales, 2014).	Sameer	Lebanon	Male child
	Muna	Lebanon	Female child
THE STORY OF HURRY by Emma Williams, illustrated by Ibrahim Quraishi (Seven Stories Press, 2014).	Hurry	Palestinian Territories	Male donkey
	Moody	Palestinian Territories	Adult male
	Watton	Palestinian Territories	Male child
RAZIA'S RAY OF HOPE by Elizabeth Suneby, illustrated by Suana Verelst (Citizen Kid, 2013).	Razia	Afghanistan	Female child
HANDS AROUND THE LIBRARY: PROTECTING EGYPT'S TREASURED BOOKS by Karen Leggett Abouraya, illustrated by Susan L. Roth (Dial Books, 2012).	Dr. Ismail Serageldin	Egypt	Adult male
	Unnamed narrator	Egypt	Female child
GOLDEN DOMES AND SILVER LANTERNS: A MUSLIM BOOK OF COLORS by Hena Khan, illustrated by Mehrdokht Amini (Chronicle Books, 2012).	Unnamed narrator	Unnamed country of origin living in unnamed	Female child

		Western country	
FOLKTALES FROM TURKEY: FROM AGRI TO ZELVE by Serpil Ural, translated by Ginger Saçlıoğlu illustrated by Dilara Arin (Citlembik Publications, 2012).		Turkey	19 adult males 3 adult females 6 female children 2 trees 7 adults of unknown gender
THE WOODEN SWORD: A JEWISH FOLKTALE FROM AFGHANISTAN by Ann Redisch Stampler, illustrated by Carol Liddiment (Albert Whitman & Company, 2012).	The Shoemaker	Afghanistan	Adult male
	The Shah	Afghanistan	Adult male
WHAT'S THE BUZZ: HONEY FOR A SWEET NEW YEAR by Allison Ofanansky, photographs by Eliyahu Alpern. (Kar-Ben Publishing, 2011).	Igal	Israel	Adult male
MIRROR by Jeannie Baker, unknown translator, illustrated by Jeannie Baker (Candlewick Press, 2010).	Unnamed narrator	Australia	Male child
	Unnamed narrator	Morrocco	Male child
THE SECRET MESSAGE by Mina Javaherbin, illustrated by Bruce Whatley, (Disney/Hyperion Books, 2010).	Unnamed Merchant	Iran	Adult male
	Unnamed parrot	India	Adult male
TIME TO PRAY by Maha Addasi, illustrated by Ned Gannon (Boyds Mills Press, 2010).	Yasmin	Unnamed Western country	Female child
	Yasmin's grandmother	Unnamed Middle Eastern country	Adult Female
HOW MANY DONKEYS: AN ARABIC COUNTING TALE by Margaret Read MacDonald, and Nadia Jameel Taibah, illustrated by Carol Liddiment (Albert Whitman & Company, 2009).	Jouha	Unnamed Middle Eastern country	Adult male
	Jouha's son	Unnamed Middle Eastern country	Male child
KINGS AND CARPENTERS: ONE HUNDRED BIBLE LAND JOBS YOU MIGHT HAVE PRAISED		Israelites	No leading character
		Philistines	

OR PANNED by Laurie Coulter, illustrated by Martha Newbigging (Annick Press, 2010).		Canaanites	
THE BUTTER MAN by Elizabeth Alalou and Ali Alalou, illustrated by Julie Klear Essakalli (Charles-bridge Publishing, 2008).	Nora	Unnamed Western country	Female child
	Nora's father	Morrocco	Adult male
THE GRAND MOSQUE OF PARIS: A STORY OF HOW MUSLIMS RESCUED JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST by Karen Gray Ruelle and Deborah Durland DeSaix, illustrated by by Karen Gray Ruelle and Deborah Durland DeSaix (Holiday House, 2009).	Si Kaddour Banghabrit	France	Adult male
SILENT MUSIC: A STORY OF BAGHDAD by James Rumford, illustrated by James Rumford (Roaring Brook Press, 2008).	Ali	Iraq	Male child
FOUR FEET, TWO SANDALS by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed, illustrated by Doug Chayka (Eerdman's Books for Young Readers, 2007).	Unnamed character	Afghanistan	Female child
	Unnamed character	Afghanistan	Female child
THE BEST EID EVER by Asma Mobin-Uddin, illustrated by Laura Jacobsen (Boyds Mills Press, 2007).	Aneesa	Unnamed Western country	Female child
	Aneesa's grandmother	Unnamed Western country	Adult female
	Unnamed family (father, two girls)	Unnamed country of origin living in and unnamed Western country	Adult male Two female children
ONE CITY, TWO BROTHERS by Chris Smith, illustrated by Aurélia Fronty (Barefoot Books, 2007).	Unnamed character	Jerusalem	Adult male
	Unnamed character	Jerusalem	Adult male
COUNT YOUR WAY THROUGH IRAN by Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson, illustrated by Farida Zaman (Millrook Press, 2007).	No main character	Iran/Persia	
THE RICH MAN AND THE PARROT retold by Suzan Nadimi, illustrated by Ande Cook (Albert Whitman & Company, 2007).	Unnamed merchant	Iran/Persia	Adult male
	Unnamed Parrot	India	Adult male

LUGALBANDA, THE BOY WHO GOT CAUGHT UP IN A WAR by Kathy Henderson, illustrated by Jane Ray (Candlewick Press, 2006).	Lugalbanda	Sumer	Male child
MYSTERY BOTTLE by Kristen Balouch, illustrated by Kristen Balouch (Hyperion Books for Children, 2006).	Unnamed grandchild	The U.S.	Male child
	Baba Bozorg	Iran/Persia	Adult male
ALIA'S MISSION: SAVING THE BOOKS OF IRAQ by Mark Alan Stamaty, illustrated by Mark Alan Stamaty(Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).	Alia	Iraq	Adult female
THE LIBRARIAN OF BASRA by Jeanette Winter, illustrated by Jeanette Winter (Harcourt, 2005).	Alia	Iraq	Adult female
THE TRAVELS OF BENJAMIN OF TUDELA by Uri Shulevitz, illustrated by Uri Shulevitz (Farrar Traus Giroux, 2005).	Benjamin of Tudela	Spain	Adult male
MUHAMMAD ص by Demi,illustrated by Demi (Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2003).	Muhmmad (pbuh)	Saudi Arabia	Adult male
CELEBRATING RAMADAN by Diane Hoyt Goldsmith, photographs by Lawrence Migdale (Holiday House, 2002).	Ibrahem	United States	Male child
TRAVELING MAN: THE JOURNEY OF IBN BATTUTA, 1325-1354 by James Rumfordillustrated by James Rumford (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001).	Ibn Batuta	Morocco	Adult male
THE HOUSE OF WISDOM by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland, illustrated by Mary GrandPré (DK Publishing, Inc., 1999).	Ishaq	Iraq	Adult male
THE STORYTELLERS by Ted Lewin, illustrated by Ted Lewin (New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 1998).	Abdul	Morrocco	Child male
	Abdul's grandfather	Morrocco	Adult male

Authors' and illustrators' relationship to Middle East. The authenticity of books in children's literature is often associated with the experiences of authors and illustrators and the degrees to which they can create from emic perceptives (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015). Through gathering information about the authors and illustrators from book jackets, authors and illustrators' webpages, and publishing houses, I found that the majority of the authors and illustrators were born in Western countries that include but are not limited to the United States,

Australia, Canada, and European countries such as France and Netherlands. 78% (32) of the authors were not born in the Middle East and do not indicate any Middle Eastern heritage. The percentage of Western born illustrators is even greater with 91% (30) of illustrators not from the Middle East and with no indication of any Middle Eastern heritage. I used resources such as their webpages, publishing houses, and books to verify information about their backgrounds. For instance, "author and illustrator Demiwas born in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is married to a Chinese man and has been interested in East Asia since she was a kid. She has written about many different cultures' traditions and legends from the geography. [H]er work has been appreciated by many diverse people across the globe" (http://www.wisdomtalespress.com/authors_artists-childrens/Demi.shtml).

Only 5% (2) authors and 6% (2) illustrators are from Middle East and still live in the area. For example, Serpil Ural (2012), author of *Folktales from Turkey: From Agri to Zelve* was born in Istanbul, is considered Middle Eastern as she was born in Turkey, and continues to live there (http://www.serpilural.net/Turkce/ozgecmis.htm). In another example Nizar Ali Badr, the illustrator of *Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family's Journey* was born in Latika, Syria and has never left his home country (Book Jacket).

I categorized authors and illustrators of Middle Eastern heritage currently living in Western countries as Western Middle Eastern. 15% (6) authors have Middle Eastern heritage living in a Western country and fall under the Western Middle Eastern category. A drastic drop is noticeable for illustrators in this category that only 3% (1) of illustrators have a sort of Middle Eastern heritage and live in a Western country. For example, Hena Khan (2012), the author of *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Color*, is of Pakistani descent and was born in Maryland. Paralleling that definition but only applying to one book creator, the term

Middle Eastern Westerner (2%) is used for Allison Ofanansky, author of *What's the Buzz: Honey for a Sweet New Year* and *New Month/ New Year* who was born in the U.S., moved to Israel, and became an Israeli citizen (Book Jackets). None of the illustrators fall into this category.

In addition, some Western authors are not of Middle Eastern heritage themselves but claim authenticity due to their marriage to someone from the Middle East or time spent living in or visiting the geography. For example, Karen Leggett Abouraya (2012), the author of *Hands Around the Library: Protecting Egypt's Treasured Books*, lives in Washington, DC and is married an Egyptian man. As stated on her author website, "Karen, her Egyptian husband and their two children have traveled frequently to Egypt, so it is not surprising that Egypt is the focus of her first children's book" (http://childrenslit.com/2014/11/05/karen-leggett-abouraya/). See Figures 4 and 5 for a representation of authors and illustrators' characterization using the categories of Middle Eastern, Western Middle Eastern, Middle Eastern Western, and No Middle Eastern Heritage. It is also important to recognize that the numbers of authors and illustrators are different from the total number of books because some books have more than one author/illustrator, and sometimes the same author/illustrator created more than one book. Table 3 provides a detailed description about author and illustrator background information as related to their Middle Eastern experiences.

Figure 2. Authors' Relationship to Middle East

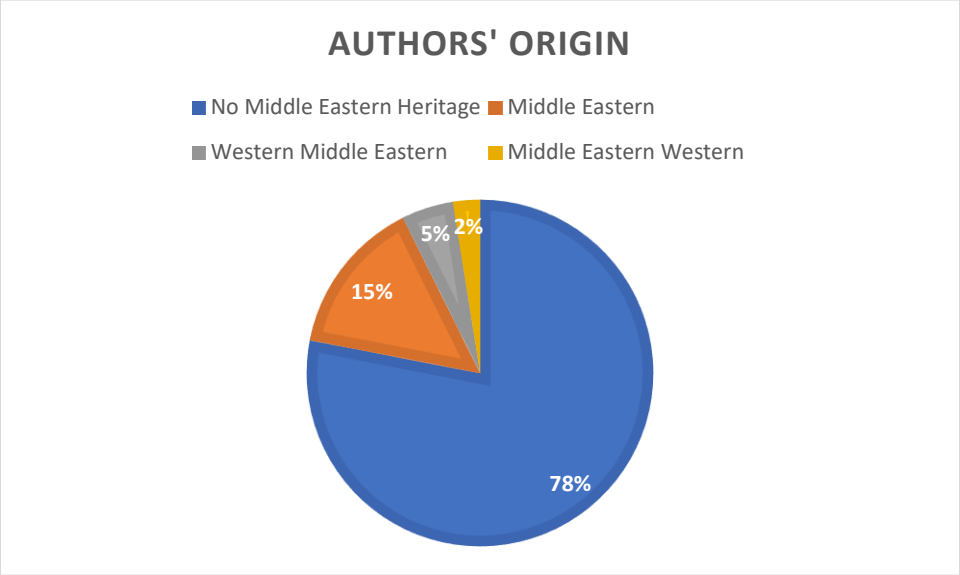
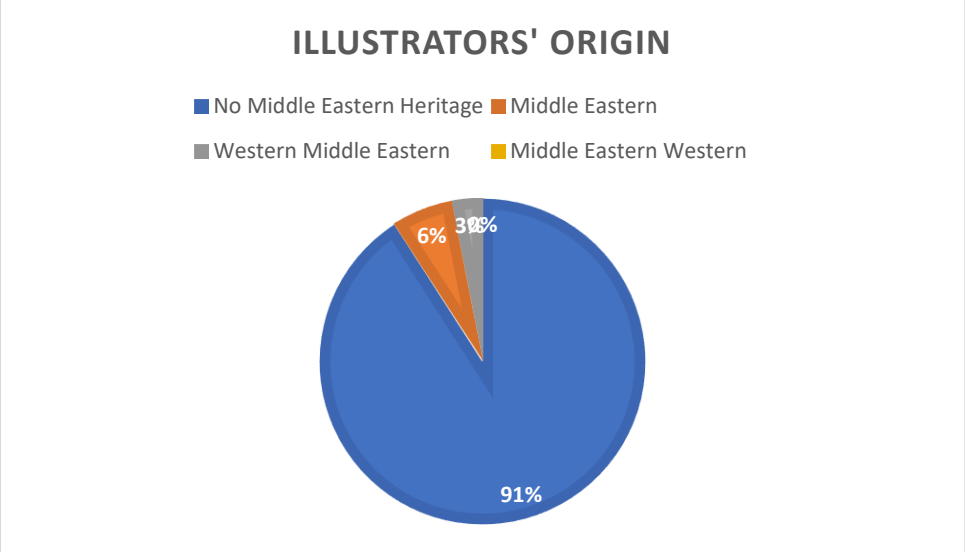


Figure 3. Illustrators' Relationship to Middle East



Publishing houses and their vision and mission statements related to multicultural books. Considering the publishing houses' role in publication process, I also gathered some information about their vision and mission statements related to diversity from their webpage. Some of the publishing houses (n=10) clearly states their advocacy for diverse and multicultural books. For example, "Orca Book Publishers aims to increase awareness of people for the lands

we live on. They publish books that 'illuminate the experiences of people of all ethnicities, people with disabilities, and people who identify LQBTQ' to show the diversity of human experiences to all ages. They also want readers to see themselves reflected in the books" (https://us.orcabook.com/About.aspx). In another example, "Seven Stories is as well known for publishing on human rights, social and economic justice, and media as for its prize-winning American fiction, literature in translation, and poetry collections" (Retired from https://www.sevenstories.com/pg/about). Unlike these advocacy vision and mission statements, the majority of publishing houses claim a more generic vision and mission statement rather than one advocating for multicultural education. For example, "DK Publishing was founded in1974 in London. They aim to 'inspire, educate, entertain readers from all ages' that they are popular for innovative design and illustrations" (https://www.dk.com/us/information/about-dk). To give another example, "Roaring Brook Press aims to publish high quality books for children of various ages" (https://us.macmillan.com/publishers/roaring-brook-press/). One additional category focuses on specifically Jewish content. Kar-Ben publishing house indicates that

> With over 400 titles in print, Kar-Ben is the largest publisher of exclusively Jewish-themed children's books in the world, publishing 18-20 new, high quality children's titles each year. Subjects include fiction and nonfiction for preschool through middle school, including Jewish holiday books, life-cycle stories, Bible tales, folktales, stories about Israel, and Jewish history, reflecting the rich cultural diversity of today's Jewish family (Retired from http://www.karben.com/About-Us_ep_42-1.html).

As a result of these data, there major categories: publishing house that advocate for social justice, publishing houses with generic mission and vision statement, and publishing houses focusing on specific content (e.g., Jewish content) are found.

Table 6. Authors' and Illustrators' Relationship with/in Middle East

LOST AND FOUND CAT: THE TRUE STORY OF KUNKUSH'S INCREDIBLE JOURNEY (Crown Books for Young Readers, 2017).			Publishing House
Doug Kuntz is a photojournalist who travelled to Greece to help refugees. He volunteered there, and spent 5 months in Greece, Turkey, France, German and Norway (Book Jacket.)	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	A division of Penguin Random House in Canada (https://penguinrandomhouse.ca/content/about-penguin-random-house-canada).
Amy Shrodes saw a post on Facebook for volunteers in Lesbos, Greece and she went there to help refugees (http://annarborfamily.com/feature/an-interview-with-ypsilanti-author-amy-shrodes/	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
Sue Conelison lives in St Charles, Iowa (http://www.suecornelison.com/about-2/).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
MY BEAUTIFUL BIRDS (Pajama Press, 2017).			
Suzanne Del Rizzo launched herself both as illustrator and author in this book. She lives in Oakville, Ontario. (http://suzannedelrizzo.com/about-2/) While trying to explain refugee problem to her own children, she found an article about a Syrian boy who connected with birds that made her to write this book (Book Jacket).	Author/ illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Pajama Press, aims to publish high quality books that will receive wide critical claims and awards" (http://pajamapress.ca/about/).
STEPPING STONES: A REFUGEE FAMILY'S JOURNEY (Orca Book Publishers, 2016).			
Margriet Ruurs was born in Netherlands, and now she lives in Salt Spring Island, B.C. with her family (https://www.margrietruurs.com/about/index.html). She came up writing this book after seeing Mr. Badr's art and she aims to raise fund to help Syrian refugees.	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	Orca Book Publishers aims to increase awareness of people for the lands we live on. They publish books that 'illuminate the experiences of people of all ethnicities, people with disabilities, and people who identify LQBTQ' to show the diversity of human experiences to all ages. They also want readers to see themselves reflected
Nizar Ali Badr was born in Latika, Syria. He gathers stones and bring them to home that the stones become the medium of his art. He has never left his country and home (Book Jacket).	Illustrator	Middle Eastern	

			in the books" (https://us.orcabook.com/About.aspx).
WHEN THE ANIMALS SAVED EARTH: AN ECO-FABLE (Wisdom Tales, 2015)			
Alexis York Lumbard was born in a military base in North Caroline, and her interest to other cultures lead her to have a BA in comparative religion. She lived in Egypt, Jordan and Amman. She started to write after noticing she could not find stories to read her kids and she wrote by herself (http://www.alexisyorklumbard.com/about-alexis).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	Wisdom Tales aims to share "wisdom, beauty, and values of traditional cultures and peoples from around the world with young readers and their families" (http://www.wisdomtalespress.com/about_us.shtml).
Demi, an author and illustrator, was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is married a Chinese man and has been interested in East Asia since she was a kid. She wrote about different cultures traditions and legends from the geography (http://www.wisdomtalespress.com/authors_artists-childrens/Demi.shtml).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
NEW MONTH/NEW MOON (Kar-Ben Publishing, 2014) and WHAT'S THE BUZZ: HONEY FOR A SWEET NEW YEAR (Kar-Ben Publishing, 2011)			
Allison Ofanansky was born in the U.S., moved to Israel and became an Israeli citizen in 1996 with her husband and two children (Book Jacket).	Author	Middle Eastern Westerner	"Kar-Ben Publishing publishes high quality children's book with Jewish content including fiction and nonfiction and aims to illustrate cultural diversity in Jewish community"(http://www.karben.com/About-Us_ep_42-1.html
Eliyahu Alpern was born and raised outside of Chicago. His specialty is 360-degree panoramic images of Israel.	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
THE OLIVE TREE (Wisdom Tales, 2014).			
Elsa Marston was born in Newton Centre, Massachusetts and she married to a Lebanese man who is teaching political science. Due to his job, they travel a lot to Middle East and she likes writing about Middle East and Arab Americans (http://www.elsamarston.com/bio.htm).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Wisdom Tales aims to share 'wisdom, beauty, and values of traditional cultures and peoples from around the world with young readers and their families' (http://www.wisdomtalespress.com/about_us.shtml).
Claire Ewart was born in Holland, MI and through her travels and interest of taking photographs in different countries she illustrates the books, such as sketching streets in Egypt, helped her to illustrate this book (https://www.claireewart.com/bio).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
THE STORY OF HURRY (Seven Stories Press, 2014).			

Emma Williams studied history at Oxford, and medicine at London University. She worked in UK, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the West Bank, the US, and South Africa as a doctor. She has 4 children and lives in New York City (Paper Jacket).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Seven Stories Press published books of human imagination. They publish in different languages. They are well-know for publishing human rights, social and economic justice" (https://www.sevenstories.com/pg/about).
Ibrahim Quraishi was born in Nairobi, Kenya. He spends his time in Europe and Middle East for his works related to immigration, refugees, disposition and cohabitation (http://ibrahimquraishi.org/cv/). Now, he lives in Amsterdam (Book Jacket).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
RAZIA'S RAY OF HOPE (Citizen Kid, 2013).			
Elizabeth Suneby lives with her family near Boston, Massachusetts. She decided to write this book after she met Razia Jan, the founder of the Zabuli Education Center near Kabul (Book Jacket).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Citizen Kid aims to inspire children for a better global citizen. They aim to make complex and global issues available to children age 8 to 12 such as 'such as water conservation, biodiversity, food security, microlending, citizenship, global awareness and more." (http://www.kidscanpress.com/series/citizenkid).
Suana Verelst was born in Antwerp, Belgium and currently lives in Montreal (https://www.suanaverelst.com/bio/).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
HANDS AROUND THE LIBRARY: PROTECTING EGYPT'S TREASURED BOOKS (Dial Books, 2012).			
Karen Leggett Abouraya lives near Washington, DC and she is married with an Egyptian man. Thus, she travels there a lot and Egypt is the focus on her books (http://childrenslit.com/2014/11/05/karen-leggett-abouraya/).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Dial Books aims to entertain, enrich and encourage readers that they care about diversity and artistic excellence that they have been leading in multicultural literature for a long time" (http://www.penguin.com/publishers/dial
Susan L. Roth was born in New York City, is married now. She has three children, and two grandchildren (http://susanlroth.com/bio_story.htm).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	

			booksforyoungreaders/).
GOLDEN DOMES AND SILVER LANTERNS: A MUSLIM BOOK OF COLORS (Chronicle Books, 2012).			
Hena Khan is a Pakistani descent Muslim woman who was born and raised in Maryland (https://www.henakhan.com/about-old/)	Author	Western Middle Eastern	"Chronicle Books considers all details and make sure that their books is unique and belongs to their company". https://www.chroniclebooks.com/about-us
Mehrdokht Amini grew up in Iran and now she lives in Surey, England (Book jacket).	Illustrator	Western Middle Eastern	
FOLKTALES FROM TURKEY: FROM AGRI TO ZELVE (Citlembik Publications, 2012).			
Serpil Ural was born in Istanbul, Turkey. She went school in the US, and she has written many books (https://muse.jhu.edu/article/539765).	Author	Middle Eastern	"Citlembik Publications publishes books which are sweet and though-provoking with multicultural and multi-perspective. They publish books that illustrate cultural and historical aspects in the geography" (http://www.citlembik.com.tr/).
Dilara Arin is a London based illustrator, originally from Turkey (https://www.illusian.com/about/).	Illustrator	Western Middle Eastern	
THE WOODEN SWORD: A JEWISH FOLKTALE FROM AFGHANISTAN (Albert Whitman & Company, 2012).			
Ann Redisch Stampler is known for retelling traditional Yiddish stories, and she won an award for her book. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and children (Book Jacket).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Albert Whitman & Company aims to help reader develop intellectually and emotionally and creating high quality books" (https://www.albertwhitman.com/heart-and-culture/).
Carol Liddiment was born in Widness Cheshire in Northwest England and currently lives in England with her children (Book Jacket, https://kathytemean.wordpress.com/2013/11/30/illustrator-saturday-carol-liddiment/).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
MIRROR by Jeannie Baker (Candlewick Press, 2010).			

Jeannie Baker is an Australian writer and illustrator who visited Morocco and focused on Berber community there. While she was in Australia she heard some hate speeches about immigrants, yet she was surprised how she was welcomed in Morocco as a woman. She kept a journal during her visit and took photographs (https://www.jeanniebaker.com/focus/mirror-extracts-from-my-journey/).	Author/ illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Candlewick Press aims to publish mostly quality non-fiction books" (http://www.candlewick.com/about.asp)
THE SECRET MESSAGE (Disney/Hyperion Books, 2010).			
Mina Javaherbin was born in Iran and now lives near Southern California with her husband (https://minajavaherbin.com/bio/).	Author	Western Middle Eastern	"Disney/Hyperion Books publish books that appeal children" (http://www.writerscafe.org/publishers/Hyperion-Books-for-Children/101/).
Bruce Whatley is working in London and Sydney and his main inspiration of illustration has been his family (http://brucewhatley.com/home-1/).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
TIME TO PRAY (Boyds Mills Press, 2010).			
Maha Addasi was born and raised in Kuwait. She lives in Virginia now (Book Jacket).	Author	Western Middle Eastern	"Boyds Mills Press aims "fun with purpose" and they also aim to entertain, inform and engage children of all ages" (https://www.boydsmillspress.com/bmp/about-us).
Ned Gannon is originally from Midwest, and currently teaches at University of Wisconsin, He lives with his wife and two kids (http://www.nedgannon.com/bio.html).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
HOW MANY DONKEYS: AN ARABIC COUNTING TALE (Albert Whitman & Company, 2009).			
Margaret Read MacDonald lives in Seattle, Washington, and her expertise is in folktales. She travels the world and tell folktales (Book Jacket, http://www.margaretreadmacdonald.com/0).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	Albert Whitman & Company aims to help reader develop intellectually and emotionally and creating high quality books (https://www.albertwhitman.com/heart-and-culture/).
Nadia Jameel Taibah grew up by hearing Saudi folktales told by her grandmother. She lives in Saudi Arabia with her husband and son (Book Jacket, https://www.albertwhitman.com/author/nadia-jameel-taibah/).	Author	Middle Eastern	
Carol Liddiment was born in Widness Cheshire in Northwest England and currently lives in England with her children (Book Jacket, https://kathytemean.wordpress.com/2013/11/30/illustrator-saturday-carol-liddiment/).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	

KINGS AND CARPENTERS: ONE HUNDRED BIBLE LAND JOBS YOU MIGHT HAVE PRAISED OR PANNED (Annick Press, 2010).			
Laurie Coulter grew up in London and Toronto. She started this job by editing non-fiction books, then she wrote her book. She lives with her husband in Toronto (http://www.annickpress.com/author/Laurie-Coulter).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Annick Press aims to publish most innovative fiction and non-fiction books. They are extremely active in foreign right and they have licensed 15 language above 40 countries" (http://www.annickpress.com/about-annick).
Martha Newbigging is a multi-disciplinary artist and she mostly focus on autobiographical drawing and comics for critical pedagogy and currently teaches at Seneca College in Canada (http://www.marthanewbigging.com/art_practice/art_practice.html).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
THE BUTTER MAN (Charlesbridge Publishing, 2008).			
Elizabeth Alalou was a volunteer when she met her husband in Morrocco. She, now, lives in Pennsylvania with her children and husband (Book Jacket).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	Charlesbridge "Publishing aims to create lifelong readers by presenting accurate information and enhance positive worldview through children's wonder and enjoyment" (https://www.charlesbridge.com/pages/about-us).
Ali Alalou is an associate professor at University of Delaware. Ali's family lives in Morrocco He visits his family with his wife (Elizabeth Alalou) and four children (Book Jacket).	Author	Western Middle Eastern	
Julie Klear Essakalli is an illustrator who was born in Germany and raised in Toledo, Ohio (https://zidzidkids.com/team/).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
THE GRAND MOSQUE OF PARIS: A STORY OF HOW MUSLIMS RESCUED JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST (Holiday House, 2009).			
Karen Gray Ruelle lives in New York City, and while writing nonfiction, like this book, she does an extensive research (https://karenruelle.carbonmade.com/about).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Holiday House began to publish in1935 that first aims to publish for children. They aim to "entertain, educate and enlighten children" (http://holidayhouse.com/our-story/).
Deborah Durland DeSaix lives in Asheville, North Caroline, and is a professor of illustration at University of Hartford (https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/authors/deborah-durland-desaix/).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
SILENT MUSIC: A STORY OF BAGHDAD (Roaring Brook Press, 2008).			

James Rumford currently lives in Hawaii and he has a special interest to calligraphy. He lived in Africa, Afghanistan, Arabia (https://www.jamesrumford.com/Aboutme.html).	Author/ illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Roaring Brook Press aims to publish high quality books for children of various ages" (https://us.macmillan.com/publishers/roaring-brook-press/)
FOUR FEET, TWO SANDALS (Eerdman's Books for Young Readers, 2007).			
Karen Lynn Williams was born in Connecticut and lived in Africa and Haiti (http://www.karenlynnwilliams.com/index.html).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	Eerdman's Books for Young Readers values the books that "celebrate diversity, stories of historical significance and stories that relate to contemporary social issues" (https://www.eerdmans.com/Pages/YoungReaders/EBYR-About.aspx)
Khadra Mohammed is originally from Somalia and worked in refugee camps in the U.S., Pakistan and Kenya more than 20 years (https://www.eerdmans.com/Pages/Item/9104/Author-Interview-Karen-Lynn-Williams--Khadra-Mohammed.aspx, http://www.citylabpgh.org/person/khadra-mohammed/).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
Doug Chayka is an illustrator based on New Jersey and grew up in New York. (http://dougchayka.com/ABOUT).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
THE BEST EID EVER (Boyds Mills Press, 2007).			
Asma Mobin-Uddin, is an American born (Ohio), Muslim woman originally from Pakistan. (http://www.asmamobinuddin.com/bio.html).	Author	Western Middle Eastern	The publishing house stated "fun with a purpose" as their motto/ (https://www.boydsmillspress.com/bmp/about-us).
Laura Jacobsen is an American born illustrator and originally from Columbus, Ohio (https://www.amazon.com/Laura-Jacobsen/e/B002DBE4KG)	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
ONE CITY, TWO BROTHERS (Barefoot Books, 2007).			
Chris Smith is storyteller who lives in Oxford and Devon/ UK. He worked with UNICEF in Gaza for 15 years and wrote this book (Book jacket).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Barefoot Books is dedicated for "diverse, inclusive and inspiring books" to raise global citizen of the world" (https://www.barefootbooks.com/about-us/).
Aurélia Fronty lives in Montreuil, France and that is her first book in this company (http://www.aureliafronty.com/spip.php?article6, Book Jacket).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	

COUNT YOUR WAY THROUGH IRAN (Millrook Press, 2007).			
Jim Haskins is an African American author who was a professor of English at University of Florida (https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/authors/jim-haskins/).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Millbrook Press published nonfiction book by focusing on different point of views" (https://www.lernerbooks.com/About-Lerner/Pages/Millbrook-Press.aspx).
Kathleen Benson is a children's literature author who was born in Keene, New Hemisphere (http://www.kathleenbenson.com/).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
Farida Zaman is a Toronto based artist who travels many different countries that influenced her multicultural perspectives (http://www.faridazaman.com/intro/).	Illustrator	Heritage not stated	
THE RICH MAN AND THE PARROT (Albert Whitman & Company, 2007).			
Suzan Nadimi is originally from Iran, and her grandmother was used to tell this story to her (http://justonemorebook.com/2008/09/08/interview-with-suzan-nadimi/).	Author	Western Middle Eastern	"Albert Whitman & Company aims to help reader develop intellectually and emotionally and creating high quality books" (https://www.albertwhitman.com/heart-and-culture/).
Ande Cook is an instructor of art at Georgia State University, and married to a Rockstar (https://www.andecookstudio.com/about-1/)	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
LUGALBANDA, THE BOY WHO GOT CAUGHT UP IN A WAR (Candlewick Press, 2006).			
Kathy Henderson came across this story just before the invasion of Iraq, and she thought the timing was extraordinary (Book Jacket).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Candlewick Press aims to publish mostly quality non-fiction books" (http://www.candlewick.com/about.asp)
Jane Ray was born in London (http://www.janeray.com/about/). While writing this book she looked for Sumerian artifacts. She says that "this is the first time I've really had to research a particular historical period for a book. And I found it completely fascinating. It was wonderful to have the chance to explore the skill, beauty, and sophistication of this ancient culture—and added pleasure in illustrating the story" Book Jacket).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
MYSTERY BOTTLE (Hyperion Books for Children, 2006).			
Kristen Balouch was born in Chicago and lives in New York City (http://www.kristenbalouch.com/resume.html).	Author/ illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Hyperion Books for Children aims to appeal children though children, picture book, young

She is married a man who was put in a plane when he was a child before the revolution in Iran (Book Jacket).			teen & adult genres" (http://www.writerscafe.org/publishers/Hyperion-Books-for-Children/101/).
ALIA'S MISSION: SAVING THE BOOKS OF IRAQ (Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).			
Mark Alan Stamaty was born in Brooklyn, New York and her parents both are cartoonists. He now lives in New York City (http://www.stamaty.engelbachdesign.com/bio/index.html).	Author/ illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Alfred A. Knopf aims to publish distinguished hardcover fiction and non-fiction" (http://knopfdoubleday.com/imprints/#knopf).
THE LIBRARIAN OF BASRA (Harcourt, 2005).			
Jeanette Winter lives with her husband in New York. She published many books related to different countries (https://www.kidsreads.com/authors/jeanette-winter).	Author/ illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"A division of Houghton Mifflin Company aims "fostering lifetime learning" (https://www.hmhco.com/about-us
THE TRAVELS OF BENJAMIN OF TUDELA (Farrar Traus Giroux, 2005).			
Uri Shulevitz was born in Warsaw, Poland and now lives in NYC. He won Caldecott Medal and lived in Tel Aviv (https://muse.jhu.edu/article/245910).	Author/ illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Farrar Traus Giroux has some authors who won Caldecott, and Nobel prize" (https://us.macmillan.com/fsg/about#Children's%20books).
MUHAMMAD ص *(*Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2003).			
Demi, an author and illustrator, was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is married a Chinese man and has been interested in East Asia since she was a kid. She wrote about different cultures traditions and legends from the geography (http://www.wisdomtalespress.com/authors_artists-childrens/Demi.shtml	Author/ illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Margaret K. McElderry Books is proud of their global identity that they work with talented people from different countries and publish picturebooks, fantasy, contemporary,

			historical fiction, character-driven picturebooks and poetry" (http://simonandschusterpublishing.com/margaret-k-mcelderry-books/
CELEBRATING RAMADAN (Holiday House, 2002).			
Diane Hoyt Goldsmith lives in Orinda, California with her husband and children. She wrote books related to celebration in different cultures (https://www.strongnations.com/gs/show.php?gs=3&gsd=1426).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Holiday House began to publish in1935 that first aims to publish for children. They aim to "entertain, educate and enlighten children" (http://holidayhouse.com/our-story/).
Lawrence Migdale is an artist and photographs children in their natural environment. He lives in Orinda, California with his wife and children. (Book Jacket).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
TRAVELING MAN: THE JOURNEY OF IBN BATTUTA, 1325-1354 (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001).			
James Rumford currently lives in Hawaii and he has a special interest to calligraphy. He lived in Africa, Afghanistan, Arabia (https://www.jamesrumford.com/Aboutme.html	Author/ illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Houghton Mifflin Company aims "fostering lifetime learning" (https://www.hmhco.com/about-us).
THE HOUSE OF WISDOM (DK Publishing, Inc., 1999)			
Florence Parry Heide was born in the U.S. and wrote more than 100 children's books. She described it as her hobby (https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/12481/florence-parry-heide).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"DK Publishing was founded in1974 in London. They aim to "inspire, educate, entertain readers from all ages" that they are popular for innovative design and illustrations" (https://www.dk.com/us/information/about-dk).
Judith Heide Gilliland is the daughter of Florence Parry Heide. She lived in Cairo for 2 years and she is an expert of Arab culture. Now she lives in New Hemisphere (https://www.penguin.co.uk/puffin/authors/judith-heide-gilliland/21024/).	Author	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
Mary GrandPré is an American artist who is inspired from Islamic art and she did and extensive research which lead her to illustrate this book (Boo Jacket).	Illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	
THE STORYTELLERS (Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 1998).			

Ted Lewin, an American author and illustrator grew up in Buffalo, New York. His books are inspired from his travel to different countries, same as traveling Morocco in this book (http://www.tedlewin.com/about/biography/).	Author/ illustrator	No Middle Eastern Heritage	"Lee and Shepard Books published books for children." (https://www.jacketflap.com/lothrop-lee-and-shepard-books-publisher-4106)

The Presence of Religion and Islam

The Middle East is a vast geographical area consisting of many countries, nationalities, ethnicities and religions; it is important to bring attention to this diversity. Many of the world's religions originated in this area. Though the majority of people in this region practice Islam, other religious groups are also actively practicing in the region and feel a sense of ownership over particular parts of the geography. Yet, as with all groups, religious identities play out in people's day-to-day lives in ways that intersect with other identities. Following, in this section, I report on my analysis of religion in the books, particularly Islam.

Religion is prevalent across the data set. Amongst 36 books, only one book (3%), *Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family's Journey* by Margriet Rurrs, does not reference a religion. This bilingual (Arabic and English) story is about a family's escape from the Syrian war. The book does not have any language or image that directly link to a particular religion. The remaining 35 books do reference religion. Of these books, five center on or are written from the perspective of a religion other than Islam (i.e., Judaism and Christianity), four emphasize shared stories amongst the Abrahamic religions. The remaining 25 are about Islam and its rituals (7), historical and traditional stories from Muslim communities (4) or have Muslim characters in present-day settings but do not have explicit attention to Islam (14).

Of the books written from Jewish perspectives, two are about Jewish religious celebrations and do not mention any other religion: *What's the Buzz: Honey for A Sweet New*

Year (2011) by Allison Ofanansky and *New Month/New Moon* (2014) by Allison Ofanansksy. The former is about Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), and the latter emphasizes the beginning of a new month in the Jewish calendar (Rosh Chodesh). In another book, *The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela: Through Three Continents in the Twelfth Century*, author Uri Shulevitz (2005), adapts the story of "the greatest medieval Jewish traveler" (book jacket) for young readers from the original Hebrew sources. The book includes references to Islam and Christianity as Benjamin encountered the religions across his travels. The final book, *The Wooden Sword,* a Jewish folktale by Ann Redisch Stampler (2012) highlights the positive relationship between a Jewish shoemaker and an Afghani shah (Muslim), told from the shoemaker's perspective. The shah caused many obstacles to test the shoemaker's faith and the shoemaker kept his faith under all difficulties. At the end of the book, the Jewish shoemaker was awarded a high honor by the Muslim Shah due to his faith.

Another book, *Kings and Carpenters: One Hundred Bible Land Jobs You might have Praised or Panned* by Laurie Coulter (2010), is written from a Christian perspective as evidenced by the centrality of the Christian *Bible* throughout the book. The book is written about a time before the birth of any Abrahamic religions in Ancient Canaan (the geography the author refers to as Bible land) and the civilizations that lived there such as the Israelites, Philistines, and Canaanites (Coulter, 2010). The book includes reference to Islam and Judaism in addition to other religions present in the region at the time period described by the book. Interestingly, some drawings in the book show Islamic images such as some minarets on a castle yet the purpose was not intentional as these books are not written from Islamic perspective or do not center Islam. Because they are the outsiders to the Middle East, the book creators could not be aware that the

minarets are a symbol in Islam and has a significant meaning in this religion, but it is not a symbol of Middle East

Shared Stories Across Religions

Four books reflect shared stories amongst the groups. One is a story that reflects the humanity of all that originated from the middle east. Three are stories told in all three Abrahamic religions, though many of the references to the religions are cursory.

Lugalbanda: The Boy who Caught up In a War: An Epic Tale from Ancient Iraq (Henderson, 2006) is an adaptation of an ancient Mesopotamian story that, according to the author, "can well lay claim to be the oldest written story in the world" (unpaginated). Religious references only occur once in the very first sentence of the book:

> THIS IS THE STORY of a boy named Lugalbanda who got caught up in a war. It is one of the oldest stories in the world, older that the Torah, the Bible, the Koran, older than Homer or the Greek and Roman myths, even older than the Epics of Gilgamesh (un paginated).

Because all the Abrahamic religions originate in this area, this book can be considered something shared by those who practice all three. In another example, *When the Animals Saved Earth: An Eco-Fable,* Lumbard (2015) claims the following in the Author's Note:

> This book was inspired by a 1,000-year-old fable with a fascinating, multi-faith history. The first version, *The Case of the Animals Versus Man Before the King of the Jinn*, was written in Arabic by the Muslim Brethren of Purity and appeared in 10th-centruy Iraq (unpaginated).

This folktale has been told in multiple religions (i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). It was first written by Arab Muslims then spread to Christian and Jewish communities. Further,

Lumbard's story is set in the West, in *Emerald Isle,* a term used for Ireland. Paralleling the multi-faith folktale nature of Lumbard's book, *One City, Two Brothers: A Story from Jerusalem* (2015) by Chris Smith is about two brothers' relationship within the kingdom of Solomon, a figure in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Yet, as indicated by the author, "it is not part of the holy books of Jews, Muslims or Christian; rather it is a simple folktale, passed from storyteller to storyteller for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years, kept alive by the power of its message" (Smith, 2015, unpaginated). These two folktales do not center on any single religion. The fourth and final book, *Folktales from Turkey: From Agri to Zelve* by Serpil Ural (2012), is an anthology of stories from Turkey, a country known for its religious diversity. Some of the stories are specifically related to Islam and have Muslim characters (e.g., "Nasreddin Hodja"), some are common across all Abrahamic religions (e.g., "Ağrı and Noah's Ark", "Urfa: Home of Abraham"), and some are secular (e.g. "Zelve and Its Pigeons").

Islam and/or Muslim Characters

The majority of the books (n= 25) are about Islam, are written from a Muslim perspective, or have Muslim characters. Since it is the majority religion in the geographic area, this number is not surprising. The majority of books in this category are about Islam or Islamic rituals (n=7). Others are traditional stories from Muslim communities (n=4). Still others are not specifically about Islam but have Muslim characters (n=14). Next, I describe these three sub-categories that center Islam and Muslim characters.

Books about Islam and its rituals. Seven books are about Islam and would easily fit in a religious education context. Generally, they tell the story of a family or character's life in a way that highlights the practicing of an Islamic ritual. These books provide a positive representation that mirrors the lives of potential readers who are Muslim children.

The Grand Mosque of Paris: A Story of How Muslims Rescued Jews During the Holocaust by Karen Gray Ruelle (2010) tells a story of how Muslims living in France helped Jews to escape from the country during World War II. Their efforts included opening the Grand Mosque for sanctuary. As I indicated in the introduction to this study, Islam is a *jihad* (striving) to struggle with self and communal problems and helping Jews in that time is a striving of a communal problem. The role played by the Muslims in this story reflect the collective actions of addressing a communal problem, the risk faced by Jews. The outsider creators of this book have done extensive research to accurately represent the historical event in Paris, yet they did not mention how Muslims' actions to protect Jews was related to Islam and was a result of an Islamic ritual.

Muhammad ص, written by Demi (2003), is a biography of Muhammad's (pbuh) life that includes information related to the birth of Islam as seen in the following excerpt:

> Muhammad ص did not institute an organized priesthood, altars, or sacraments. He prescribed several key observances, which are known as the Five Pillars of Islam. BEARING WITNESS (SHADADAH): Muslims declare acceptance of one God—Al lah—and MUHAMMAD ص s his prophet (unpaginated).

In addition to the Five Pillars of Islam, other Islamic guidance is provided:

> The Koran and the Sunnah became guides that provided a model of ideal moral and social behavior to be followed by every Muslim. True believers were to honor their parents, treat women with kindness, help the poor, protect orphans, and be honorable and just in all personal and professional matters (unpaginated).

In addition to these practices common across all Muslims, verses from the *Quran* are also included in this book.

Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Color by Hena Khan (2012) used the genre of concept books (e.g., designed to teach colors) to educate about Islam. Each page spread attributes one color to something related to Islam. For example, "Red is the rug Dad kneels on to pray facing toward Mecca, five times a day" (unpaginated). The book concludes with, "All of the colorful things we've seen make up the world of my faith, my deen" (unpaginated).

Two of the books tell the story of a Muslim child as they participate in religious celebrations. In both stories, much more information about Islam is included than the celebration itself. *The Best Eid Ever* (2007) by Asma Mobin-Uddin is about a young girl, Aneesa, who celebrates Ramadan with her grandmother while her parents go to Eid Al-Adha for hajj (i.e., pilgrimage to Mecca). The insider author of this book reflects the real meaning of Eid al-Adha in a Western country to mean sharing. *Celebrating Ramadan* (2002) by Diane Hoyt Goldsmith is an informational book in which photographs and print are used as Ibraham and his family show the rituals of Eid Al-Fitr (Ramadan) in detail including daily prayers.

Each of the two remaining books is about a single Islamic ritual. In *Time to Pray* by Maha Addasi (2010), the main character, Yasmin, visits her grandmother in an unnamed, mostly Muslim country. During her visit, she learns from her grandmother about daily prayers in Islam. As an insider to the community, the author was able to represent these Islamic rituals authentically. The unnamed Muslim country, however, makes it more difficult to address which community the book reflects. *Traveling Man, The Journey of Ibn Battuta, 1325-1354* by James Rumford (2004) is a biography of Ibn Battuta and his experiences during his pilgrim to Mecca (Hajj). This historical book was created after extensive research about the Ibn Batuta. Considering the historical figure in the book, the author did not reference archives and first-hand

data, yet still reflect his life accurately. In addition, the author did not reference Islamic rituals in detail.

Historical and traditional stories from Muslim communities. Four books are inspired by traditional stories from Muslim communities that tend to be well-known across various Muslim countries. One, *The House of Wisdom* by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland (1999), is about a well-known historical figure, Ishaq, who travelled the world in order to learn and collect books to bring back to Baghdad for translation. He brought these books back to the library. As a result

> The House of Wisdom became like a beacon, drawing to itself a thousand scholars from all over the world. They came to read the precious books, books that had been written in languages and alphabets that only scholars could read; ancient Greek and Syriac, Persian and Sanskrti. Once the scholars had translated these books into Arabic, everyone could read them and share their ideas.
>
> And as these ideas sparked new ideas, Baghdad shone brighter (unpaginated).

Through Ishaq's life story, this book emphasizes the longstanding Muslim tradition of valuing and seeking knowledge. That is to say, the building provides a safe space for men and women to develop themselves as intellectuals by reading books from all over the world, engaging in dialogues with people from different nationalities, and using materials for researching (e.g. translating).

The remaining three books are traditional stories. Two of the books, *The Rich Man and the Parrot* retold by Suzan Nadimi (2007) and *The Secret Message* by Mina Javaherbin (2010) are based on the same 13th century poem by Rumi. Reflecting the eminence of Rumi, Nadimi writes

> Eventually, Rumi took his father's place as the head of a religious school, practicing Sufism, a mystic tradition of Islam. Today, Rumi's work is read all around the world, and his words and wisdom inspire a diverse audience (unpaginated).

The story is retold not only because of Rumi's reputation. In her author's note, Mina Javaherbin writes:

> WHEN I WAS A CHILD, growing up in Iran, I begged my father every evening to tell me the story of the parrot and the merchant. It was a tale he told from memory. I still remember the fantastic scenes that played in my imagination as he spoke.
>
> Years later; when I studied Persian literature, I discovered my favorite story was an ancient poem (Author's Note).

The fact that this particular story, recognized in Muslim communities around the world, is found in two different MEOC-MEBAW books is striking.

In the other example of a traditional story, *How Many Donkeys: An Arabic Counting Tale, 2012* by Margaret Read MacDonald and Nadia Jameel, the authors also indicate the story's historical aspect. The authors exclaim that:

> Jouha (JOU-huh—ou as in could) is a wise fool much beloved in Middle Eastern folklore. These tales are told in Turkey about Nasr-din Hodja and Iran about the Mullah. Egypt calls him Goha. Wherever he is found and under whatever name, his tales are always a mix of wisdom and foolishness, with trickster elements tossed in (unpaginated).

With minor alterations (e.g., changing the character's name), this story is recognized in many Muslim communities.

To conclude, the stories found in these four books are taken from the history and traditions of Muslim communities. They, with minor variations, are told in various countries.

Muslim characters. In the final subcategory (n=14), Muslim characters are featured in the books, but they do not serve as instructive related to religious rituals or particular traditions. Instead, the character is doing something such as saving books (e.g*., Alia's Missions: Saving the Books of Iraq* by Mark Alan Stamaty, 2004), protesting (*Hands Around the Library: Protecting Egypt's Treasured Books*, by Karen Leggett Abouraya, 2012), and escaping from a war-torn country (e.g., *Lost and Found Cat: The True Story of Kunkush's Incredible Journey*, by Doug Kuntz & Amy Shrodes, 2017). All of the stories are set in modern times. These books and the stories they tell are more fully described in the next section.

As a result of this initial examination, amongst 25 books centering Islam and Muslims, seven of them reflect Islamic rituals, four reflect traditional stories in Muslim communities, and 14 reflect Muslim characters not in a religious context. Five of these reflect an immigration, and nine are about Muslims living in the Middle East. In the next part, I provide an historical overview for the books. See Tables 3, 4, and 5 for the presence of religions and time periods in the books. Each table is located prior to the section describing it.

Historical Overview

The use of a historical lens is crucial to fully consider religious representations in the Middle East. The geography has never been religiously monolithic and has always been comprised of various religious groups. Moreover, the region is the birthplace of many religions practiced today in addition to others that are no longer practiced. When considering intersectional identities, the time period of the character analyzed matters. The MEOC-MEBAW books fit into three time periods I identified during the analytic process: before Muhammad's (pbuh) death (632 CE), the Islamic Golden Age (8^{th}-14^{th} century), and present day (1940-today). I found it noteworthy that none of the books were about the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) even

though it was one of the most powerful countries in the Middle East and had many important achievements from 1453-1683 (e.g. conquering Constantine, new name Istanbul). An important time period of almost 500 years was excluded in the books. Of the 36 books, only one book, *Folktales from Turkey: From Agri to Zelve* by Serpil Ural (2013), could not be clearly associated with a single time period. This book is an anthology of multiple stories set in various time periods within Turkish cities.

Table 7. Presence of Religion Prior to 632 CE

Book	Presence of religion
KINGS AND CARPENTERS: ONE HUNDRED BIBLE LAND JOBS YOU MIGHT HAVE PRAISED OR PANNED by Laurie Coulter, illustrated by Martha Newbigging (Annick Press, 2010).	Jewish Perspective
ONE CITY, TWO BROTHERS by Chris Smith, illustrated by Aurélia Fronty (Barefoot Books, 2007).	Shared Stories Across Religions (Judaism, Islam, Christianity)
LUGALBANDA, THE BOY WHO GOT CAUGHT UP IN A WAR by Kathy Henderson, illustrated by Jane Ray (Candlewick Press, 2006).	Shared Stories Across Religion (Islam, Christianity, Judaism) (Polytheism – Multiple gods— Judaism, Christianity, Islam)
MUHAMMAD ص by Demi,illustrated by Demi (Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2003).	Islamic Perspective (rituals)

Before Muhammad's (pbuh) death (before 632 CE). Three books, *Lugalbanda: The Boy who got Caught up in a War* by Kathy Henderson (2006), *Kings and Carpenters: One Hundred Bible Land Jobs You Might Have Praised or Panned* by Laurie Coulter (2010), and *One City, Two Brothers: A Story from Jerusalem* by Chris Smith (2007), were written about times before Islam. *Muhammad* ص by Demi (2003) was the only one that described Muhammad's (pbuh) time period (571-632). Three of these four books reference war, yet only *Muhammad* ص by Demi includes information related to the reasons for the war. When Muhammad (pbuh) declared that he was a prophet some of his family members and citizens

contradicted him and fought against him such as "[Quraysh leaders of the Meccan tribes] began a persecution of Muhammad's ص followers, some of whom fled to the protection of the Christian king in Ethiopia" (unpaginated).

Little attention was given to women in the portrayals of this time period. For instance, Muhammad's (pbuh) first wife was a strong merchant, and the first Muslim woman in the history, yet the part of the book that mentions any women are the few sentences about his first wife, "Muhammad's ص remarkable qualities were noticed by Khadijah, a beautiful, wealthy widow, fifteen years his senior. She hired Muhammad ص to work as her agent" (unpaginated).

The MEOC-MEBAW books about this time period also send clear messages of distinction between women's jobs and men's jobs. *Kings and Carpenters: One Hundred Bible Land Jobs You Might Have Praised or Panned* by Laurie Coulter specifically categorized what women's jobs are. Coulter (2010) exclaims that "Would you like to be a drummer in an all-girl band? Although more men than women play drums today, the opposite seems to have been true in ancient Israel" (unpaginated). Similarly, in *Lugalbanda: The Boy who got Caught up in a War* by Kathy Henderson, no women were a part of the war: "For days men flocked to the city in answer to the king's call. They covered the ground like heavy fog and stirred up a cloud of dust so big it whirled up into the sky" (2006, unpaginated). War was a central feature of books about this time period and women characters are few.

Table 8. Presence of Religion Prior from the 8th to 14th Century

Book	Presence of religion
WHEN THE ANIMALS SAVED EARTH: AN ECO-FABLE retold by Alexis York Lumbard, illustrated by Demi (Wisdom Tales, 2015).	Shared StoriesAcross Religion (Islam, Christianity, Judaism)
THE WOODEN SWORD: A JEWISH FOLKTALE FROM AFGHANISTAN by Ann Redisch Stampler, illustrated by Carol Liddiment (Albert Whitman & Company, 2012).	Jewish Perspective
THE SECRET MESSAGE by Mina Javaherbin, illustrated by Bruce Whatley, (Disney/Hyperion Books, 2010).	Historical and Traditional Stories from Muslim Communities
HOW MANY DONKEYS: AN ARABIC COUNTING TALE by Margaret Read MacDonald, and Nadia Jameel Taibah, illustrated by Carol Liddiment (Albert Whitman & Company, 2009).	Historical and Traditional Stories from Muslim Communities
THE RICH MAN AND THE PARROT retold by Suzan Nadimi, illustrated by Ande Cook (Albert Whitman & Company, 2007).	Historical and Traditional Stories from Muslim Communities
TRAVELING MAN: THE JOURNEY OF IBN BATTUTA, 1325-1354 by James Rumfordillustrated by James Rumford (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001).	Islamic Perspective (rituals)
THE HOUSE OF WISDOM by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland, illustrated by Mary GrandPré (DK Publishing, Inc., 1999).	Historical and Traditional Stories from Muslim Communities

The Islamic Golden Age (8th – 14th century). Eight books are set in this time period. Appropriately given their representation of the Golden Age, these books represent peaceful times and the value of knowledge. In the following section which details commonly found intersections of identities, the first intersection, that of the Traveling Men from Long Ago, more fully describes the stories of this time period.

While this time period was peaceful and prosperous for Muslims living in the Middle East, the same was not true for all. As illustrated in *The Travels of Benjamin Tudela* (2005) by Uri Shulevitz, Jewish people had to live under other countries' authority and were not treated equally. For instance, "I went to the Jewish quarter, where I was going to stay. Jews are not allowed to live in Constantinople. They've been confined to the small district of Pera"

(unpaginated). In another example, Benjamin was scared to tell where he was from in Muslim countries (e.g., in Iraq) due to a fear of being killed since "it was dangerous to travel as a European through Muslim lands, because of the war between Christian Crusaders and the Muslims. So, to be safe, I spent this part of my trip dressed as an Arab" (unpaginated). Jews lived in segregated neighborhoods across countries, all ruled by Muslims or Christians. Whenever Benjamin went a new country, he quickly found a Jewish neighborhood to stay in.

Lastly, as with the books set before Muhammad's (pbuh) death, none of these books center any woman leading characters. Yet women are much better represented in present day books.

Table 9. Presence of Religion from 1940 to Present Day

Book	Presence of religion
LOST AND FOUND CAT: THE TRUE STORY OF KUNKUSH'S INCREDIBLE JOURNEY by Doug Kuntz & Amy Shrodes, illustrated by Sue Conelison (Crown Books for Young Readers, 2017).	Muslim Characters
MY BEAUTIFUL BIRDS by Suzanne Del Rizzo, illustrated by Suzanne Del Rizzo (Pajama Press, 2017).	Muslim Characters
STEPPING STONES: A REFUGEE FAMILY'S JOURNEY by Margriet Ruurs, translated by Falah Raheem, illustrated by Nizar Ali Badr (Orca Book Publishers, 2016).	No reference to any religion Bilingual (Arabic and English)
NEW MONTH/NEW MOON by Allison Ofanansky, photographs by Eliyahu Alpern (Kar-Ben Publishing , 2014).	Jewish Perspective
THE OLIVE TREE by Elsa Marston, illustrated by Claire Ewart (Wisdom Tales, 2014).	Muslim Characters
THE STORY OF HURRY by Emma Williams, illustrated by Ibrahim Quraishi (Seven Stories Press, 2014).	Muslim Characters
RAZIA'S RAY OF HOPE by Elizabeth Suneby, illustrated by Suana Verelst (Citizen Kid, 2013).	Muslim Characters
HANDS AROUND THE LIBRARY: PROTECTING EGYPT'S TREA-SURED BOOKS by Karen Leggett Abouraya, illustrated by Susan L. Roth (Dial Books, 2012).	Muslim Characters
GOLDEN DOMES AND SILVER LANTERNS: A MUSLIM BOOK OF COLORS by Hena Khan, illustrated by Mehrdokht Amini (Chronicle Books, 2012).	Islamic Perspective (rituals)

WHAT'S THE BUZZ: HONEY FOR A SWEET NEW YEAR by Allison Ofanansky, photographs by Eliyahu Alpern. (Kar-Ben Publishing, 2011).	Jewish Perspective
MIRROR by Jeannie Baker, unknown translator, illustrated by Jeannie Baker (Candlewick Press, 2010).	Muslim Characters
TIME TO PRAY by Maha Addasi, illustrated by Ned Gannon (Boyds Mills Press, 2010).	Islamic Perspective (rituals)
THE BUTTER MAN by Elizabeth Alalou and Ali Alalou, illustrated by Julie Klear Essakalli (Charlesbridge Publishing, 2008).	Islam Centering Islam
THE GRAND MOSQUE OF PARIS: A STORY OF HOW MUSLIMS RESCUED JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST by Karen Gray Ruelle and Deborah Durland DeSaix, illustrated by by Karen Gray Ruelle and Deborah Durland DeSaix (Holiday House, 2009).	Islamic Perspective (rituals)
SILENT MUSIC: A STORY OF BAGHDAD by James Rumford, illustrated by James Rumford (Roaring Brook Press, 2008).	Muslim Characters
FOUR FEET, TWO SANDALS by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed, illustrated by Doug Chayka (Eerdman's Books for Young Readers, 2007).	Muslim Characters
THE BEST EID EVER by Asma Mobin-Uddin, illustrated by Laura Jacobsen (Boyds Mills Press, 2007).	Islamic Perspective (rituals)
COUNT YOUR WAY THROUGH IRAN by Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson, illustrated by Farida Zaman (Millrook Press, 2007).	No main Character(s)
MYSTERY BOTTLE by Kristen Balouch, illustrated by Kristen Balouch (Hyperion Books for Children, 2006).	Muslim Characters
ALIA'S MISSION: SAVING THE BOOKS OF IRAQ by Mark Alan Stamaty, illustrated by Mark Alan Stamaty(Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).	Muslim Characters
THE LIBRARIAN OF BASRA by Jeanette Winter, illustrated by Jeanette Winter (Harcourt, 2005).	Muslim Characters
THE TRAVELS OF BENJAMIN OF TUDELA by Uri Shulevitz, illustrated by Uri Shulevitz (Farrar Traus Giroux, 2005).	Jewish Perspective
CELEBRATING RAMADAN by Diane Hoyt Goldsmith, photographs by Lawrence Migdale (Holiday House, 2002).	Islamic Perspective (rituals)
THE STORYTELLERS by Ted Lewin, illustrated by Ted Lewin (New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 1998).	Muslim Characters

Present day (1940-today). Twenty-three of the books took place during the 20th or 21st century with the oldest, *The Grand Mosque of Paris: A Story of How Muslims Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* by Karen Gray Ruelle (2010), set in the 1940s during World War II. Further, most of the books reference Islam, yet the themes in these books tend to be very different from those from earlier time periods.

Most books set in the present day are about refugees and immigrants, often also referring to the Civil Wars in Middle Eastern countries. Only one book, *The Story of Hurry* (2014) by Emma Williams highlights conflict between two countries with its treatment of the conflict between Palestine and Israel. The role of the West and other countries in the Middle Eastern conflicts is never recognized in these books.

Unlike the books set in previous time periods, those from the current time period do not prioritize the value of wisdom and seeking knowledge even though that remains a fundamental goal of Islam. Books set in current times do show the importance of knowledge with recounting of saving libraries and the books within them (e.g., *The Librarian of Basra: A Trues Story of Iraq* by Jeanette Winter, 2005). They do not, however, illustrate the importance of producing new knowledge and/or contributing to science.

Middle Eastern countries in MEOC-MEBAW books set in present day also generally indicate a lack of technology, modernization, and civilization. For example, *Mirrors* (2010) by Jeannie Baker is based on the author's experiences in Morrocco. The book has two parallel storylines, one in Sydney Australia (author's home), and the other in Valley of Roses in Morrocco (a place the author visited). In the book, Australia is represented as more modern with cars, technologies, and industrialization while the Valley of Roses in Morocco is depicted as lacking technology. The family in Morrocco still rides horses and donkeys to travel rather than cars for transportation. The family are shown as working in a bazaar; to carry their goods, they have to load them onto animals. In another example set in a different territory in Morrocco during current times, *The Butter Men* (2011) by Elizabeth and Ali Alalou, people are also shown using donkeys for transportation and travel.

All Western Middle Eastern Characters (those who have Middle Eastern heritage but live in the West) are only included in the books sent in present day. Further, the stories set in the West show magnificent and huge mosques built in the West as opposed to the books in the Middle East that fail to include magnificent and/or famous mosques. To be clear, Middle Eastern countries have beautifully designed, huge, famous mosques (e.g. The Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi) but none of them are mentioned in the books. Only a few small mosques are illustrated.

In this current time period, women appearsas main characters for the first time. These characters are generally empowered. They are responsibility takers, and they do something for their country and themselves. They join marches, demonstrations, and take care of their families as more fully described later in this chapter.

The two informational books referencing Judaism in current time, *What's the Buzz: Honey for A Sweet New Year* (2011) by Alison Ofanansky and *New Month/New Moon* (2014) by Allison Ofananksy, are set in Israel and illustrate stories of children taking field trips to learn about bees and the honey making process in one and the moon in another. No reference to conflict is included in either book.

In conclusion and in response to first question, I have responded to the first question, What are the overall characteristics of the MEOC-MEBAW picturebooks? I described the overall characteristics of the books by focusing in on genre, an overview of the characters, authors' relationship to the Middle East, references to religion, and historical overview. In next section of this chapter, I delve into intersectional identities and how the Middle Eastern identity is interconnected with other identities.

Intersectionality and Middle Eastern Muslim Identities

As described in the previous section, most of the books (25 of 36) are related to Islam and/or Middle Eastern Muslims. Different social identities (e.g., ethnic background, gender, social class, etc.) work together forming intersections at the level of the individual. Attention to these intersecting identities, entangled in a unique way, is needed in order to understand inequitable experiences and representation. In this section, I address the second question: How are Islam and Middle Eastern Muslims represented in the MEOC-MEBAW picturebooks? The theoretical lenses of intersectionality allowed me to examine how the identities of the characters are interconnected with that of their geographic origin (i.e., Middle East) and religious identity (i.e., Muslim). In order to fully understand issues of representation of Middle Eastern Muslims, it is important to consider these identities in combination. During analysis, it became clear that three types of characters who shared the same intersecting identities were recast across multiple books. These characters include the following: Traveling Men from Long Ago, Courageous Women Accomplishing Change, and The Refugee.

Traveling men from long ago. One clear narrative about Middle Eastern Muslim men could be seen in several (n=5) of the MEOC-MEBAW books. In these books, a traveling Middle Eastern Muslim man left his home, often alone, for a long journey during the time period of 800-1300 CE. These male characters are portrayed as traveling on behalf of the greater good for the purpose of seeking knowledge and gathering information, hajj (i.e., pilgrimage to Mecca), and for their businesses as merchants.

In *The House of Wisdom* by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland (1999), Ishaq's studies sparked a strong desire to travel. As indicated in the following excerpt, his travels supported his quest for knowledge:

> So Ishaq studied, he read, he translated. He became a good student, even a scholar. He learned about astronomy and mathematics, about geography and medicine. He studied the writing of ancient Greek thinkers such as Galen and Plato and Hippocrates.
>
> But still he did not feel the fire.
>
> And then one day the Caliph chose Ishaq to lead an expedition to search for books. Now he could explore! At least he would see the world" (unpaginated).

Ishaq's traveling animated his quest for knowledge in a way that study could not. Fulfilling his dream of traveling the world known to the people of Iran at the time that included most of the Middle East, parts of Northern Africa, South Asia, East Asia, and Southeastern Europe. These travels allowed him to gather knowledge to bring back to his country, having a great influence at the time.

> Caliph al-Ma'mun , Hunayn, and Ishaq all played important part in this period of enlightement and contributed greatly to the sum of human knowledge: the Caliph as the founder of the House of Wisdom and passionate patron of the sciences; Hunayn, whose noble example influenced many generations of scholars; and Ishaq, who would devote his life to translating the entire know body of Aristotle's work and would become the greatest translator of Aristotle who ever lived. Through their work, the scholars in the House of Wisdom introduced Greek though to Europe, sparking the Renaissance. They carried the torch of civilization for the rest of the world (Heide & Gilliland, 1999, unpaginated).

In this instance the travels were a quest for knowledge. *The Traveling Man: The Journey of Ibn Battuta, 1325—1354* by James Rumford (2004) represents a journey that allowed for both gathering knowledge and hajj. Several verses from *Quran* reference how, through traveling, one

can be enlightened about the world as well as the divine as indicated in Surah al Haj, 22:46; Surah Al-' Ankabut, 29:20. In this book, main character Ibn Battuta, a well-educated young man at age twenty-one, left his home to go to Mecca, follow his dreams, and go on an adventure (e.g., traveling to many of the same places traveled by Ishaq. The author book begins with, "When [Ibn Battuta] grew up, he wore the turban of a scholar and could recite the Koran. At twenty-one, he decided to go to Mecca as a pilgrim. Here begins his story" (unpaginated). But the search for knowledge and adventure and hajj were not the only motivations for these characters' travels.

The traveling men also left home to make money by selling and/or buying goods. Two retellings of the same story, *The Secret Message* by Mina Javaherbin (2010) and *The Rich Man and the Parrot* retold by Suzan Nadimi (2007), in which a merchant leaves his family in Iran to journey to India to acquire additional goods for his store. The same type of journey is represented in *How Many Donkeys: An Arabic Counting Tale* by Margaret Read MacDonald and Nadia Jameel Taibah (2012) The illustrations show the main character, Jouha, traveling alone with his animals during the day and sleeping outside under a tree at night.

Interestingly, all the traveling characters from this time period are men. Though one of the four books is written from a Jewish perspective, *The Travels of Benjamin Of Tudela* by Uri Shulevitz (2005), it also depicts a traveling man from long ago in ways similar to these books about Middle Eastern Muslims. None of the books telling stories of travels for knowledge gathering, religious purposes, and/or commerce are about women. These men are represented as adventurous and independent. Ibn Battuta was able to make the decision to leave home and Ishaq was selected to lead the expedition because he was an educated man. The Middle Eastern merchants align with longstanding depictions of patriarchal societies in which men are the

breadwinners of the family. The women in these stories stayed at home and, in one account, asked for gifts.

> That night at home, the merchant announced, "I'm going to India to buy more goods for my shop." Everyone wanted something from India. The cook asked for extraordinary species, the merchant's daughters asked for dazzling silk robes; and his wife requested brilliant Jewels. The merchant promised to buy all the gifts (Javaherbin, 2010, unpaginated).

Women did travel in more modern stories. The purpose and nature of their travel, however, was much different and detailed later in this chapter. The time period in which the travels occurred was significant for another reason related to the nature and purpose of the travels in addition to the gender of the characters.

During the 800s to 1300s, the men traveling the longest distances did so to seek wisdom and look for knowledge. Seeking knowledge, creating and sharing it, and appreciating wisdom is the foci of these travelers. As indicated in one account,

> IBN BATUTA RETURNED not with the wealth of jewels or gold coins but with the wealth of a traveler—his memoirs. In an age of few books, he spun these memories into stories and led his listeners down scarlet roads and opened their eyes to the world. In boats made of words, he took his friends across peacock-colored seas and showed them new horizons (Rumford, 2004, unpaginated).

In this time period, war, occupation of other nations, and the heavy-handed spread of religion through conversion attempts occurred (http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/timeline). Yet, none of the books about this time period focus on these types of activities such as colonizing, conquering, and joining war. Rather, the stories of these travelers' center on all they discovered

about the world, and, in some cases include funny stories (e.g., *How Many Donkeys: An Arabic Counting Tale* retold by Margaret Read Macdonald and Nadia Jameel Taibah). As indicated before, none of these stories characterize any single Middle Eastern Muslim women. However, 10 books set in present day include these characters as described below.

Courageous and sacrificing women accomplishing change. The role of women in Islam has often been discussed and is still a current and hot topic (Garner & Selod, 2015). While some portray Islam as oppressive towards women with the ideal Muslim woman as quiet and meek, others disagree with these portrayals. These people reference verses from the *Quran* to back up their claims (Saleem, 2005). These varied ways of thinking about Muslim women are interesting in light of the characters found in many of the MEOC-MEBAW books. In 8 of the books, Middle Eastern Muslim women tell stories of how they courageously accomplished change that benefitted their communities or families by contradicting and/or resisting authority. Interestingly, all of the books featuring courageous Muslim women characters are set in the present day.

Some of the books tell the stories of women who accomplish change at the community level. These women took great risks, sometimes even risking their own lives for the wellbeing of the community (e.g., saving books from a library in peril, protesting to protect something important to the community, donating food, or helping those in need). These women put themselves in jeopardy, not for individual benefit, but to help others. Two of the books, *The Librarian of Basra* by Jeanette Winter (2005) and *Alia's Mission: Saving the Books of Iraq* by Mark Alan Stamaty (2004), are biographical accounts of the same courageous woman. Alia, a Muslim librarian woman from Iraq recognized that the war would get worse, so she moved the books out of the library to save them. Without permission and risking her career and life, she

saved most of the books, many of which were original or rare books. In another book about a different library, *Hands Around the Library: Protecting Egypt's Treasured Books* by Karen Abouraya and Susan L. Roth (2012), a young girl, from her own point of view, elucidates how she marched with many people to save the books in Egypt's Alexandria Library. She narrates

> I'm a part of this story. I marched in Alexandria too. I was excited and hopeful. But I was also scared. In other parts of our city some of the protestors had acted in anger. They had set fire to cars and to a police station. As we marched toward the library, I grew worried. What if they tried to burn it down? (unpaginated).

Even though she was scared of what could happen as a result of her act of protest, this young Muslim girl prioritized the saving of the library to help her community. But all of the acts on behalf of the community were not focused on books or libraries. Neither were all of the stories about such public acts.

Also emphasizing courageous Muslim women, some books described brave acts within smaller contexts. In *Razia's Ray of Hope: One Girl's Dream of an Education* by Elizabeth Suneby (2013), most of the men in the family of a Muslim Pakistani girl opposed her desire to attend a new girls' school opening close to her house. Their statements included "Our girls need to help their mothers at home," "We need Razia to work in the orchards, too," "Next you'll want Razia to go into town to shop by herself," "Or for women to shed their burqas in public," and "Razia is not going" (Suneby, 2013, unpaginated). Yet, rather than accept the male authority of her household, she went to the school to ask for help. Though this attempt was unsuccessful, her act of learning to read allowed her to save her brother's life when she was able to read the directions to prepare his medicine. Her resistance against authority allowed her to benefit by

attending the school and she convinced her family of the educational rights of women. This character was able to accomplish change at the family level.

Other stories involved women's sacrifices on behalf of others. In one case, the story was couched in the Muslim faith. In *The Best Eid Ever* by Asma Mobin-Uddin (2007), Aneese and her grandmother gave their own Eid feast of lamb korma to a new immigrant Muslim family in the Western country where they lived, eating pizza on Eid night instead. The act of helping others on Eid, an important part of the religious celebration, can also be seen in other books such as *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors* by Hena Khan (2012) in which a young girl in a Western country fills a box with "gifts of Zakat for those in need" (unpaginated). In another story described more fully in the next section, *Four Feet, Two Sandal*s by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed (2012), one young girl sacrifices the opportunity to wear shoes so that her friend can have shoes on her trip to the United States.

In still other cases, female characters acted courageously on behalf of their family (including a pet in one case). In *Lost and Found Cat: The True Story of Kunkush's Incredible Journey*, Kuntz and Shrodes (2017) indicate "Sura, the mother, had paid the smugglers to help her family flee the country. Mosul had become too dangerous" (unpaginated). Her courageous acts were effective. "After four month and thousands of miles, Kunkush and his family were finally together in their new home. 'we are all safe now,' said Sura." (2017, unpaginated). In another case, the story of *The Olive Tree* by Elsa Marston (2014), a young girl works to defend the products of her family's olive tree from male neighbors.

Many of the courageous or sacrificing women were refugees as seen in this section's descriptions. Another common intersection of identities was that of the refugee or immigrant.

The refugee or immigrant. Conflicts in Middle Eastern countries have caused many people to leave their countries and journey long distances through areas that are dangerous at times. The numbers of people leaving their countries to seek asylum are so large that this issue is often referred to as the refugee crisis in the media.

Fitting the topic of this study, Muhammad (pbuh) was the first Middle Eastern Muslim refugee in the Muslim history. Thus, the first book emphasizing a Middle Eastern Muslim refugee character is *Muhammad* ص (2003) by Demi. In this biography, one day Muhammad (pbuh) received a message from God to leave Mecca and travel to Yathrib (now called Medina) due to the safety problems that arose from his attempts to start a new religion. His followers also joined this journey, and this journey is now a significant ritual in Islam also known as Hijra and hajj which mean migrate. This journey was not voluntary. "The Quraysh leaders continued their efforts to crush Islam by threats, stonings, beatings, and all forms of persecution. They even plotted against Muhammad ص life" (Demi, 2003, unpaginated). Obviously, their lives in Mecca were threatened. To prevent this threat, through God's message, they left for a safer place and arrived at their new home.

Eight other books in the MEOC-MEBAW data set also feature Middle Eastern Muslim refugee main characters. Unlike the biography of *Muhammad* ص by Demi, however, the other books were all set in more current times. None of these books about present-day Middle Eastern Muslim refugees provide information about the reasons for the conflict in the home country that necessitated the characters' departure. Instead, the language used is more general. In one example, "The family who lived there had gone away during the troubles, because they were different from most of the people in the village" (Marston, 2014, unpaginated). In another example, "Sura, the mother, had paid the smugglers to help her family flee the country. Mosul

had become too dangerous" (Kuntz & Shrodes, 2017, unpaginated). This type of superficial and decontextualized treatment omits important information about the characters' identities. As seen in these two examples, detailed information about the reason for war, who is fighting with whom and for what reason, in addition to information related to the outcomes and solutions are missing. The book highlights the peaceful atmospheres of the Western host countries. The characters are portrayed as living happily in their new countries. The illustrations demonstrate the new family home as a nicely decorated house with a computer, Wi-Fi connection, and all family members united in the Western host country. This illustration is accompanied by the following language, "after four month and thousands of miles, Kunkush and his family were finally together in their new home. 'we are all safe now,' said Sura." (Kuntz & Shrodes, 2017, unpaginated). Their journey to a Western country was not easy, yet it resulted in better life conditions for this refugee family from Iraq.

In *My Beautiful Birds* by Suzanne Del Rizzo (2017), even the refugee camps are portrayed as providing a better life as compared to the life in characters' home country of Syria. Because they do not have to worry about the bombs, war, or conflict in the refugee camp, the children in the camps feel safer.

> As the sun peeks over the dune to greet the new day, we arrive at the camp. Helpful hands welcome us in. We made it. We are safe. A peaceful hush settles across the vast sea of shelters, but I can only hear loud booming in my head. I'm still scared. Mother wraps us up in rough blankets. We snuggle close and give in to sleep (unpaginated).

Sami, the character in the book and his family had to leave their home country. Yet the positive parts of refugee camps were not the only components shown in the books.

In *Four Feet Two Sandals* by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed (2012), two Afghani girls arrive in a refugee camp in Pakistan. In the camp, they are lacking resources. For example, they are barefoot. One day, in the distribution of donations, one of the girls, Lina, got one sandal of a pair, and another girl, Feroza, got the other sandal from the same pair. Since they both had half of the pair, they decided to share it with Lina wearing both shoes and Feroza wearing them the following day. However, this shortage of resources still did not prevent them from coming to the refugee camp since their life was in danger in their home countries. "My father and sister were killed in the war," Lina told her friend. "Mama and I had to run with Ismatu and Najiib in the night" Feroza nodded and two tears ran down her cheek. "I have only my grandmother now" (unpaginated). As seen in the excerpt, both young girls lost some family members. For them, the only option was to escape. In fact, they, like many other refugees, did not have another option.

In other books, the characters are the children of immigrants. Five books clearly exemplify Middle Eastern refugee characters whose families have migrated and now live in a Western country. Either the main characters' parents or the main characters themselves were born in a mostly Christian populated Western country. The characters in these five books are generally a part of a middle and/or upper middle-class family that act in ways consistent with their social class designations such as traveling long and expensive distances to see family (e.g., *Time to Pray*), engaging in charity (e.g. *The Best Eid Ever*), cooking in their homes (e.g. *The Butter Man*), and celebrating festivals (e.g. *Celebrating Ramadan*). For example, the characters in *Celebrating Ramadan* by Diana Hoyt-Goldsmith (2001) exemplify a U.S. middle class/upper middle-class Muslim family in the U.S. who have immigrated from other countries—Ibraheem's

mother was born in Egypt and his father in Bosnia. As the author explains, the family gives to charity (zakat) a certain amount as required by the Five Pillars of Islam.

> Before the end of Ramadan, all Muslims have a very important responsibility to fulfill. Each family donates to the poor the amount of the money it would take to feed the number of people in their family. For example, Ibraheem's family must give enough to feed five people, since they are five people in his family. Such gifts remind Muslims of the need to be generous with the wealth Allah has provided for them. This gift is called Zakar-ul-Fitr (zh-KAHT-ul-FITR) (Hoyt-Golsmith, 2001, unpaginated).

Ibraheem's family is able to donate enough money to feed five people. In addition, Ibraheem, his mother, and sister wrap gifts for all of the cousins in the family even though giving gifts to relatives is not required during Ramadan. These comfortable living situations are shown in contrast to less desirable conditions in the characters' home countries. In *The Butter Man* by Elizabeth and Ali Alalou (2012), flashbacks to father's hometown in Morocco through his stories indicate how difficult it was for his family to find basic food such as bread when he was a child. Yet they have enough food in the U.S.

> When I was a little boy, about your age, there was a time my family didn't have much to eat. It hasn't rained in *tamazirt* [the place where I come from, my country] for a very long time, and that means that the crops didn't grow…
>
> After a while your *mahalou* [grandmother] started to make the plates of couscous smaller, and the loaves of bread smaller too (unpaginated).

Life conditions in this Western country were surely portrayed as better.

Conclusion

This chapter considers the overall characteristic of the books, and how Middle Eastern Muslim identity is entangled with other identities. In the first section of this chapter, I introduced the overall characteristics including book genres and characters. I identified the majority of the books as realistic fiction (14) with other genres including fantasy (1), fables (2), folktales (6), biographies (6), informational texts (5), and concepts books (5). As far as the nationality of the characters, six books do not state the nationality of the characters. Two books are about nationalities that no longer exist. The remaining books feature characters representing the following countries: Iraq (5), Iran/Persia (5), Morocco (3), Afghanistan (3), Israel (2), Syria (2), Egypt (2), Turkey (1), Lebanon (1), Saudi Arabia (1), and the Gaza Strip (1). I also provided information about the authors' and illustrators' relationship to the Middle East and found that 32 of the 40 authors and 30 of the 33 illustrators are born in places other than the Middle East and have heritages other than those of the Middle East.

Next, I examined the presence of religion and reported that 5 books were written from a perspective other than Islam (4 Jewish Perspective, 1 Christian Perspective), 4 books highlight the shared stories amongst Abrahamic religions, and 25 books highlight Islam and/or Muslims. I then reported an overview of the MEOC-MEBAW books' historic settings with 4 set before Muhammad's (pbuh) death, 8 books set in the Islamic Golden Age (8^{th} – 14^{th} century), 23 in present day, and 1 book an anthology with stories set across time periods.

In the second part, I illustrated three common intersections of Middle Eastern Muslim identities: Traveling Men of Long Ago, Courageous and Sacrificing Women Accomplishing Change, and The Refugee or Immigrant. In the next chapter, I will discuss these intersections

along with implications for this study. I also offer suggestions for further research and explain limitations of this study.

5 DISCUSSION

In this dissertation, I use intersectional and critical content analytic lenses to examine a text set of picture books selected for the Middle Eastern Book Award by the Middle East Outreach Council. This award has been given to children and young adult books to promote positive understandings of the Middle East since 1999 (www.meoc.us/books-award.html). Because Islam is the predominant religion in this geographic area and because, unlike other religions, an award focused on the role of Islam in children's books could not be found, I selected this list as the most appropriate text set for examining my inquiry into how Middle Eastern Muslims are portrayed in picture books available to children living in the United States. I began the inquiry by examining the nature of the books themselves.

In this chapter, I first consider the findings in terms of already published research in this area (as presented in chapters 1 and 2) in addition to issues related to representation of intersectional identities and how they are monolithic and fail to represent the great diversity of Middle East. Ultimately, while many advocate for the popular metaphor of thinking of children's literature as mirrors and windows (Bishop, 1992), this analysis indicates that instead, the text set misrepresents and distorts images in ways that are not productive for the group they include. I then provided the limitations of the study followed by implications and suggestions. I conclude with a brief summary of the dissertation and suggest future research.

The Monolithic Representation of Middle Eastern Muslims

According to my analysis but contrary to Campbell and Crowe's (2015) statement, religion is not treated as taboo in this particular text set. The treatment of religion in the books I examined ranges from cursory references to detailed descriptions of complex practices. Yet, as described in the findings of this study, these books fail to represent a large portion of the various

countries, nationalities, and ethnicities from the geographic area. Issues of representation are indeed present. This finding supports previously reported studies indicating a failure to recognize the great variety of ways of being a Muslim (Siddiqui, 2016; Phelps, 2010).

As popularized by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her (2009) TED talk titled, "The danger of a single story," it is easy for people to form misunderstandings about themselves and others when an uninterrupted, uncomplicated story dominates. In her words, "show a people as only one thing over and over again and that is what they become." The Middle East is far more diverse than portrayed in these texts. As described in chapter 4, I did indeed find a small number of single stories (n=3) that dominated the MEOC-MEBAW picturebook list. This finding is particularly striking when juxtaposed with the information that 32 of the 40 authors and 30 of the 33 illustrators do not have any Middle Eastern heritage. While the argument remains unsettled over whether author and illustrator background can be the sole factor in considering the authenticity of a book (Short & Fox, 2003)), the fact that Middle Eastern Muslims are not able to represent themselves is problematic and provides cause for careful deliberation about these stories. Consequently, while it is possible for authors and illustrators who are not cultural insiders to create high quality children's books, in many of the author and illustrator statements, little evidence exists that they worked with cultural insiders or did more than the most basic research.

Refugees and immigrants. The first intersectional identity is that of refugees and immigrants. From an Islamic perspective, it is important to note that *Shari'a* law also known Islamic Law provides greater protection for asylum seekers and refugees than that of modern international refugee policy. According to *Shari'a* law, refugees do not have to prove the oppression they faced prior to fleeing a country and are granted all of the rights as citizens of the

country, including those related to education, work, free movement, and family unity (Elmadmad, 2008). According to Islamic law, "asylum is a right, a duty, and a general and comprehensive form of protection" (p. 53). Islamic refugee law and modern international refugee law differ as the former emphasizes pluralism and inclusivity while the latter better accommodates the nation-state (Manuty, 2008).

As indicated in earlier chapters, the Middle East has political issues which have caused large numbers of people to flee to other countries. One of the predominate representations in this text set, refugees and immigrants, echoes the findings of other studies of the representation of Muslims in children's literature. Torres (2016) states, referring to the fiction subset of her data, "so many stories set during wars can send a message that the Muslim experience is essentially negative and about conflict" (p. 200). In her work, Raina (2009) also identified survival and war/refugee as two of four prevalent themes in her data set.

I, too, found that many of the books in my data set concerned the difficulties faced by refugees and immigrants. Considering the number of outsider book creators who do not have first-hand experiences with either the Middle East or migration, the large number of refugee and immigrant stories is notable. Of the 7 stories about refugees and immigrants, only 2 were authored by insiders. Suzanne Del Rizzo, creator of *My Beautiful Birds* (2017), lives in Oakville, Ontario and provides a description of the sort of impetus for the work many of the outsider book creators provided (http://suzannedelrizzo.com/about-2/). While trying to explain the refugee problem to her own children, Del Rizzo found an article about a Syrian boy who connected with birds that inspired this book (Book Jacket).

These themes contribute to a pervasive "single story of catastrophe" (Adichie, 2009) about Middle Eastern Muslims. Further, the issues, wars, and conflicts that sometimes make up

the reality in the Middle East are never detailed. Many of the books tell stories that could happen in many places, offering few contextual specifics in ways that overgeneralize and simplify the complex, nuanced situations across diverse Arab settings**.** For example, in *The Olive Tree* by Elsa Williams (2015), the reader learns that the family left Lebanon because of the war and then returned but not what the war was about or why one family left and the other stayed.

Refugees experience war, death of family members, and loss of their homes (Ehntholt & Yule, 2006). In the host country, they often experience poor living facilities (e.g., overcrowded tents), socio-economic struggles, security problems, adaptation problems, and face a lack of acceptance (Kazour, Zahreddine, Maragel, Almustafa, Soufia, Haddad, & Richa, 2017). These experiences can cause trauma, depression, and other psychological problems (Ehntholt & Yule, 2006). Books that dehistoricize and depoliticize refugee stories by failing to provide political, historical and cultural context "[tend] to silence refugees" (Malkki, 1996, p. 378). The lack of fuller context in these books can lead to romanticization of the story as well as unauthentic representation. None of the books related to refugees and immigrants in my data set include the reality of death, injury, or other cruel aspects of the war in their home country. Instead, they represent a story that romanticizes their experiences.

In addition, while generic stories of refugees and immigrants are indeed prevalent, many of the books are not about their migration journey or the difficulties they face during their journeys. Instead, they provide rosy portrayals of the families after they were resettled in the West with examples that include a family that had enough resources to help other Muslims in the community (e.g., *The Best Eid Ever* by Asma Mobin-Uddin, 2007) and others that were able to send their children to visit grandparents in their home countries (e.g., *Time to Pray* by Maha Addasi 2010, *Mystery Bottle* by Kristen Balouch, 2006). Positive portrayals of post-immigration

and upper middle class Middle Eastern Muslim immigrants living in the West can be seen in *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors* by Hena Khan (2012), *The Butter Man* by Elizabeth Alalou and Ali Alalou (2008) and *Celebrating Ramadan* by Diane Hayt-Golsmith (2001).

Courageous women accomplishing change. Another intersectional character type I identified as prevalent also resonates in some ways but not others with previously published research. Considerable Western attention has been given to the way Muslim women dress. One of the most specific verses about women's dress in the *Quran* is

> And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their headcovers over their chests and not expose their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women, that which their right hands possess, or those male attendants having no physical desire, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment. And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed (An-Nur, 24:31).

Still, though Middle Eastern Muslim women have verses such as this one, the women hold varied perspectives, in large part as related to their multiple backgrounds including nation of origin, social class, family structure, and more.

Acknowledging that Islam, like most religions, has been used to control and limit the woman's role in society (Mojab, 2001), Islamic feminism, derived from the idea that gender inequality is social rather than biological, is inspired by questioning women's roles and statuses

(Moghadam, 2002). Rather than categorizing the entire religion as oppressive, Islamic feminism questions the gender oppression within Islam (Badran, 2001; Moghadam, 2002; Mojab, 2001). Islamic feminism can be achieved, in large part, through the positive representation of historical Muslim women. "The history of Islam has had women as state, tribal, and national leaders since its inception, with women such as the wives of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) known as the Mothers of all Muslims (Umhat-ul Momineen) and leaders and role models for all female Muslim" (Aziz, 2013, p. 203). She also claims that

> freedom and strength of Muslim women is a God-given birthright in the religion of Islam and they exercise it without being afraid of anything least of all, men. Muslim women have taken on leadership roles, without dressing like boys, when confronted with situation like the ones presented in these books. They have, furthermore, not remained burdens on the male members as someone who needs to be physically and emotionally protected (p. 203).

Although Islamic feminism is achievable, it will surely look different in various Muslim communities due to the impact of intersectional identities. For example, Tansu Ciller became the first woman president in Turkey (mostly Muslim populated) in 1993. Benazir Bhutto was elected prime minister of Pakistan (Islamic State) in 1988 and reelected in 1993. Islamic feminism likely looks differently in these countries as compared with other countries that have not yet had a female national leader. Following, a consideration of women's representation is complex.

The depiction of the women through image in the MEOC-MEBAW books parallel the description provided in the *Quran*. Despite the consistent representation of Middle Eastern Muslim women wearing headcovers, none of the books center decision-making surrounding or issues related to headcoverings or dress. Further, none of the Middle Eastern Muslim women are

represented as disfranchised due to way they dress. Because the characters in the books are represented with head covers and are still portrayed as courageous and accomplishing change, the head covers by themselves are not used to represent the restricting, oppressing, or disfranchising of Middle Eastern Muslim women. None of the books set in the West center the prevalent marginalization Middle Eastern Muslim women living in Western countries face in their daily lives that result from wearing headcoverings (Skjeie & Langvasbraten, 2009; Tan, 2018).

In one way, this story of courageous Middle Eastern Muslim women can be seen as pushing back against the negative perceptions that they are oppressed and lack agency (Saleem, 2005). This type of Middle Eastern Muslim character is likely well-intended. For instance, many Westerners believe that Middle Eastern Muslim women's headcovers are forced by a male-dominated society (Niyazov & Pluim, 2009). Yet, these portrayals impose "Western perspectives on Eastern Gender Roles" (Aziz, 2013, p. 19). She attributes the gendered portrayals often found in this type of book as indicating they were written for intended audiences of middle-class White readers and emphasizes the importance of publishing houses. Limiting representations of Middle Eastern Muslim women to those that either exoticize them or use Western feminism to empower them prevents the representation of feminism from an Islamic point of view.

Aziz (2013) has also indicated that in some books "women wear dresses up to their knees with uncovered shoulders, which is against the accepted norms and demands of the religious beliefs and the hot and dry climate of the Middle Eastern countries represented" (p. 53). In my study, I did not find this sort of representation. All Middle Eastern Muslim women in this text set were shown with head covers (e.g., scarf, turban, burka) any time they were portrayed in a public setting. At times, women did not wear headcoverings when shown in private settings such as

their homes, aligning with Islamic practice. While I recognize progression in that the portrayals more closely align with practice, unlike the texts Aziz (2013) examined, I also leave this analysis concerned about the lack of criticality surrounding the experiences Middle Eastern Women often face in the West.

Traveling men from long ago. The final intersectional identity I identified as prevalent is that of men who travelled long distances from their homes. These stories took place during the 800-1300 CE time period. In some cases, the men left their home at an early age for *hajj*, or pilgrimage, then traveled the world (e.g., *Traveling Man: The Journey of Ibn Battuta, 1325-1354* by James Rumford, 2004); others travelled to gather knowledge and bring it back to their home countries (e.g., *The House of Wisdom* by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland, 1999); and in still other cases, the men left for merchandising and buying goods for their businesses (e.g., *The Rich Man and the Parrot* retold by Suzan Nadimi, 2007; *The Secret Message* by Mina Javaherbin, 2010).

In ancient times, travel was considered undesirable by most Middle Eastern communities due to its difficulty and its associated dangers such as the potential for getting lost during the journey, attacks by thieves, and more. After the declaration of Islam, *siyaahah* (i.e., travel) was considered a way of worshipping as *hajj* can also be classified as a *siyaahah*. It is also important to note that the *siyaahah* is much more than simple travel for sightseeing purposes. It involves learning, seeking, and spreading knowledge of Islam. Further, it functions as a way for Muslims to enjoy the beauty of the world and testify to the oneness of God. However, during this time period, *siyaahah* was not permissible for women to conduct alone. They could only travel with a male family member in order to be protected from dangers they might encounter during travel, aligning with roles of a traditional patriarchal society.

No historical woman was portrayed as head of the family or going on a similar type of journey. The representation of historical Middle Eastern Muslim women characters is vital for readers, yet none of the books in my data set represent historical Middle Eastern women characters and thus fall short of comprehensively representing Middle Eastern Muslim women in their totality. For example, the following should be included**:** Khadīja b. Khuwaylid (d. 620), a famous merchant even before her marriage to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the head of the family in her marriage; Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawīyya (d. 801)**,** an enslaved philosopher and a founder of Sufism; Razia Sultan (d. 1240), Sultanate of Delhi; and Kösem Sultan (d. 1651)**,** the most influential women in the Ottoman Empire's history. Additional models are needed to portray a more realistic representation of lived lives.

Based on the findings of this study, three intersectional identities are overly represented. The overrepresentation of these particular identities is problematic in their own right. In addition, they take the place of many other, currently invisible stories.

Funhouse Mirrors and Stainglassed Windows

Rudine Sims Bishop's (1992) groundbreaking work uses mirrors and windows as metaphors for highlighting the need for children to be able to see both themselves and others in the literature they read, stating "If we believe in the importance of a pluralistic society, we will present them literature from diverse cultures, reflecting linguistic variety" (p. 10). Yet, while it is possible that the MEOC-MEBAW text set will serve as mirrors and windows for readers, when considered as a whole, the text set can also provide distortions and barriers to understanding. When the books distort the images, are not able to understand the diversity in the culture, instead engaging in a reading experience that promotes the false representation and narratives related to

Middle Eastern Muslim communities. Considering the ongoing misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Middle Eastern Muslim communities, authentic representations are needed.

In recent years, scholars have begun to note the incompleteness of the mirrors and windows metaphor. Reese (2018) has indicated the need for Indigenous communities to keep some stories within a community. Using Bishop's metaphor, she argues for curtained windows. In addition, she (2015) has acknowledged that:

> far and away, what Native kids get are fun house mirrors like the ones we see at carnivals, fairs, and theme parks. The ones that take your image and distort it. That make it look funny. Or uber cool. Or scary. Or stupid.

Ultimately, while children's literature offers considerable potential to validate readers' own communities and learn about others, it can also be destructive. Picking up Reese's fun house metaphor, it is possible for mirrors to distort, modifying how people see reality and preventing them from seeing entire parts of it. Rather than reflect reality, they extend and expand some parts of the image while narrowing and minimizing other parts. When considered as a whole, the MEOC-MEBAW text set distorts reality. It is important to ask why some intersectional identities are absent.

The need for curtains. The act of drawing a human image is restricted for many in Islam, as is drawing Muhammad (pbuh) (Ahmed & Pavlin, 2013). Seemin A. Raina (2009) has referenced *Muhammad* ص written by Demi (2003) and acknowledged Demi as a creator of distinguished multicultural literature. She also, though, indicates that

> The title cover page has a golden human silhouette astride a bizarre looking mythical creature with the head of a woman, a four-legged body, and a peacock tail which belies any reference of Barrack; the horse that took the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the

> heavens during Mairaj. Even though the prologue to the story confirms that human representations are restricted in Islamic art, Demi uses the human form for angels who seem to be of the female gender (p. 127).

Raina never states whether the golden human silhouette is Muhammad (pbuh) or not. Yet one may clearly interpret the silhouette as illustrating Muhmmad (pbuh). Unlike Demi, most Middle East Muslim children's literature authors and illustrators (cultural insiders) would not create a book that draws Muhammad (pbuh), even in silhouette form (Khan, 2015). I do not believe that a Muslim author or illustrator would create this particular book.

Misrepresentations and distorted images. Some books also misrepresent Islam, possibly to make the information more palatable to Western readers. For example, *Celebrating Ramadan* (2002) by Diane Hoyt Goldsmith portrays a family celebrating Ramadan and includes information related to gifts that Ibraham (the main character) and his family prepared for family members made it seem as a part of religious ritual. Yet they wrapped the family gifts in ways reminiscent of Christmas traditions. This practice caught my attention because it was so different from my own experiences celebrating Eid. When I was a child, we shopped for new clothes for both Eids, and my grandfather bought new clothes for children not related to us who could not afford them. Muslim communities celebrate the Eid Celebrations in various ways based on their cultural values, yet I had never heard of wrapping gifts for relatives in the family.

I discussed this issue with two Muslim Islamic scholars and one imam, and they also had difficult seeing the practice as an Islamic ritual for Eid. They indicated that while there is nothing wrong with giving gifts to the children in the family, priority should be given to people who cannot afford to buy clothes and gifts. These two scholars also indicted that it is an appealing tradition (not religious though) to attract children, grasp their attention, and excite them.

However, the imam recommended caution about wrapping Eid gifts and referenced a few hadiths. One explicitly states that whoever imitates a religion other than Islam is not a member of Muslim community. In another hadith, "You will certainly follow the ways of those who came before you hand span by hand span, cubit by cubit, to the extent that if they entered the hole of a lizard, you will enter it too." We said: "O Messenger of Allah, (do you mean) the Jews and the Christians?" He said: "Who else?" I leave this investigation believing that this book includes some inaccurate and arguable information related to Middle Eastern Muslim communities.

In addition to the problematic nature of the representation of Muhammad (pbuh) described earlier about Demi's (2003) book, Raina (2009) raised additional concerns related to inaccuracies.

> Her work may be regarded as problematic due to the figural representations of the Angel Gabriel and Barrack; the horse on which the Prophet (PBUH) went on his visit of the heavens. Her written narrative is well researched and factual (p. 175).

Like Raina, I also found aspects of the book inconsistent with my understandings. Further, I find the spelling of the horse's name Barrack unfamiliar, with Buraq far more common.

In still another example, *How Many Donkeys: An Arabic Counting Tale* by Margaret Read MacDonald and Nadia Jameel (2012) is also known in Turkey. I have not heard this story being told in Turkey but a similar one exists. Yet, as the authors state, the main character Nasreddin Hodja is a well-known figure in Turkey. I found the title curious because Arabic has never been a dominant language in Turkey, particularly Aksehir where the main character of the book lived. Further, though many stories are well-known locally, none of the stories about him is treated as a counting story. The stories I am aware of have a moral theme and tend to be didactic yet funny.

Missing stories. Almost all of the books in this study represent Arabs as Muslims that clearly equate the term Arab with Middle Eastern Muslim, as has been found in other research (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2012; Spellberg, 2009). MEOC names 21 countries as making up the Middle East. It is noteworthy that, with regard to intersections of Middle Eastern Muslim identities, additional diverse groups live in the geography under the governance of different countries. Some ethnic groups (e.g., Kurd, Druze) and religions (e.g., Yazidi) are never included in more than a cursory way, leaving cultural, linguistic, dialectic and other differences invisible. Because of the nature of many of the Middle Eastern conflicts, it is likely that those fleeing the conflict (and thus arriving in the U.S. as refugees) are members of these marginalized groups. Research is needed into how these missing groups relate to the population of children from Middle Eastern Muslim backgrounds living in the U.S.

In addition, none of these books reference the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) or the Islamic Golden Age (8^{th}-14^{th}). The religious Sultans of the Ottoman Empire governed many nationalities, ethnicities, and religions for more than 500 years. They governed three continents and established Istanbul as one of the most important cities in the world history, declaring it the capital of the Islamic State. This time was peaceful, and the state was much further developed in art, architecture, and science than other countries at that time. Young readers should have the opportunity to learn about this time period.

Partial stories. At times, the books contain small snapchats that do not provide a full story, instead showing a partially accurate world. For example, *Mirror* by Jeannie Baker (2011) illustrates the lives of two boys, one who lives in Valley of the Roses, Morocco and the other in Sydney, Australia. The book states “inwardly we are so alike, it could be each other we see when we look in a mirror” (unpaginated), yet the images illustrate the differences in the lives of one

boy living in a small town and another a large city. On one page spread the commonality of basic transportation is shown with Moroccan people riding donkeys and Australian people driving cutting-edge cars in daily their lives. As a result, Morocco appears as an exotic other that lacks technology. This representation is not generalizable to Morocco, let alone the Middle East as a whole. For example, had the book creators selected a large Moroccan city such as Tangier, the results of a comparison would not have been the same.

In addition, I leave my analysis with questions related to why MEOC-MEBAW includes two representations of each of two stories. In the first case, two separate picture books are devoted to a story by the Sufi Mystic, Rumi (Nadimi, 2007 and Javaherbin, 2010). Of all the stories by Rumi and/or about Sufism, why is that particular story the only Sufi story included? Second, two picturebook biographies are about the librarian, Alia Muhammad Baker, who saved the books in the Central Library in Basra (Stamaty, 2004 and Winter, 2005). Many other stories not included in the books exist.

Ultimately, while the mirrors and windows metaphor can be productive in many ways, the transparency of a glass window is not apparent. It is important that we continue to think critically about the books. Why do we have this monolithic representation? Why are these particular intersectional identities overly represented? Who benefits from the overrepresentation of such a small number of stories?

Limitations

Like all studies, this study has limitations. I will start with my own cultural bias. As an insider to one Middle Eastern Muslim community, my experiences have shaped my interpretations of the books. Positioning myself as an insider has supported my analysis in many ways. However, I am not an insider to all Middle Eastern Muslim communities. Further, the data

set and findings are limited to picturebooks and cannot be applied to the other two categories defined by MEOC-MEBAW, youth literature and youth non-fiction. Lastly, the data set is comprised of books published in English for a Western market with only a few of the awarded authors and illustrators working from emic perspectives. Following, this study does not address books Middle Easterners create about or for themselves.

Implication and Suggestions

It is necessary to provide children with books that reflect Middle Eastern Muslim identities including the entangled identities of the diverse national and ethnic backgrounds in the large geographical area. Moving beyond a small number of single stories is one way to succeed in the production of diverse children's literature as well as pushing back against stereotypical, biased representations. Having multiple narratives available with various identities depicted in authentic ways can benefit everyone. Single stories, on the other hand, contribute to the same misconceptions and misinformation about Middle Eastern Muslim communities that make them the target for hate speeches and attacks. Multiple narratives are needed to reshape representation.

Further, in the continual representation of Middle Eastern Muslims, the Arab identity predominates, and the lack of books portraying other communities in the Middle East is problematic. Many more groups currently live in the geography. From the critical paradigm of intersectionality, representing minoritized communities and voicing them is vital. These minoritized groups already oppressed in the Middle East under the hegemony of dominant culture. Since, these entangled identities influence their visibility, these groups should be represented more (Collins, & Bilge, 2016; Collins, 2015).

Visibility and making marginalized groups' voices heard are meaningful to create a just society. Some marginalized groups in the Middle East (racially, ethnically, religiously,

linguistically) should be included in the books. For example, nearly 40,000 Kurds live in the US, yet none of the books feature a Kurdish main character. To hear these communities' voices (e.g., Middle Eastern Muslim Kurd, Middle Eastern Yazidi Kurd) could create additional learning opportunities for readers. The books should be more inclusive if the MEOC-MEBAW really aims "to recognize books for children and young adults that contribute meaningfully to understanding of the Middle East" (http://www.meoc.us/book-awards.html).

Further, all book creators should gather information, do extensive research, and abstain from deficit portrayals. In addition to the book itself, the MEOC-MEBAW award committee members should also consider the authors and illustrators background and their relationship to the story. Like the authors and illustrators, award committee members should consider informing audiences about their own relationships to the Middle East. Their transparency can surely increase the credibility of the award.

Authentic representation is necessary, and there is no one single way to depict a group of people. Authors and illustrators should be aware of their intended audiences, and before submitting their manuscript, they should consider the potential of their work to impact readers' understandings of themselves and others. These considerations are important for all book creators but are especially to those who are outsiders to the communities about which they write.

Publishers and editors. Since publishers have the authority to decide what to publish, they should carefully consider their selection criteria. Further, if they want to promote multicultural literature, they should be aware of authors' and illustrators' backgrounds and their relationship to Middle Eastern Muslim communities. These issues are especially important due to the prevalence of whiteness. In addition to Western readers who often have more purchasing power, publishers should also consider the needs of Middle Eastern Muslim communities. As

Western readers have the right to read about Middle Eastern Muslims, Middle Eastern Muslims also have the right to see themselves portrayed authentically. Thus, they should be critical about their norms and be more selective while deciding whether a book is good enough to publish or not. Otherwise, more single, unauthentic and inaccurate stories will be created.

Teachers and teacher educators. Children are capable of understanding the concept of religion at very young ages both cognitively (Gottlieb, 2006) and socio-emotionally (Ratcliff, 2010). Thus, it is important to offer them various ways to explore religions. "[B]eing Muslim is not just merely a part of one's self or life, but intricately makes up one's cultural way of life" (Muhammad, 2015, p. 290). Since I situate religion as one identity amongst many held by an individual and a significant aspect of culture, its role in culturally relevant pedagogy is important to consider. Echoing back to the portrayal of Islam and Muslim characters in these books, they can be important tools in the classroom for use in discussions, to support student achievement, indicate acceptance of cultural identity, and establish critical perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Using these books as cultural tools will help both teacher educators and teachers reconceptualize culturally relevant theory and its practical use. Bringing Islam up as a cultural way of life and emphasizing Muslim identity through culturally relevant pedagogy is essential for promoting high levels of all students' development.

Teacher educators and the programs in which they work should more often emphasize the role of religion in culturally relevant pedagogy. Despite the fact that culturally relevant pedagogy is taught in most teacher educator programs and has been investigated by many scholars, few empirical studies acknowledge the role of religion in this theoretical framework. The valuing of students' religious identity using culturally relevant pedagogy is needed. According to Islam, an individual is Muslim before any other identity. It is important that teachers understand that

Muslim students cannot leave their religious identity at the classroom door, the most significant aspect of the students' identity and culture.

Teachers have many responsibilities including educating students to be critical thinkers, including religious privilege. Yet, they should also be aware of the Establishment Clause, also known the First Amendment or Separation of Church and State while applying culturally relevant pedagogy through religion. It is important to avoid indoctrination of a religion and avoid the promoting of a particular religion. That does not mean, however, they cannot support their students in becoming religiously literate. Echoing the marginalization of Islam and the increase of Islamophobia, emphasizing this religion will help Muslim students and members of other religious groups as all become more informed and religiously literate.

In addition, teachers can focus student attention on marginalized groups. They can find books that feature a type of character not typically represented in the media and talk with their students about what they're noticing as related to the perspectives presented in the text. They can listen to their Muslim students to better understand how they talk about themselves.

Conclusion and Future Research

In this qualitative study, I examined the representation of intersectional Middle Eastern Muslim identities in MEOC-MEBAW picturebooks. I explained the overall characteristics of the books such as genre, the gender and nationality of the characters, authors' and illustrators' relationship to the Middle East. I concluded that these books are not inclusive to all Middle Eastern Muslim identities and fall short of full authentic representation.

To answer the second question, I first analyzed the presence of religions in the books, then provided the historical overview in the books. Next, I engaged in close reading of 25 books centering Islam. Based on these 25 books, I have generated three main themes; travelling men

from long ago, courageous and sacrificing women accomplishing change, the refugee or immigrant. All of these identities intersect with Middle Eastern Muslim identities. I concluded that these books are not inclusive of many intersectional identities since so many intersecting identifies were not portrayed. As a result of this gap, I made a call for more inclusive literature that mirrors Middle Eastern Muslim children's life and windows for other children to enter a new world. Based on these finding, I suggested that authors, illustrators, translators, editors, publishing houses, should be more informed about Middle Eastern Muslim identity and teacher and teacher educators bring more authentic books. I, also, suggested that further research is needed to fully understand the presentation of Middle Eastern Muslim identity from different theoretical lenses, and the use of this books with children in classroom settings.

There is a dearth of research related to children's literature and Islam. Here, I examined a particular data set, MEOC-MEBAW, yet more books representing Islam and Muslim characters should be examined. For example, I emphasize religion as a part of culture and describe how these books can be classified as cultural tools. More research is needed to understand how the books in this study can be used in the classroom such as in culturally and linguistically relevant read-alouds (May, Bingham, Pendergast, & Meghan, 2014). When teachers create safe spaces, bringing these sensitive topics into the classroom is possible. Interactive read aloud activities provide one way a researcher can focus on understanding how students and teachers engage in conversation related to Islam and Muslim characters. Thus, these books' use in the classroom should be investigated for future researchers.

I would like to conclude this study in the same way many Islamic scholars do. Traditionally, all Muslim scholars interpreting Quran, hadiths or anything related to Islam should end their studies with the following sentence "Allah knows the best." Paralleling these Islamic

interpretations, I conclude the same. These are my interpretations in consultations with experts in the field. I acknowledge that Allah knows best, and these interpretations are humanitarian and not an end.

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