

DUAL IDENTITY AND PLACE ATTACHMENT TO ISLAMIC THIRD SPACES IN THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract

There are currently more than 3.45 million Muslims in the United States, for whom new typologies of Islamic spaces are developing to meet their needs. One of these spaces is an organizational typology referred to as a third space. Islamic third spaces are novel socio-religious environments that seek to support the needs of young U.S. Muslims. In the current exploratory cross-sectional study, I adopt an environmental psychology lens to explore how attachment to third spaces impacts dual identification. Data gathered from 110 U.S. Muslim third-space attendees show a significant positive relationship between participants' place attachment to third spaces and their dual identification. Demographic variables, including gender, race or ethnicity, immigration status, and Islamic religious status, did not impact dual identification. In conclusion, developing and maintaining significant places for Muslims, such as third spaces, is one way to promote a well-integrated U.S.-Muslim identity.

Keywords: Dual identity, U.S. Muslims, Third Spaces, Place Attachment, Community Development.

A. Introduction

About 3.45 million Muslims live in the United States, making up the second most diverse religious community in the U.S. in terms of immigration status, economic status, and race and ethnicity (PEW Research Center, 2017). Over 41% of U.S. Muslims are White, including people of European, Middle Eastern, and North African origins, 20% Black, 28% Asian, 8% Hispanic, and 3% mixed. The vast majority of Muslims in the U.S. are American citizens, yet U.S. Muslims are three times as likely to have an immigrant background compared to non-Muslim U.S. citizens. Per the PEW Research Center (2017), no country-of-origin accounts for more than 15% of foreign-born U.S. Muslims. This constellation of demographics leads to the development of dual, and sometimes multiple, identities that include individuals' religious, national, and ethnic identities.

The relationship between identification and wellbeing is well established (Dimitrova et al., 2013; Knez et al., 2018; Manuela & Sibley, 2015). Some studies show that holding multiple identities can enrich or facilitate one another when high identity congruence occurs (Dutton et al., 1994; Powell & Greenhaus, 2006; Rothbard, 2001). However, other research reveals that holding multiple minority identities can put a strain on the lived experiences of individuals as they are constantly navigating multiple cultural reference points, experiencing discrimination from the host society, and dealing with other intersectional impacts of their races and ethnicities (Cárdenas & Fleischmann, 2023).

The experience of U.S. Muslims with multiple identities is primarily shaped by notions of nationalism, inter-generational experiences, and politics of race/ethnicity and

gender, which can pose constant social challenges (Ali, 2011; Hummel et al., 2020; Sirin & Fine, 2007). Several focused on the impact of discrimination and Islamophobia on identity development (e.g., Sirin et al., 2008; Haddad, 2000), while only a few studies adopted an asset-based approach that addresses how various community infrastructures facilitate or hinder U.S. Muslim identities (e.g., Bagby, 2009).

As the U.S. Muslim community continues to grow exponentially, there is a need to understand how to promote high identity congruence, especially in Muslim majority community hubs, as 39% of U.S. Muslims attend a religious service despite it being on a weekday (Mohamed, 2025). For religiously affiliated individuals, religious practices—including community belonging, empowerment, lifestyle, and commitment to religious life-preserving morals—can have a positive impact on mental health (Villani et al., 2019; Héliot et al., 2020). In addition, compared to the U.S. adults, the significantly younger age of U.S. Muslims makes this line of inquiry on the identity processes that take place in the earlier course of people's life cycles especially important (Mohamed, 2025).

In this study, I explore the potential role of an underexplored typology of Islamic spaces, third spaces, in contributing to a well-integrated U.S. Muslim identity. Islamic third spaces are socio-religious environments that seek to meet the needs of young Muslim adults (Canon, 2015). Using a sample of 110 questionnaire responses, I adopt an environmental psychology perspective to understand if place attachment to Islamic third spaces contribute to dual identification. Environmental psychology views the

environment as a container of human experiences, affecting their behavior, wellbeing, and mental processes (Gifford, 2007).

The U.S. Muslim Identity in Context

Most immigrants experience challenges with dual identification (Verkuyten et al., 2019); however, there are unique factors that have been impacting U.S. Muslims' identity processes since 9/11 (Peek, 2005). In January of 2017 and again in June of 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump issued a policy restricting the entry of foreign nationals, known as the "Muslim Ban" policy, to limit the entry of individuals from several Muslim-majority countries to the U.S. (Executive Order No. 13769, 2017; Proclamation No. 10949, 2025). He, along with other officials, followed up with a series of anti-Muslim statements that shaped a public Islamophobic sentiment towards Muslims (Khan et al., 2021). Furthermore, the effect of Israel's war in Gaza since October 7th, 2023, has continued to expose Muslims in the West to discrimination, racism, and marginalization (Amin et al., 2024). Per a CAIR Rights Report, a record-high 8,658 complaints of anti-Muslim incidents nationwide in 2024 were documented (The Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2025).

These experiences threaten U.S. Muslim identity formation and consequently increase stress levels, depressive symptoms, and hinder life satisfaction (Hummel et al., 2020). Compared to families of other religious groups, Muslim families are more likely to face bullying. About 40-50% of Muslim children report being bullied in school due to their faith, contributing to their feelings of exclusion, depression,

and anxiety (The Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2023). Based on data from the U.S. Muslim Poll, 62% of Muslims report that they experienced discrimination because of their religion, and 38% experienced fear and anxiety (Mogahed et al., 2022), putting them as the most likely of any US religious group to have these experiences. Despite being the victim of these acts, Muslims are made to personally feel ashamed of the violence committed by co-religionists and to believe others who negatively stereotype their faith (Cainkar, 2019). These findings illustrate that mainstream narratives that question Muslims' citizenship and paint Islam as a foreign religion to the West act as barriers to Muslims' successful identity integration (Kalkan et al., 2009).

Many U.S. Muslims tend to internalize Islamophobic messages, which impede their identity processes and hinder their wellbeing (Ikramullah, 2019). As a result, clinical data of Muslims seeking treatment at a few health care agencies show high rates of adjustment disorder (19%-43%), anxiety disorder (13%-15%), mood disorder (9%-15%), among other disorders. In 2021, U.S. Muslims were found to have twice the rate of suicide attempts compared to other surveyed faith groups (Awaad et al., 2021). These findings suggest that marginalization, discrimination, acculturation, and adjustment pose challenges for developing a healthy U.S. Muslim identity, a concept known as the "immigrant paradox," where migrants with more exposure to the receiving cultural context report poorer mental health outcomes (Schwartz et al., 2010).

Furthermore, as theorized by intersectionality scholars, negative societal impacts are often layered for people with

multiple marginalized identities (Crenshaw, 1990). This is also true for U.S. Muslims. Like other faiths, Black Americans are more likely to experience racism from their own faith community, and Muslim women and young people are most likely to experience racial discrimination (Emerson & Smith, 2000; DellaPergola, 2024; Mogahed et al, 2022). This is further multiplied for Black Muslim women in Western societies (Ali & Iqbal, 2021).

Despite these challenges, many U.S. Muslims are deeply committed to both their religious and national values, refuting the perception that Islam is a foreign religion and a property of the East, a perception painted by both non-Muslims and Muslims alike (Jamal, 2005; Patterson et al., 2011). U.S. Muslims are continuously redefining what it means to be a Muslim living in a Western society (Ali, 2011). Contrary to expectations, second-generation U.S. Muslims are found to use social boundaries to construct their identities, keeping religion at its core; they continue to interpret what an U.S. Islam looks like for themselves and for their children (Karam, 2020). Dual identification happens through engaging in a process of structural or strategic assimilation that places U.S. Muslims close to mainstream culture while retaining minority identity values (Bagby, 2009; Karam, 2020). Individuals who experience high levels of national and religious identification among stigmatized minorities are less prone to internalizing the negative effects of discrimination (Saleem et al., 2018). Thus, to improve U.S. Muslims' wellbeing, assessing how their identity processes can be better served through their community spaces is important.

Identity and U.S. Muslim Institutions

Religious practices can promote positive mental health for practicing individuals (Villani et al., 2019). Attending religious settings plays an important role in helping individuals process discriminatory experiences and foster healthy collective self-esteem (Mustafa & Javdani, 2016). Regularly frequenting a religious space encourages a sense of community through interconnections and mentorship (Fine & Sirin, 2008; Todd, 2017). One study focusing on first-generation U.S. Muslim youth indicates that participation in Muslim students' associations, mosques, and community-based organizations predicted their collective self-esteem and reduced perceived discrimination (Mustafa & Javdany, 2016). Participation in religious settings not only buffers the negative impact of discrimination but, in reverse, translates discriminatory experience into a way of developing a collective self-esteem (Mustafa & Javdany, 2016). Similarly, other studies indirectly touched on aspects of attending mosques and their impact on U.S. Muslims' identities. Mosque attendance was found to promote integration and acculturation into the civic and political society, especially for recent immigrants (Bagby, 2009; Dana et al., 2011). Mosque-goers are more structurally assimilated than non-mosque goers (Bagby, 2009) and are more civically engaged in American society (Jamal, 2005).

Despite the significance of affiliating with Islamic settings on identity, not all mosque attendees have positive mosque associations, which impacts their personal identification. For instance, previous research has indicated that many women feel restricted and unwelcome to participate in communal experiences because of the cultural and physical barriers

that separate them from the main congregation (Mohammed, 2022). A major concern of many Muslim communities now is focusing on how to engage second-generation U.S. Muslim youth through their programming (Bagby et al., 2016). Mosques that are predominantly occupied by people from a single race or ethnicity often overlook the needs of minority groups, resulting in feelings of marginalization (Karim, 2006). These issues have led to the rise of Islamic third spaces, supplemental socio-religious spaces that focus on supporting young U.S. Muslims from diverse backgrounds.

While existing studies start the discussion on how affiliating with a religious community impacts people's identity, no studies have addressed the impact of attachment to a welcoming religious space on religious and national identification. Looking at identity from an environmental psychology perspective—that takes both the social and physical dimensions of place into consideration—sheds light on the potential role of community places as spaces for enacting healthy identities. Understanding attachment to Islamic third spaces, a significantly understudied community space, will open doors to understanding the roles of this typology of faith-based community space in supporting identity processes.

Cases Description: Islamic Third Spaces

Islamic third spaces are socio-religious environments that create the environment and companionship necessary for U.S. Muslims' development (Canon, 2015). They are informal gathering spaces where Muslims unite in unstructured ways for different purposes, including social and educational

events (Mohammed, 2024). Aside from mosques, the number of third spaces and informal socio-religious settings is growing. However, there is no official count of them. The two organizations selected for this study are MakeSpace (Northern Virginia) and Center DC (Washington, D.C.). These two third spaces were selected as they serve similar demographics, are located in proximity to each other, and many of the respondents frequent both third spaces. MakeSpace, the first non-profit organization, was founded in 2012.

The founders sought to establish a space where inclusive practices are prioritized and the gap between older and younger generation Muslims in the U.S. is bridged (Bagby et al., 2016). Formerly headquartered in a medical office building in Alexandria, VA, and now relocated to a larger space, MakeSpace was specifically designed to reflect an American-Muslim experience. It is described by its attendees as versatile and flexible, and its physical design does not represent a typical mosque. The second organization, *Center DC*, is located in the heart of Washington, D.C. On its website, Center DC highlights its mission as “a faith-based community that serves the spiritual + social + educational needs of people practicing & exploring Islam in the metro accessible DC area” (“Center DC,” n.d.). It started in 2015 at a local coffee shop in D.C. Soon after, its members realized their role in filling a need in the Muslim community. Their motto is “building community one week at a time” (“Center DC,” n.d.). Center DC is an interactive community that provides space for spiritual and self-development by offering content that can be applied to everyday life. They provide a platform for people to be and express themselves. People describe the space as their

“friend’s living room” with a cozy and simple design. Like MakeSpace, they host a wide variety of events, including potlucks, spiritual ethics courses, weekly discussion groups, etc. As of 2024, Center DC served 4,836 individuals, showing consistent growth over the years (Center DC, 2024).

Theoretical Underpinnings: Place Attachment and Identity

Place provides a structure for people to practice their cultures, share values, and recall their histories through enacting activities and communal connections (Fried, 1963; Hernández et al., 2007; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2009b). Places are composed of physical and social dimensions in which identities develop, and behavior is performed (Canter, 1996). They are essential for the physical socialization of the self (Proshansky et al., 1983). With this environmental psychology perspective, relating to a place is crucial for a well-integrated identity. In this study, I utilize a tripartite place attachment framework and measure developed by Scannell and Gifford (Scannell & Gifford, 2010b, 2010a) to signify the importance of creating and maintaining places of positive attachment for U.S. Muslims’ identity works.

Place attachment is the bond people create with their environments through affective, cognitive, and behavioral means (Scannell & Gifford, 2010a). Understanding this process can cue us into how attachment to a place may serve as a preventative mechanism for many mental health and identity struggles. Being attached to a place has many psychological benefits (Scannell & Gifford, 2017), such as predicting a sense of belonging (Mazumdar & Mazumdar,

2004), promoting wellbeing (Berg, 2020), fostering a sense of safety (Billig, 2006), and reducing stress (Hartig et al., 2001). Existing studies on place attachment examine individuals' relationships with places and their role in contributing to a stronger sense of self and identity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). As individuals create memories, come to realizations, and celebrate milestones, they build relationships with their communities and places (Manzo, 2005). Low and Altman (1992) suggest that shared symbolic meanings of place define collective place attachment by taking into account the role of the religious and historical backgrounds of individuals. The practice of making place, rituals, and daily activities creates a bond among members who share a similar socio-historical experience of place (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2009a).

Across disciplines, studies on place attachment have found that demographic characteristics predict place experience (Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003; Gillis, 1977; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). Divergent views have been expressed regarding the level of place attachment among different genders. Some studies show that women and men are equally attached to their places (Brown et al., 2003; Lewicka, 2005). However, according to other research, women are more likely to experience the psychological benefits associated with place attachment than men (Scannell & Gifford, 2017). They are also more likely to show stronger attachment to places (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). Additionally, gender moderates the preference of low-rise buildings. Women were found to prefer this type of building over men (Gillis, 1977). Different studies also examined other demographic variables, including age, length of residence, ownership of a place, and their impact

on place attachment (Lewicka, 2005; Ng et al., 2005; Scannell & Gifford, 2017). Explicating the process of place attachment across demographic variables offers an opportunity to understand whether there are variations in experiences amongst people from diverse and marginalized backgrounds.

B. Methods

This study provides a unique perspective into the lives of U.S. Muslims. The primary objective of the study is to examine the associations between place attachment to Islamic third spaces and dual identifications. The study also seeks to determine whether these effects vary across various demographic variables. The null hypothesis is that place attachment to third spaces is associated with national and religious dual identification. Third spaces provide a similar experience for attendees from various demographic groups. Levels of significance were set at $\alpha = 0.05$. The data analyzed in this article are part of a comprehensive case study on the experience of Muslims at Islamic third spaces in the United States (Mohammed, 2024a; 2024b). The objective of the larger study was to fully explicate the nature of third spaces in the United States and their role as community hubs.

Sampling and Sample

With the approval of the internal review board of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the third space community leaders, a survey questionnaire was circulated three times using Center DC and MakeSpace's listservs in March and May 2020. Three reminders were sent by each organization with one-week increments in between. To

incentivize the participants, three random participants from each organization, who left their emails at the end of the survey, were offered a \$50 gift card of their choosing. Center DC and MakeSpace community leaders stated that their regular programming, outside of major holidays, is usually attended by 20-40 individuals. Sixty-seven responses were received from MakeSpace and 45 responses from Center DC, which indicates a representative sample of the members of both organizations. Responses of participants who have not visited the physical building of either organization and only attended off-site events were removed, and missing values were fixed using multiple imputation techniques on RStudio. The final sample number was 44 responses for Center DC and 66 for MakeSpace, totaling 110 responses. Sample characteristics are presented in Table 1. A G*Power test was conducted to determine if the sample size is sufficient based on an aim of a medium-sized effect for a regression test with five independent variables. It was determined that the power for the current sample exceeded .80.

Measures

Demographic information was collected using a variety of variables and categories adapted from the PEW Research Center (2017) U.S. Muslim data to enable a comparative analysis between the third space population sample and the larger U.S. Muslim population, as local demographic information on U.S. Muslims in Virginia and Washington, D.C., was unavailable. Demographic data are presented in Table 1.

Place attachment was measured by adapting Scannell and Gifford's (2010b) previously validated place attachment

scale. The adapted scale consisted of 10 items rated on the 5-point Likert scale. Place attachment questions are presented in Table 2. A total place attachment score was created by taking the average of the items. Cronbach's alpha for the current sample was very good ($\alpha > 0.9$).

Dual identification was measured using four items from an existing measure that focus on dimensions of Muslim collective identity and American collective identity (Sirin et al., 2008). Sirin et al.'s (2008) scale was originally adapted from a modified "Race-specific" version of the Collective Self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The items included were: "Overall, my Muslim identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself," "In general, belonging to American society is an important part of my self-image," "I am a worthy member of the Muslim community," and "In general, I am glad to be a member of American society."

Analysis

Data from both organizations were merged and treated as a single data set. RStudio was used for all statistical analyses in this study. Demographic descriptive statistics are presented to define the population of third space communities in comparison to descriptive statistics from an existing dataset on U.S. Muslims that relied on census data (PEW Research Center, 2017). The second analysis included a multiple regression model testing the impact of place attachment on an integrated American-Muslim identity while controlling for gender, race or ethnicity, immigration status, and whether the participant was born Muslim or converted to Islam. These demographic variables were selected based on (1) relevant literature on Islamic places

(Bagby, 2009; Bagby et al., 2016) and place studies (Lewicka, 2008, 2010); (2) pilot interviews; and (3) final interviews whose results are presented in a different article.

C. Results

First, a comparative analysis of the demographics of third spaces with those of the U.S. Muslim public indicated that the sample of participants from third spaces (n=110, MakeSpace n=66, and Center DC n=44) makes up a subgroup of the U.S. Muslim community and does not represent the entire population of U.S. Muslims. More women go to third spaces than men, despite men making up a higher proportion of the U.S. Muslim public (Table 1). The majority of the attendees are under the age of 40 (Table 2). About half of the attendees are married, and a quarter have children living in their households (Table 3). Third spaces have an overrepresentation of Asians (Table 4). They comprise more of the community than any other racial or ethnic group, followed by White, Black or African Americans, Hispanics and Latinx, American Indians or Alaskan Natives, and mixed-race, respectively. Those racial representations in third spaces vary from the U.S. Muslim public. While over half of the U.S. Muslim public is made up of first-generation immigrants, second-generation immigrants make up the most significant percentage of third-space attendees, followed by second, third, and fourth generations, respectively (Table 5). Third space attendees are more educated than the U.S. Muslim population (Table 6). A small percentage are unemployed (Table 7). The majority of the attendees are born Muslim, but a significant number of converts attend both spaces (Table 8).

Both organizations did not have publicly shared reports or demographic data of attendees at the time of the study. However, in 2024, Center DC published a report indicating that 66% of the people they serve are women, 52% are between the ages of 25-34, 58% are single, 22% have kids, 20% were not born into a Muslim family, 43% are first-generation American, 50% have a master’s degree or higher, 72% make over \$75k annually, and 40% have lived in the area for 10+ years. Though these variables were different and could not be directly compared to the sample in this study, the sample is largely representative of how the community continued to grow over the years.

Table 1 *Comparison of third space attendees’ gender demographics with the general U.S. Muslim public*

Variable	Case 1: Center DC %(n)	Case 2: MakeSpace %(n)	Both Cases (%n)	General U.S. Muslim Public %
Male	36.4% (16)	30.3% (20)	32.73% (36)	55%
Female	63.6% (28)	69.7% (46)	67.27% (74)	45%

Table 2 *Comparison of third space attendees’ ages with the general U.S. Muslim public*

Variable	Case 1: Center DC %(n)	Case 2: MakeSpace %(n)	Both Cases (%n)	General U.S. Muslim Public %
18-29	36.4% (16)	30.3% (20)	32.73% (36)	55%
30-39	63.6% (28)	69.7% (46)	67.27% (74)	45%
40-54				
55-65	43.2% (19)	42.4% (28)	42.73% (47)	35%
65+	50% (22)	28.8% (19)	37.27% (41)	25%

Table 3 *Comparison of third space attendees’ marital and parenthood statuses with the general U.S. Muslim public*

Variable	Case 1: Center DC %(n)	Case 2: MakeSpace %(n)	Both Cases (%n)	General U.S. Muslim Public %
Marital Status				
Married	40.9% (18)	48.5% (32)	44.7% (50)	53%
Not Married	59.1% (26)	51.5% (34)	55.3% (60)	47%
Parenthood Status				
Have children	13.6% (6)	33.3% (22)	25.45% (28)	50%

Table 4 *Comparison of third space attendees’ racial or ethnic identities with the general U.S. Muslim public*

Variable	Case 1: Center DC %(n)	Case 2: MakeSpace %(n)	Both Cases (%n)	General U.S. Muslim Public %
Black/African American	11.36% (4)	9.1% (6)	10% (11)	20%
White/Caucasian	15.90% (7)	12.1% (8)	13.64% (15)	41% combined
Middle Eastern/North African	18.18% (6)	21.2% (14)	20% (22)	21%
Latinx/Hispanic	2.27% (1)	(0%)	.91% (1)	8%
Asian	50% (22)	50% (33)	50% (55)	28%
Mixed	2.27% (1)	6.1% (4)	4.55% (5)	3% combined
American Indian or Alaska Natives		1.5% (1)	0.90% (1)	

Table 5 *Comparison of third space attendees' immigration background with the general U.S. Muslim public*

Variable	Case 1: Center DC %(n)	Case 2: MakeSpace %(n)	Both Cases (%n)	General U.S. Muslim Public %
Non-Immigrant (Visa Holder)	9.09% (4)	1.5% (1)	4.55% (5)	
Permanent Resident	6.81% (3)	6.1% (4)	6.36% (7)	
First generation immigrant	18.12% (8)	31.8% (21)	26.36% (29)	58%
Second generation immigrant	47.73% (21)	47% (31)	47.27% (52)	18%
Third generation immigrant	9.09% (4)	1.5% (1)	4.55% (5)	24% combined
Fourth generation immigrant+	9.09% (4)	12.1% (8)	10.9% (12)	

Table 6 *Comparison of third space attendees' level of education with the general U.S. Muslim public*

Variable	Case 1: Center DC %(n)	Case 2: MakeSpace %(n)	Both Cases (%n)	General U.S. Muslim Public %
Less than high school				8%
High School Diploma		3% (2)	1.82% (2)	30%
Some Colleges	11.36% (5)	3% (2)	6.36% (7)	30%
College Degree	43.18 % (19)	45.5% (30)	44.55% (49)	21%
Graduate Degree	45.45% (20)	48.5% (32)	47.27% (52)	11%

Table 7 *Comparison of third space attendees' employment status with the general U.S. Muslim public*

Variable	Case 1: Center DC %(n)	Case 2: MakeSpace %(n)	Both Cases %(n)	General U.S. Muslim Public %
Full-Time	77.27% (34)	77.3% (51)	77.27% (85)	44%
Part-Time	9.09% (4)	9.1% (6)	9.1% (10)	16%
Not employed	13.64% (6)	13.6% (9)	13.63% (15)	40%

Table 8 *Third space attendees Islamic religious status*

Variable	Case 1: Center DC %(n)	Case 2: MakeSpace %(n)	Both Cases %(n)	General U.S. Muslim Public %
Born Muslim	81.82% (36)	90.9% (60)	86.36% (96)	N/A
Converted	18.18% (8)	9.1% (6)	13.64% (14)	N/A

****Note 1:** General U.S. Muslim Public demographics are based on a survey conducted by the PEW Research Center in 2017. **Note 2:** PEW's percentages of the immigration status category exclude non-immigrants and temporary residents of the US. **Note 3:** Religious status (born Muslim or converted to Islam) was also not surveyed in PEW's report.

Second, ratings of questionnaire respondents indicate positive place attachment to MakeSpace and Center DC. The average rating for all questions combined was 3.78 (SD= 0.83). For average ratings of each question, see Table 9. The highest rated statements of respondents at both organizations were "I respect what MakeSpace/Center DC Stands for" and "I am proud of Center DC/MakeSpace." The lowest rated statement at both organizations was "I am attached to the physical space of MakeSpace/Center DC," followed by "When I am away, I miss the community at MakeSpace/Center DC." Similarly, results indicated

high dual identification of the participants (M =16, SD =2.998).

Table 9 *Average Rating for all 10 place attachment scale questions at Center DC and MakeSpace*

Question	M	SD
Center DC/MakeSpace community reflects who I am	3.95	1.10
I am proud of Center DC/MakeSpace	4.52	1.0
The interior space of Center DC/MakeSpace is special to me	4.02	1.05
When I am away, I miss the community at Center DC/MakeSpace	3.77	1.05
I am attached to the physical space of Center DC/MakeSpace	3.05	1.20
I am attached to Center DC/MakeSpace	3.73	1.17
I feel connected to the community at Center DC/MakeSpace	3.93	1.0
People like me go to Center DC/MakeSpace	4.05	.99
Center DC/MakeSpace is special to me	4.32	.96
I respect what Center DC/MakeSpace stands for	4.59	.97

Third, a bi-directional stepwise linear regression model was used to identify the possible predictors of the outcome of national and religious identification out of the following variables: place attachment, race or ethnicity, gender, immigration status, and whether an individual was born Muslim or converted to Islam. At each step, the variables were chosen based on *p*-values, and the AIC was used to set a limit on the total number of variables included in the final model. The overall regression was statistically significant; $R^2 = .1054$, $F(2, 107) = 6.303$, $p = .002$, place attachment was associated with dual identification ($\beta = -.12$, $p = .001$). Variations amongst demographic variables did not significantly influence dual

identification. Hence, the more participants were attached to Islamic third spaces, the more likely they were to dually identify as U.S. Muslims regardless of their gender, race, or ethnicity, immigration, or Islamic religious status.

D. Discussion

Place attachment plays an important role in identity processes (Lewicka, 2008). Applying this perspective, the present study tested the potential role of place attachment to Islamic third spaces in fostering a well-integrated dual U.S. Muslim identity. While prior research focused on the impact of discrimination (Hummel et al., 2020), this study expanded the literature by examining the potential role of religious setting on U.S. Muslim identity formation. Using a sample of 110 third-space attendees, results show that participants had a strong attachment to third spaces. Their attachment significantly predicted dual identification. The current study findings echo results from other studies on place attachment and identity in different settings, such as tourist destinations (Dandotiya & Aggarwal, 2023). It also reinforces theories suggesting that when individuals see themselves as part of the local social group or social identity, their wellbeing and place identification increase (Maricchiolo et al., 2021).

It is also important to note that these findings did not significantly change based on gender, race or ethnicity, immigration status, or Islamic religious status, suggesting that third spaces welcome diversity. The findings are in line with several previous qualitative case studies on an Islamic third space that concluded that U.S.-based Islamic third spaces provide a new brand of Islamic organizations in the West, ones

that operate with values of acceptance and seek to promote congruence between U.S. and Muslim identities (Mahmoud et al., 2016; Mohammed, 2024a; 2024b). When the sample of this study was compared with samples from previous studies on mosques and reports on the U.S. Muslim public, it was revealed that third space attendees are more ethnically and racially diverse (Kahera, 2002; PEW Research Center, 2017), suggesting that that third spaces programming and ambiance attract individuals that are typically marginalized in some mosques such as women and youth (Bagby et al., 2016; Sayeed et al., 2013). These findings confirm results from previous studies, quantitatively, by indicating the importance of these institutes in promoting a U.S. Muslim identity.

E. Conclusion

The current study sought to explore how attachment to third spaces impacts dual identification by engaging two Islamic third spaces in Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia. The study findings suggest that, in a sample that represents a diverse subset of the U.S. Muslim population and is in alignment with demographic reports published by one of the two organizations on the population of their attendees, attendees are highly attached to Islamic third spaces, impacting their dual identification. In sum, the study results indicate that the more participants are attached to Islamic third spaces, the more likely they are to dually identify as U.S. Muslims regardless of their gender, race or ethnicity, immigration, or Islamic religious status. These findings suggest that the culture and practices in U.S. Islamic third spaces could facilitate dual identification. Mosques and other

Islamic institutes in the West could learn from the practices of third spaces to promote more inclusive environments for a growing population of second- and third-generation U.S. Muslims.

The current study on the experiences of third space attendees is significant for several reasons. It provides insight into the impact of a growing type of Muslim community spaces that will become an integral part of community development efforts. Further studies on the structure of third spaces, their programming, and their physical designs may serve as inspiration to other Islamic institutions in the U.S. that seek to attract younger generations. Combined with other existing studies on Muslim experiences in the U.S., the study's findings provide a promising account of well-integrated U.S. Muslim identities beyond narratives of Islamophobia. As the community continues to grow, a shift to an asset-based approach that highlights the strengths of the community ought to happen. Lastly, the study contributes to the place attachment literature by adding the U.S. Muslims' identity experience.

There are several limitations to this study. First, the study is cross-sectional, which focuses on a sample of third-space attendees residing in Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia at a single point in time. As such, findings may not apply to other third spaces in the United States, and long-term effects are impossible to capture. However, this study is positioned as a pioneering exploratory study on the role of Islamic third spaces. Secondly, although the conclusion that third space attendees are a subset of the larger U.S. Muslim population could be strengthened by comparing

the demographics of third spaces with local U.S. Muslim demographics in D.C. and Virginia, such a dataset does not exist yet. This limitation is posed by the fact that the U.S. census does not collect data on religious affiliation, as this is part of the First Amendment concerns; reliable national-level religious data comes from independent research institutions. Lastly, the analytical technique of analyzing the data does not reveal intersectional demographic effects on the dependent variable, which may hide the effects of how individuals with specific overlapping backgrounds relate to the third space.

Environmental psychology is a significantly underutilized approach when studying minority groups, especially U.S. Muslims. The social, psychological, and physical dimensions of relating to a place can be used to understand and impact various facets of individual and community wellbeing for Muslim Americans. Due to the significant relationship between places and experiences that occur within them, future studies should examine the mechanisms behind the constructs presented in this study. Additionally, understanding environmental psychology aspects affecting U.S. Muslims in religious settings may provide mental health providers with the cues necessary to facilitate more relevant and culturally competent services. Furthermore, at an age of declining religious identification across faith groups, this study could prompt several other discussions on the potential role of religious spaces in other faith-based communities, especially in minority populations.

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